



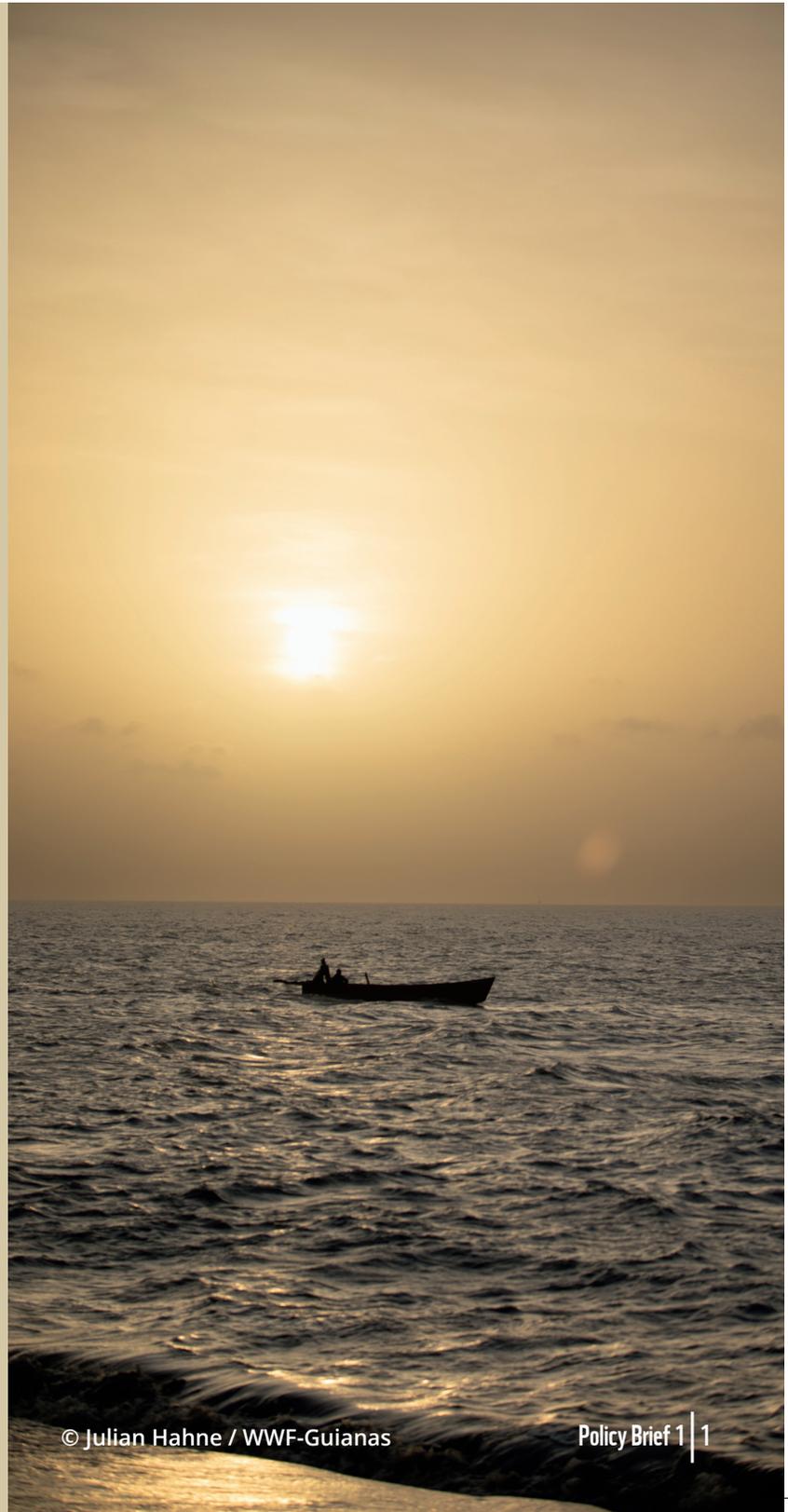
ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES IN SURINAME

A POLICY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief assesses Suriname's fisheries policies and regulatory framework, addressing critical sector challenges. *The fisheries sector contributes \$94.2 million annually (2.0% of GDP based on the recently updated \$4.71 billion GDP) and employs approximately 6,500 or more individuals. The MSC-certified seabob fishery continues as the world's first certified tropical shrimp operation, maintaining its certification status as of September 2025. However, broader sector challenges persist around technology deployment, enforcement capacity, and cross-border illegal fishing.*

Despite the implementation of the National Plan of Action on Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing (NPOA-IUU) in February 2025, significant gaps persist. These include a severe shortage of inspectors, low Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) coverage, and widespread enforcement and financial access limitations. The resulting infrastructure deficits cause millions in annual post-harvest losses, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive sector transformation.





