



ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES IN SURINAME

ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES IN SURINAME BY INCENTIVIZING COMPLIANCE AND PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS

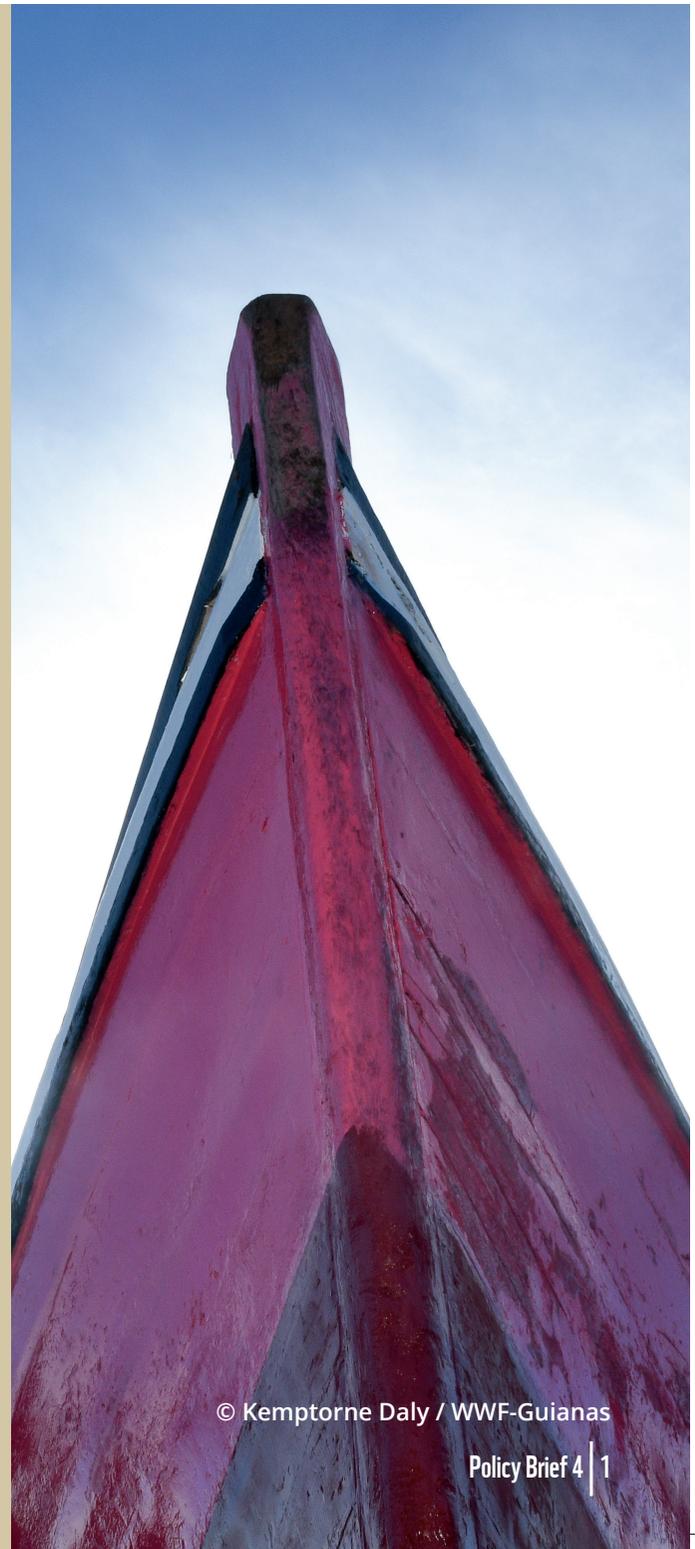
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief presents evidence-based strategies to address challenges through targeted alternative livelihood development and strategic compliance incentives, offering a promising path towards a sustainable future for Suriname's fisheries.

Suriname's fisheries sector, a critical economic pillar, has been a focus of support from WWF Guianas for decades. It represents a significant financial contribution, generating \$35.2 million in projected 2025 export revenue and supporting over 6,200 direct and indirect jobs across 22 registered vessels in the MSC-certified seabob fishery. However, the sector is under threat from persistent challenges.

The sector maintains its position as the world's leading tropical shrimp fishery with MSC certification, though it faces ongoing compliance requirements across 25 performance indicators to maintain premium market access advantages. The convergence of newly available WTO Fish Fund grants offering up to \$300,000 per project and EU-CDB Regional Food Security Programme funding creates immediate opportunities for comprehensive sector transformation.

