



ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES IN SURINAME

A COMPARATIVE POLICY ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT BASED ON GLOBAL AND REGIONAL BENCHMARKING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *Sustainable fisheries represent a critical economic and environmental imperative for Suriname, contributing \$92.4 million annually to export revenues and supporting over 6,350 direct and indirect employment positions while representing 2.4% of national GDP.*
- *The sector demonstrates continued growth momentum despite structural challenges, with export revenues expanding from \$79.1 million in 2021 to \$92.4 million in 2025, representing sustained competitive positioning in global markets.*
- *This policy brief provides a comprehensive assessment of Suriname's fisheries governance framework through comparative analysis with global best practices and regional initiatives.*
- *Critical gaps identified include insufficient enforcement capacity with only five inspectors managing over twenty-two ports, limited artisanal fleet monitoring coverage at 15%, and systematic infrastructure deficits generating \$9.3 million in annual post-harvest losses.*
- *Strategic recommendations encompass enhanced stakeholder engagement mechanisms, technology-driven monitoring systems, and institutional capacity development to align Suriname's policies with international standards and secure long-term sector sustainability.*

WWF's Role and Commitment: Through the BIODEV2030 Phase 2 project, WWF-Guianas leads comprehensive efforts to strengthen Suriname's fisheries governance frameworks and enhance sustainable management practices.



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As a regional conservation leader in the Three Guianas and broader Latin American and Caribbean region, WWF promotes the adoption of innovative fisheries management approaches such as Chile's territorial use rights model and Brazil's REBYC-II LAC bycatch reduction practices, while facilitating cross-border cooperation to address the estimated \$12.4 million annual impact of illegal fishing activities that threaten sustainable fisheries across the region.

WWF's strategic approach focuses on mobilizing international financing mechanisms and allocating funds, while facilitating community-centered co-management systems that leverage 100% stakeholder support for empowerment initiatives. WWF advocates for the immediate deployment of technology infrastructure to achieve 95%+ vessel monitoring coverage, enhanced regional cooperation to address cross-border illegal fishing, and the integration of ecosystem-based management to balance the sector's \$92.4 million economic contribution with marine biodiversity conservation objectives.

1. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES IN SURINAME

SITUATION

Sustainable fisheries management encompasses the systematic harvesting of aquatic resources within ecological limits while maintaining ecosystem integrity and ensuring resource availability for future generations. In Suriname, the fisheries sector operates as a strategically significant economic driver, generating substantial export revenues of \$92.4 million annually while directly and indirectly employing over 6,350 individuals across coastal communities. The sector demonstrates strength in premium markets, with fish fillets representing 28.3% of export portfolio revenue and maintaining established relationships in the United States and European Union markets.

COMPLICATION

Despite demonstrated capability for international leadership - exemplified by achieving the world's first MSC certification for tropical shrimp fishery - Suriname's current policy framework faces significant implementation challenges that threaten long-term sustainability objectives. Systematic constraints, including enforcement capacity limitations, technology gaps, and infrastructure deficits, undermine competitive positioning and regulatory compliance effectiveness. Current production forecasts indicate concerning trends, with regional market share declining from 18.2% in 2021 to 16.5% in 2025, representing a strategic competitive challenge that demands immediate policy intervention.

RESOLUTION

By identifying specific policy enhancement opportunities and providing actionable recommendations, this analysis guides Suriname toward strengthened fisheries management that aligns with international standards while securing economic benefits and environmental sustainability. This policy brief addresses critical governance gaps through a comprehensive comparative analysis with global best practices, regional frameworks, and neighboring country approaches to further support Suriname with reliable and guiding information and examples to improve further.



2. CURRENT STATE OF SURINAME'S FISHERIES SECTOR

ECONOMIC IMPACT AND PERFORMANCE

- Suriname's fisheries sector operates as a strategically significant component of the national economy, demonstrating both substantial achievements and critical development requirements.
- The sector generates annual export revenues of \$92.4 million while contributing 2.4% to national GDP and supporting over 6,350 direct and indirect employment positions across coastal communities.
- The sector exhibits steady growth momentum with export revenues expanding from \$79.1 million in 2021 to \$92.4 million in 2025, representing a compound annual growth rate of 3.2%.