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WWF's Role and Responsibilities: As the commissioning organization through WWF-Guianas, the World Wildlife Fund serves as the primary coordinator and facilitator of the BIODEV 2030 Phase II project in Suriname, with specific responsibility for integrating biodiversity conservation objectives within the fisheries sector framework. WWF's actions include commissioning comprehensive stakeholder assessments, facilitating policy dialogue between government agencies and fishing communities, and providing technical expertise on sustainable fisheries management practices. The organization's responsibilities encompass ensuring that fisheries policies align with global biodiversity conservation standards, supporting the development of Marine Protected Areas within Suriname's EEZ, promoting ecosystem-based management approaches, and coordinating with international partners to address cross-border illegal fishing activities. Through its regional presence in the Guianas, WWF plays a critical role in advocating for the maintenance of Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification, supporting the implementation of technology-driven monitoring systems, and mobilizing international financing mechanisms to achieve comprehensive sector transformation while maintaining ecological integrity.

Through this brief, WWF recommends immediate action across five strategic dimensions, resulting from research and extensive stakeholder consultations conducted between November 2024 and September 2025, as well as a comprehensive Industry assessment conducted between April and June 2025. These strategic dimensions are: legislative modernization, enhanced enforcement capacity, technology-driven monitoring systems, extensive stakeholder engagement, and strategic financing mobilization. Each of these dimensions plays a crucial role in addressing the sector's challenges and promoting sustainable fisheries management. Success requires coordinated intervention across policy reform, institutional strengthening, and the systematic deployment of technology.

IMPORTANCE OF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Suriname's marine ecosystems support an exceptional biodiversity, including dolphins, manatees, and various species of turtles. Recent assessments reveal 82% of stakeholders report moderate to high negative impacts from fish stock decline on coastal communities, underscoring the urgent need for science-based management approaches.

The sector's historic achievement as the first tropical country to secure MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) certification demonstrates proven sustainability leadership capability. The Suriname Atlantic Seabob fishery continues to maintain its MSC certification, with surveillance audits ongoing

in 2025, representing 34% of total production by volume. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) establishment within Suriname's EEZ represents critical opportunities for ecosystem protection and climate change resilience.

Technology-enabled monitoring systems play a crucial role in enhancing biodiversity conservation. Real-time data collection and adaptive management provided by these systems can significantly improve the sector's sustainability. Digital traceability systems, recognized by 94% of stakeholders as critical for market access, enable supply chain transparency while supporting conservation objectives.





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Table 1: Suriname Fisheries Economic Performance Indicators (2021-2025)

Metric	2021	2022	2023	2024	Sept 2025	Target 2028
National GDP	\$3.11B	\$3.79B	\$4.59B	\$4.71B	\$4.71B	\$5.28B
Fisheries GDP Contribution	\$68.1M (2.2%)	\$72.4M (1.9%)	\$83.2M (1.8%)	\$89.7M (1.9%)	\$94.2M (2.0%)	\$147.8M (2.8%)
Employment (Direct/Indirect)	5,200	5,600	6,100	6,300	6,500	9,800
Production Volume (MT)	52,000	54,500	56,800	57,500	58,000	62,000
Export Value	\$61.2M	\$65.8M	\$76.4M	\$84.1M	\$87.8M	\$132.6M
VMS Coverage (Industrial)	95%	98%	100%	100%	100%	100%
VMS Coverage (Artisanal)	3%	5%	8%	12%	15%	100%
MSC Certified Volume	32%	33%	33%	34%	34%	55%

Sources: World Bank GDP Historical Data (2025), UN Comtrade Data, MSC Certification Database (2025).