Drawing on a comprehensive stakeholder analysis that reveals a universal consensus on export expansion priorities and 94% agreement on value-added product development, the brief provides actionable recommendations for sustainable fisheries transformation. *Key interventions include aquaculture development, eco-tourism integration, financial incentive mechanisms, and technology-enhanced enforcement systems. Implementation of these measures will preserve marine resources while strengthening economic resilience across fishing communities.*



1. CURRENT CHALLENGES IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Suriname's fisheries sector operates within a complex challenge environment that threatens both ecological sustainability and economic viability. These challenges require immediate attention and action:

- **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Crisis:** Cross-border IUU fishing represents the most severe threat to sector sustainability, with quantified economic impacts reaching \$12-16 million annually through illegal license trading between Suriname and Guyana alone. Current enforcement capacity remains critically constrained, with only five inspectors responsible for monitoring over 20 ports nationwide, representing approximately 25% of required staffing levels. Vessel Monitoring System coverage demonstrates significant gaps, achieving 100% compliance across industrial fleets but only 13% penetration among the 400+ vessel artisanal fleet, creating substantial enforcement vulnerabilities.
- **Technology and Infrastructure Deficits:** Comprehensive stakeholder assessment reveals universal recognition of critical infrastructure constraints, with 100% of respondents identifying cold storage inadequacies and 94% citing incomplete digital traceability implementation. Post-harvest losses affect 25-30% of annual production, resulting in \$8-12 million in value destruction that directly undermines fisher incomes and market competitiveness.
- **Compliance and Regulatory Challenges:** MSC certification, maintained since 2011 as the first tropical shrimp fishery globally to achieve this distinction, requires continuous improvement across 25 performance indicators to maintain premium market access advantages. Current certification status undergoes regular assessment processes, with performance indicators scoring between 60-79 triggering mandatory corrective actions that affect market positioning. Survey data indicates that 76% of stakeholders recognize current enforcement mechanisms as requiring substantial improvement, while regulatory framework gaps limit prosecution effectiveness and deterrence impact.

2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF FISHERIES

The fisheries sector's economic significance extends beyond direct production metrics to encompass broader development and food security implications:

- **Employment and Economic Contribution:** The sector directly employs over 6,200 individuals while contributing 2.4% to national GDP through a diversified product portfolio including fish fillets (\$24.8 million), fresh fish (\$17.0 million), and other seafood products (\$33.2 million). Artisanal fishing operations support approximately 2,000 households across coastal communities, representing critical livelihood security for vulnerable populations.
- **Food Security and Nutritional Access:** Fish represents the primary protein source for coastal communities, with declining stock availability creating direct food security risks. Regional production trends indicate stabilization following recent volatility, with Suriname maintaining a 52% market share in regional seabob production despite an overall decline in regional production.
- **Export Market Positioning:** Suriname maintains strategic market positioning with the United States capturing 73% of export value, European Union markets representing 20%, and regional Caribbean trade accounting for 7% of total exports. This market diversification provides resilience while creating opportunities for premium positioning through the maintenance of sustainable certification.



© Rafael Jantz / WWF-Guianas

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES

Strategic alternative livelihood development requires systematic intervention across multiple economic sectors to reduce fishing pressure while maintaining community income stability:

- **Aquaculture Development and Technology Integration:** Comprehensive aquaculture expansion represents the highest-impact alternative livelihood opportunity, with 88% stakeholder consensus supporting production scaling initiatives. Technology deployment through automated monitoring systems and digital feed management can optimize production efficiency while ensuring environmental compliance. The EU-CDB Regional Food Security Programme provides €400,000-€670,000 project grants specifically targeting fisherfolk and agri-food enterprises, creating immediate financing access for aquaculture infrastructure development.
- **Eco-Tourism and Marine Service Industries:** Maritime skills transfer into eco-tourism creates sustainable income diversification while leveraging existing community expertise. Training programs targeting vessel operation, marine ecosystem interpretation, and hospitality services enable fishers to capture tourism value while maintaining a connection to marine environments. Regional success models from Costa Rica demonstrate revenue potential reaching 40-60% of traditional fishing income through integrated eco-tourism programming.
- **Value-Added Processing and Cooperative Development:** Enhanced processing capabilities enable fishers to capture additional value chain margins through direct product transformation. The current value-added product share of 37.8% represents significant expansion potential to 60% through technology investment and cooperative business model development. Financial mechanisms, including sustainability-linked loans, can provide capital access for processing equipment while incentivizing environmental compliance.

2. INCENTIVES TO ENHANCE COMPLIANCE

Strategic incentive design leverages both financial mechanisms and market access opportunities to promote voluntary compliance with sustainable fishing practices:

- **Financial Incentive Architecture:** The WTO Fish Fund provides unprecedented access to \$300,000 project grants and \$50,000 preparation grants for developing countries implementing fisheries subsidies agreements, creating immediate opportunities for compliance incentive programming. The Fund became operational in June 2025 with nearly \$15 million in contributions from 17 donor countries. Impact investment mechanisms targeting artisanal fishing communities can provide loan guarantees through private financial institutions, enabling formal finance access without exclusive government dependency.
- **Market Access and Certification Incentives:** MSC certification maintenance represents the critical pathway to premium market access and price realization improvement. Historical certification achievement enables 10-15% premium capture above commodity pricing while ensuring international market differentiation. Technology investment in digital traceability systems supports certification requirements while enabling blockchain-based supply chain transparency that commands market premiums. Current digital traceability gaps affecting 94% of stakeholders represent immediate intervention opportunities.
- **Technology-Enhanced Monitoring and Rewards:** Digital monitoring systems create opportunities for performance-based incentive delivery through automated compliance verification. Vessel Monitoring System expansion, requiring additional units for comprehensive artisanal fleet coverage, enables real-time compliance tracking and reward distribution. Mobile application development for anonymous reporting combined with community reward systems can enhance enforcement effectiveness while building social compliance pressure.