FLEET COMPOSITION AND PRODUCTION

- The industry maintains a diverse fleet composition of 686 vessels, comprising both artisanal vessels and industrial vessels, which collectively produced 34,850 tons of fish and seafood in 2025.

MARKET DISTRIBUTION AND EXPORT PERFORMANCE

- Export performance demonstrates strong market positioning, with the United States representing the primary destination, accounting for 71% of export value, followed by European Union markets at 22% and regional Caribbean markets at 7%.
- Fish fillets constitute the largest export category at \$26.1 million, representing 28.3% of total export revenue, while fresh non-fillet fish generates \$17.8 million, and frozen fish products contribute \$13.6 million annually.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES

- Vessel monitoring system (VMS) coverage achieves 100% compliance across the industrial fleet but only 15% coverage for artisanal vessels, requiring 420 additional monitoring units for comprehensive fleet oversight.
- Enforcement capacity remains severely constrained with only six inspectors responsible for managing over twenty-two ports nationwide, representing a fundamental capacity-to-responsibility mismatch that limits regulatory effectiveness.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROCESSING LIMITATIONS

- Infrastructure deficits create systematic barriers to value optimization, with current cold storage capacity of 1,350 metric tons falling substantially below the 3,200 metric tons required for effective post-harvest management, resulting in \$9.3 million in annual value destruction through post-harvest losses.
- Processing operations achieve 65% capacity utilization with limited automation capabilities, constraining value-added product development that currently represents 42.3% of the export portfolio.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The sector faces significant operational challenges that constrain competitive positioning and sustainable development, which can be overcome with various forms of support available for organizations, such as WWF, technology implementation, and continued collaboration.

3. SECTOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Suriname has established itself as a pioneer in sustainable tropical fisheries management, achieving several milestones that demonstrate world-class capabilities and international leadership.

- **World's First MSC certification:** The sector's most significant accomplishment represents achieving the world's first MSC certification for tropical shrimp fishery operations in 2011, positioning Suriname as a global sustainability leader and enabling premium market access with 10-15% price premiums.
- This historic achievement generated universal stakeholder recognition and established Suriname's reputation for **environmental stewardship** and operational excellence in international markets.
- **The industrial fleet demonstrates exemplary technology adoption** with 100% *vessel monitoring system coverage*, establishing best practice implementation that serves as a regional benchmark for compliance and operational transparency.
- This technological leadership extends to **comprehensive catch documentation systems and sustainable fishing gear protocols**, with 88% stakeholder awareness of selective fishing practices and active promotion of bycatch reduction devices.
- The sector has **successfully implemented turtle excluder devices and bycatch reduction technologies**, contributing to marine conservation while maintaining commercial viability.
- **Policy framework development** represents another area of significant achievement, with Suriname establishing a **comprehensive governance architecture** through the Fisheries Management Plan 2021-2025 and the National Plan of Action on IUU Fishing, operational since February 2025.
- These frameworks position Suriname at the forefront of regional cooperation and demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of contemporary fisheries management requirements.
- The sector has achieved **notable success in stakeholder engagement**, with survey data revealing 100% support for **community empowerment** initiatives and 94% backing for enhanced technical and financial support programs.
- **Institutional capacity building demonstrates measurable progress** through comprehensive training delivery to over 200 fishers across five coastal districts, safety program implementation reaching 150+ fishers at primary fishing ports, and cooperative development encompassing eight fisheries cooperatives with national coverage.
- These achievements establish a **foundation for continued sector development** while demonstrating Suriname's commitment to inclusive and sustainable fisheries management that balances economic objectives with environmental stewardship and community empowerment.

4. GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

Contemporary sustainable fisheries policies demonstrate convergence around several foundational principles that have proven effective across diverse geographic and economic contexts.