CURRENTLY, ONGOING HARMFUL PRACTICES THAT UNDERMINE SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES IN SURINAME

Recent assessments identify systematic harmful practices requiring immediate intervention:

1. Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

Cross-border IUU fishing represents an annual threat of \$18.2 million. The illegal license market between Suriname and Guyana affects over 45 vessels operating under fraudulent documentation, resulting in 48–72-hour delays in reporting violations, which compromises enforcement effectiveness.

2. Enforcement Capacity Constraints

94% of stakeholders rate enforcement mechanisms as requiring substantial improvement. The inspector-to-port ratio of 1:4+ creates systematic monitoring gaps, while limited PSMA (Port State Measures Agreement) compliance expertise constrains international cooperation.

3. Technology Deployment Gaps

VMS coverage reveals significant disparities: 100% industrial fleet compliance versus 13% artisanal fleet. This affects over 400 vessels, requiring the deployment of technology for comprehensive monitoring and compliance.

4. Infrastructure and Post-Harvest Losses

Cold storage capacity deficits result in 25–30% post-harvest losses annually, representing a value destruction of \$8–12 million. The current capacity of 1,200 metric tons falls significantly below the required 3,000 metric tons.

5. Financial Access Barriers

94% of stakeholders report limited access to affordable credit, while 100% cite high compliance costs as universal barriers. Limited collateral acceptance restricts technology adoption and infrastructure investment capacity.

6. Climate Change and Environmental Pressures

Stock decline impacts affect 82% of stakeholders, indicating increasing fishing effort requirements for equivalent catches, suggesting ecosystem stress and reduced productivity.



POLICIES, LEGISLATION, AND LAWS

Suriname has established a comprehensive policy architecture supporting sustainable fisheries management:

- a. National Plan of Action on IUU Fishing (NPOA-IUU) 2025-2030**

Operational since 1 February 2025, this framework deploys five integrated components: regulatory enhancement, monitoring optimization, institutional capacity development, stakeholder engagement, and regional cooperation mechanisms. Implementation has reached 28% completion as of September 2025.
- b. Fisheries Management Plan 2021-2025**

Validated by stakeholders in March 2021, the plan emphasizes stakeholder involvement, fishing capacity control, and illegal fishing reduction. Implementation has improved to 76% compliance, with enforcement components requiring systematic strengthening. This plan will undergo another update.
- c. Draft Fisheries Act Enhancement Framework**

Currently, parliamentary review. Stakeholder consensus indicates comprehensive modernization requirements. 94% report existing legal instruments inadequately align with global sustainability standards. Priority reforms include science-based quotas, enhanced enforcement, and digital monitoring requirements.
- d. Environmental Framework Act (2020)**

Establishes environmental protection regulations and mandates environmental impact assessments for fishing activities with an 82% compliance rate.
- e. Fish Stock Protection Act (1961)**

Regulates fishing methods and commercial licensing but lacks modern gear regulation, catch limits, and enhanced penalty enforcement provisions.
- f. Sea Fisheries Act (1980) and Updates (2001)**

Supports sustainable practices through license limits and overexploited stock reduction plans, particularly regulating the Galibi no-fishing zone.
- g. National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)**

The NBSAP provides a holistic approach to biodiversity conservation, integrating fisheries management with ecological sustainability goals. It focuses on protecting critical habitats, reducing pollution, and promoting sustainable resource use (FAO, 2023). The NBSAP also includes provisions for the sustainable management of marine resources, with a particular emphasis on the conservation of endangered species and the protection of vulnerable ecosystems.
- h. Law on the Territorial Sea and the Continuous Economic Zone (1978)**

This law defines Suriname's territorial sea at 12 nautical miles from the shore and establishes regulations for activities within the economic zone. It provides the legal basis for managing fisheries in Suriname's EEZ (FAO, 2023). The law also includes provisions for the regulation of foreign fishing vessels and the enforcement of fishing rights within the EEZ.
- i. Forest Management Act (1992)**

Locally known as Wet Bosbeheer 1992, this act provides a framework for the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems in Suriname, including provisions relevant to coastal and marine environments. It aims to conserve critical habitats and promote sustainable resource use (CLME+ Project Hub, 2021). The act includes provisions for the establishment of protected areas, the regulation of wildlife trade, and the enforcement of penalties for illegal activities.