© Martin Harvey / WWF

Table 1: Available Funding Mechanisms for Fisheries Development (2025)

Programme	Total Budget	Caribbean Allocation	Suriname Eligibility	Funding Windows	Application Status
EU-CDB Regional Food Security	€19,000,000	€19,000,000	Yes	3 Windows	Call 1& 2 closed. Call 3: March 2026
WTO Fish Fund	\$15,000,000	Global Pool	Yes (upon ratification)	2 Categories	Open June 2025
UK Caribbean Infrastructure Fund	£190,000,000	£190,000,000	Yes	Infrastructure Focus	Continuous
Green Climate Fund (via CDB)	\$1,200,000	Caribbean Region	Yes	Climate Adaptation	Continuous

Sources: CDB Annual Report 2023, WTO Fish Fund Documentation, UK-Caribbean Partnership Summary

3. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Comprehensive policy reform provides the institutional foundation for effective alternative livelihood and compliance incentive implementation:

- **Co-Management Framework Enhancement:** Stakeholder analysis reveals universal support (100% consensus) for small-scale fisher empowerment through co-management approaches. Legislative modernization, incorporating adaptive quota systems, community participation mechanisms, and formal consultation processes, creates institutional frameworks for shared resource stewardship. The National Plan of Action on IUU Fishing, operational since February 2025, provides the policy foundation for enhanced community engagement and capacity-building initiatives.
- **Enforcement Capacity and Technology Integration:** Strategic enforcement enhancement requires systematic capacity expansion from current levels to 20+ specialized inspectors through targeted recruitment and training programs. Technology deployment, including automated inspection systems, documentation digitalization, and information sharing platforms, enables force multiplication effects while reducing operational costs. Regional cooperation mechanisms with Guyana and French Guiana address cross-border enforcement challenges through coordinated monitoring and prosecution frameworks.
- **Financial Inclusion and Market Development:** Policy reforms enabling cooperative formation, credit access enhancement, and alternative livelihood business licensing create enabling environments for economic diversification. Integration with existing development finance mechanisms, including Inter-American Development Bank technical cooperation (\$250,000 Green Climate Fund financing) and Caribbean Development Bank programming, provides systematic implementation support.





© Kemptorne Daly / WWF-Guianas

BENEFITS FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

- 1. Policy Developers and Government Agencies:** Evidence-based policy development supported by comprehensive stakeholder consensus data enables targeted intervention design and resource allocation optimization. Technology integration creates systematic monitoring capabilities while reducing administrative burden and improving compliance verification accuracy. International development finance access through established partnerships provides sustainable funding mechanisms for program implementation and scaling.
- 2. Enforcement Agencies and Regulatory Bodies:** Enhanced monitoring capabilities through technology deployment enable force multiplication effects while improving operational efficiency and coverage. Community engagement frameworks create collaborative enforcement models, reducing adversarial relationships while improving voluntary compliance rates. Digital information sharing platforms enable real-time coordination with regional partners, addressing cross-border enforcement challenges.
- 3. Fishing Communities and Industry Stakeholders:** Income diversification through alternative livelihoods creates economic resilience while maintaining a connection to marine resources and traditional knowledge systems. Market access enhancement through certification maintenance and premium positioning enables significant revenue improvement and competitive advantage development. Technology adoption, support, and access to financing enable modernization and improvement in efficiency across value chain operations.

CONCLUSION

The convergence of stakeholder consensus, development financing availability, and proven institutional capability creates optimal conditions for comprehensive fisheries sector transformation through alternative livelihood development and strategic compliance incentives. The unprecedented alignment of the WTO Fish Fund operational status, the EU-CDB Regional Food Security Programme availability, and the maintained MSC certification provides systematic pathways for achieving economic diversification, environmental stewardship, and community empowerment objectives.

Implementation success requires coordinated intervention across policy reform, technology deployment, and financial mechanism development to address current challenges while building long-term sustainability.

WWF concludes and further recommends that drawing on regional best practices and leveraging existing partnerships with international development organizations provides a systematic pathway for achieving economic diversification, environmental stewardship, and community empowerment objectives.

Strategic implementation of these recommendations will position Suriname as a regional leader in sustainable fisheries management while ensuring economic prosperity for fishing communities and marine ecosystem preservation for future generations.



© WWF-Guianas



© Widecast



Commissioned by

The World Wildlife Fund
(WWF)/WWF-Guianas

WWF® and ©1996 Panda Symbol are owned by WWF. All Rights reserved.

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. 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.