Table 1: Global Best Practice Framework

Practice Area	Leading Example	Key Features	Relevance to Suriname
Community-Centered Management	Norway Co-Management	Formal participation in quota allocation and enforcement	Aligns with 100% stakeholder support for community empowerment
Ecosystem-Based Management	Australia, Great Barrier Reef	Integrated resource management considering ecosystem interactions	Addresses biodiversity conservation gaps in the current framework
Technology Integration	United States VMS	Comprehensive vessel monitoring and automated compliance	Critical for addressing the 15% artisanal fleet coverage gap
Science-Based Management	Iceland Quota System	Real-time monitoring, stock assessments, predictive modeling	Essential for addressing competitive positioning challenges

Community-centered management approaches have generated substantial success across multiple jurisdictions. Norway’s co-management framework empowers fishing communities through formal participation in quota allocation and enforcement mechanisms, leading to improved compliance rates and enhanced resource stewardship.

This participatory governance model demonstrates relevance for Suriname’s context, where stakeholder analysis reveals universal support for small-scale fisher empowerment.

Technology integration has proven essential for modern fisheries governance, with the United States employing comprehensive Vessel Monitoring Systems and automated compliance mechanisms to achieve substantial reductions in illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities.



5. LAC REGION OVERVIEW

Latin American and Caribbean countries have developed innovative approaches to sustainable fisheries management that provide valuable lessons for policy enhancement.

KEY REGIONAL INNOVATIONS:

- **Chile's Territorial Use Rights for Fisheries:** Grants exclusive access rights to local fishing communities while requiring compliance with sustainability standards, achieving improved stock management and enhanced community economic outcomes
- **Brazil's REBYC-II LAC Project:** Focuses on bycatch reduction and ecosystem health in trawl fisheries, achieving measurable improvements in species protection while maintaining commercial viability
- **Latin American Parliament Model Law (2017):** Establishes regional standards for community rights and participatory governance, emphasizing inclusive decision-making processes
- **Ecuador and Peru Coastal Fisheries Initiative:** Demonstrates effective ecosystem-based management through community engagement and scientific collaboration.

6. COMPARISON WITH OTHER CARICOM COUNTRIES

CARICOM member states demonstrate varying levels of policy sophistication and implementation effectiveness, providing valuable benchmarking opportunities for Suriname’s governance enhancement.

Table 2: CARICOM Fisheries Policy Comparison

Country	Policy Framework	Key Strengths	Lessons for Suriname
Jamaica	National Fisheries Policy	Community-based management, MPA development	Advanced institutional mechanisms for community participation
Barbados	Coastal Zone Management Policy	Integrated coastal resource governance	Holistic approach addressing ecosystem interactions
The Bahamas	Comprehensive Fisheries Act	Habitat protection, MSC certification maintenance	Sustained compliance capability demonstration
Saint Lucia	MPA-focused approach	Sustainable stock management, international agreement alignment	Integration of conservation with commercial objectives

Suriname distinguishes itself within the CARICOM framework through its historic MSC achievement and advanced National Plan of Action on IUU Fishing, operational since February 2025. The sector maintains its regional leadership position through continued certification compliance and institutional development.



7. GUIANAS COMPARISON

Regional analysis within the Three Guianas reveals diverse approaches to fisheries governance, with each jurisdiction facing distinct challenges and opportunities.

Table 3: Three Guianas Fisheries Governance Comparison (2021-2025)

Indicator	Suriname	Guyana	French Guiana
Annual Production	34,850 tons	53,400 tons	9,750 tons
Fleet Size	714 vessels	1,200+ vessels	450 vessels
Export Value	\$92.4M (US focus)	\$58.8M (multiple markets)	\$42.6M (EU focus)
MSC Certification	Seabob (certified)	Seabob (certified)	None achieved
VMS Coverage	45% overall	76% overall	98% comprehensive
Cold Storage Capacity	1,350 MT	2,000 MT	3,500 MT
Key Challenges	Enforcement capacity, infrastructure gaps, and Illegal fishing	Enforcement challenges, Capacity challenges	Illegal fishing, resource allocation

Cross-border illegal fishing poses a significant challenge across the Three Guianas, with an estimated annual economic impact of \$12.4 million due to illicit trading licenses and vessel registration violations. These activities undermine stock assessments, distort market dynamics, and threaten certification efforts across the region.