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KEY NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR ROLES

a. Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Fisheries (LVV):

Leads fisheries management, policy development, and licensing administration. Facilitates stakeholder consultations and coordinates with fishing communities to develop sustainable practices. Performance has improved to 78% effectiveness.

a.1. Fisheries Department:

Manages operational implementation with 5 inspectors for 20+ ports. Further coordinates with other agencies for enforcement & execution of penalties & fines, as well as prosecution. Develops policy and legislative instruments for the fisheries sector management, monitoring & control.

b. Maritime Authority Suriname (MAS) and Coast Guard:

Responsible for vessel registration, compliance monitoring, and territorial water enforcement using modern surveillance technology. Current capacity constraints limit comprehensive coverage effectiveness to 42%.

c. Regional and International Partners

The Inter-American Development Bank provides technical cooperation focusing on stock assessment enhancement. WWF coordinates BIODIV 2030 Phase II implementation, supporting biodiversity integration within the fisheries sector with 85% project delivery effectiveness.

d. Private Sector and Cooperatives: Industrial operators demonstrate 91% compliance and 70% vertical integration from harvesting through export. Eight fisheries cooperatives provide an institutional foundation with universal stakeholder support (100%) for small-scale fisher empowerment.

- e. **Attorney General: Public Prosecutors' Office (OM):** The Attorney General's Office prosecutes violations of fisheries laws, ensuring that offenders face legal consequences for illegal activities. The office works closely with the Maritime Police and the Coast Guard to ensure the effective enforcement of fishing regulations.
- f. **Maritime Police and Navy:** The Navy supports maritime security operations by patrolling vulnerable areas and assisting in enforcement actions against illegal fishing activities. The Navy collaborates with the Coast Guard and the Maritime Police to ensure the effective enforcement of fishing regulations.

The Maritime Police enforces fisheries laws at sea, conducts inspections of fishing vessels, and reports violations. The Maritime Police is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of illegal fishing activities.

- g. **Ministry of Trade:** The government authority in international trade, import & export, market access & entrepreneurship.
- h. **VKI: Fish Inspection Institute (VKI)**

The VKI conducts inspections related to fish quality and hygiene standards throughout the supply chain to ensure compliance with health regulations. The institute also plays a role in monitoring the implementation of sustainable fishing practices.

- i. **Ministry of Land and Forest Management (GGB):** The Ministry of Land and Forest Management (Ministerie van Grondbeleid en Bosbeheer, GBB) plays a significant role in sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation. It manages and protects forest resources, develops policies for sustainable land use, and engages in stakeholder workshops to strengthen compliance with international agreements such as CITES. The GGB also collaborates with the LVV to ensure the protection of critical habitats within the EEZ.
- j. **Ministry of Oil, Gas & Environment:** The newly formed Ministry of Oil, Gas & Environment fulfills the responsibilities of the former Ministry of Spatial Planning & Environment. It promotes sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation by developing regulations for the sustainable use of natural resources. It focuses on integrated ecosystem management, engages local communities in decision-making, and participates in international agreements to align policies with global standards. This Ministry is responsible for implementing the Environmental Framework Act and coordinating environmental impact assessments for fishing activities.



IDENTIFIED GAPS IN THE POLICIES AND LAWS

Table 2: Critical Policy and Implementation Gaps Analysis - October 2025

Gap Category	Current Status	Required Standard	Implementation Timeline	Investment Need
Legislative Framework	72% aligned	95% international standards	12-18 months	\$2.4M
Enforcement Capacity	5 inspectors	20+ inspectors needed	18 months	\$4.8M
VMS Coverage	37% fleet average	100% mandatory	24 months	\$6.8M
PSMA Compliance	67% implementation	100% full compliance	12 months	\$1.9M
Financial Access	6% operator access	75% target access	36 months	\$12.4M
MPA Designation	0 in EEZ	3 MPAs required	24 months	\$2.8M

Sources: FAO Gap Analysis Framework (2024), World Bank Investment Analysis (2023)

a. Legislative Modernization Requirements

94% of stakeholders indicate existing legal instruments inadequately align with global sustainability standards. Priority reforms include sustainable fishing quotas, effort control measures, and adaptive management provisions.

b. Enforcement Capacity Deficits

Critical constraints include inadequate inspector coverage (5 inspectors for 20+ ports), limited PSMA compliance expertise, and insufficient cross-border coordination. The enhanced capacity to handle 20+ inspectors represents immediate requirements.

c. Technology Infrastructure Gaps

VMS expansion requires 400 additional units for comprehensive artisanal fleet coverage. Digital traceability gaps affect 94% of stakeholders, limiting export compliance. Processing automation could increase value-added products from 37.8% to 60%.

d. Financial Access and Investment Barriers

Limited financing access affects 94% of stakeholders, with universal compliance cost barriers (100% recognition). The infrastructure investment requirements of \$32.4 million demand innovative financing mechanisms.

e. Marine Protected Areas Designation

The current absence of designated MPAs within Suriname’s EEZ limits critical habitat protection and ecosystem resilience.

f. Regional Cooperation Mechanisms

Cross-border illegal fishing requires enhanced trilateral coordination. Limited information sharing enables illegal license markets worth \$18.2 million annually.

HOW GAPS IMPACT SUSTAINABILITY

a. Market Access and Certification Benefits

The MSC certification has been extended for the seabob fishery, representing 34% of production by volume and demonstrating its proven sustainability capabilities. Expansion to additional species requires enhanced management systems and stakeholder coordination to replicate this success.

b. Economic Development Constraints

Infrastructure deficits result in \$8-12 million in annual post-harvest losses, while financial barriers affect 94% of stakeholders, constraining the adoption of technology essential for competitive enhancement.

c. Enforcement Effectiveness Limitations

94% of stakeholders rate enforcement mechanisms as requiring improvement. Cross-border violations and illegal license markets worth \$18.2 million annually undermine resource management effectiveness.

d. Technology Adoption Barriers

VMS coverage gaps (15% artisanal fleet) limit comprehensive monitoring, while digital traceability deficits affect export compliance and market access.

e. Stakeholder Engagement Deficiencies

Universal support for small-scale fisher empowerment (100% consensus) indicates opportunities for enhanced co-management approaches.





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RECOMMENDATIONS

Suriname's fisheries sector faces a decisive transformation moment. The MSC-certified seabob fishery demonstrates proven sustainability capabilities, while systematic capacity constraints demand immediate strategic intervention across policy modernization, enforcement enhancement, and technology deployment.

A recent stakeholder assessment reveals an unprecedented consensus on transformation priorities. Available financing mechanisms through World Bank lending portfolios, Caribbean Development Bank initiatives, and private sector partnerships create optimal conditions for comprehensive sector modernization.

Success requires coordinated implementation across five strategic dimensions: legislative framework modernization, enforcement capacity expansion from 5 to 20+ inspectors, technology deployment achieving 100% VMS coverage, systematic stakeholder engagement enabling community co-management, and strategic financing mobilization through international partnerships.

WWF recommends that implementation must be immediate and comprehensive to maintain market confidence, expand sustainable fisheries excellence beyond the seabob fishery, and secure long-term economic viability for coastal communities while preserving marine biodiversity.



Commissioned by

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(WWF)/WWF-Guianas

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Issued by

Ms. Soraya Wijntuin MSc.
Manager Better Production in
Natural Resources
WWF-Guianas
Prins Hendrikstraat 114
Paramaribo, Suriname
swijntuin@wwf.sr

Project:

BIODEV2030 Phase 2 - Suriname

Authored by

OSAEDA Ventures N.V.
Ms. Anushka .Y. Raghoebarsing
Anushka.r@osaeda.org
Biodiversity Consultant WWF-Suriname

Accepted on September 10, 2025
Published on December 12, 2025

SOURCES:

1. **Direct sources:** Extensive Stakeholder consultations between November 2024 and September 2025, and a comprehensive Industry Current State Assessment conducted between April and June 2025. Unpublished.
2. **Authoritative sources for additional validation & benchmarking:** World Trade Organization Statistics and reports 2020- 2025, International Trade Center (ITC) commodity trading statistics 2020-2025. Industry reports & Publications from regional and global governments, UN Comtrade data & statistics, FAO reports, and data statistics (2020-2025). US Department of Commerce Import-Export data 2020-2025. Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) online publications 2025. ICAAT publications 2020-2025. CDB publications 2024-2025. IDB publications 2023-2025. World Bank-Suriname Country data 2020-2025. Suriname Bureau of Statistics (ABS) GDP & Export reports 2020-2023. Suriname government annual reports 2020-2024, Suriname Parliament legislative publications on the portal dna.sr.