8. CURRENT STATE OF SURINAME’S FISHERIES FRAMEWORK

Suriname’s fisheries governance is based on three primary policy instruments that establish the regulatory framework for sector management.

POLICY ARCHITECTURE:

- **The Fisheries Act:** Provides legal architecture for resource governance, emphasizing conservation objectives while balancing exploitation with ecological sustainability.
- **Fisheries Management Plan 2021-2025:** Operationalizes specific sustainability strategies through stakeholder participation, illegal fishing reduction, and bycatch mitigation measures.
- **National Plan of Action on IUU Fishing (February 2025):** Addresses cross-border enforcement challenges through five integrated components, including regulatory framework enhancement and regional cooperation mechanisms

However, stakeholder analysis reveals that 76% of sector participants indicate existing legal instruments inadequately align with contemporary global sustainability standards.

9. IDENTIFIED FRAMEWORK GAPS

A comparative analysis reveals several critical areas where Suriname’s current framework requires enhancement to meet international standards.

Table 4: Gap Analysis

Gap Category	Current Status	International Standard	Impact	Priority Level
Enforcement Capacity	6 inspectors for 22+ ports	1:2 or 1:3 inspector-to-port ratio	Severely limited regulatory effectiveness	Critical
VMS Coverage	45% overall (15% artisanal)	95%+ comprehensive coverage	Compliance gaps, illegal fishing vulnerability	High
Cold Storage Infrastructure	1,350 MT capacity	3,200 MT required	\$9.3M annual post-harvest losses	Critical
Financial Access	94% report credit constraints	Accessible development financing	Limited modernization investment	High
Digital Traceability	Underdeveloped systems	Blockchain-enabled supply chain transparency	Export market access risks	High

Key Implementation Constraints:

- Enforcement capacity represents the most significant constraint, with a fundamental capacity-to-responsibility mismatch severely limiting regulatory effectiveness
- Technology integration lags substantially behind regional and international standards, requiring 420 additional vessel monitoring units for comprehensive fleet coverage
- Infrastructure deficits create systematic barriers to value optimization, with processing capabilities achieving only 65% capacity utilization

10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

WWF recommends the following: Strategic policy enhancement requires coordinated intervention across multiple dimensions to address identified gaps and align with international best practices.

Table 5: Strategic Recommendations Matrix

Recommendation Area	Specific Actions	Investment Required	Expected Outcomes	Implementation Timeline
Legislative Modernization	Comprehensive Fisheries Act enhancement with science-based quota systems	\$350K (legal review)	Alignment with international standards	12-18 months
Enforcement Expansion	Recruit 20 additional specialized inspectors	\$3.8M annually	Effective regulatory oversight	18-24 months
Technology Infrastructure	VMS expansion, digital traceability, and automation systems	\$14.6-22.3M total	95%+ compliance coverage, reduced losses	24-36 months
Stakeholder Engagement	Formalized community participation programs	\$500K-1M	Enhanced compliance, traditional knowledge integration	12-24 months
Regional Cooperation	Joint enforcement protocols, information sharing agreements	\$450K-750K	Reduced cross-border illegal fishing	6-12 months

Financing Architecture: Available financing mechanisms include the WTO Fish Fund's \$14.2-18.6 million allocation, Caribbean Development Bank project grants of €890,000, and IDB Technical Cooperation funding of \$320,000. These resources provide the foundation for comprehensive policy implementation and infrastructure development.



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11. CONCLUSION

Suriname possesses significant opportunities to strengthen its fisheries governance framework and maintain regional leadership in sustainable management. The convergence of stakeholder consensus, development financing availability, and proven institutional capability creates optimal conditions for comprehensive policy enhancement.

WWF emphasizes through this brief that *Success requires disciplined implementation across legislative modernization, capacity building, technology deployment, and regional cooperation to secure long-term sector sustainability and economic benefits.* The strategic framework outlined in this brief provides a roadmap for achieving international standards while maintaining Suriname's competitive position in global markets.



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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. 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.