



# Mahi-Mahi FIPs in Latin America

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# A practical guide for seafood buyers

*What is a FIP and why does it matter for your business?*

A fishery improvement project (FIP) is a multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together the fishing industry, governments, NGOs, and buyers to address sustainability challenges in a fishery. For seafood companies, FIPs are both a supply continuity tool and a market signal: they help protect long-term access to key origins while demonstrating responsible sourcing to customers and regulators.

The Southeast Pacific supplies nearly two-thirds of the global wild mahi-mahi catch. If your company sources mahi-mahi, there is a high probability it originates from a FIP fishery - or from a fishery that needs one.



## *Before you commit: Is this FIP ready?*

Is there a clear, shared motivation among the main industry actors?

Is there a funding plan covering at least the first 24 months?

Is there minimum government recognition or engagement?

Does the FIP cover a meaningful share of the active fishery?

Is there a technical facilitator with relevant fishery-specific experience?

Are the key FIP elements in place: multi-stakeholder participation, public commitment, clear objectives, workplan, and six-monthly reporting?

If three or more answers are “no” or “unclear,” the FIP may need additional support before formal sourcing commitments are made - **but that is not a reason to disengage.** Your involvement at this stage may be the difference between a FIP that takes hold and one that does not.

## *While you source: Is your FIP on track?*

Is there a dedicated technical facilitator - not just a coordinator?

Are key stakeholders actively participating, or has engagement become nominal?

Are progress reports published every six months on FisheryProgress?

Has the workplan been updated in the last 12 months?

Can your suppliers articulate what improvements have been achieved and what the next milestones are?

Does your own engagement go beyond the sourcing decision?

If two or more answers are “no” or “unclear,” **request a direct conversation with the FIP lead** before renewing sourcing commitments.



## Warning signs: when a FIP may be stalling

No substantive progress report published in over six months

Technical facilitator disengaged or unfunded

Workplan not updated in over 12 months

Government participation nominal or absent

Declining stakeholder participation or loss of key actors

FIP leadership instability or capacity gaps

Multiple red flags appearing together - especially combining structural and operational issues - **require a direct conversation with the FIP lead** before making or renewing sourcing commitments.

## Five principles for effective engagement

1

Treat FIP engagement as a supply-chain investment, not a compliance exercise. Sustained buyer engagement consistently predicts better FIP outcomes. The returns - supply continuity, reputational benefit, long-term fishery health - are real.

2

Use your leverage collectively. Coordinated action by multiple buyers is significantly more effective than individual pressure in influencing government priorities and systemic change.

3

Set realistic timelines. FIPs in Global South contexts face structural constraints. Consistent incremental progress under difficult conditions is more valuable than a FIP's Stage designation may suggest.

4

Stay engaged through difficult periods. Buyer disengagement during slow progress is one of the most damaging things a company can do to a FIP that it has previously supported.

5

Invest in enabling conditions, not just outputs. Co-finance technical support. Participate in stakeholder processes. Help build local organizational capacity. These are the foundations that make all other FIP activities possible.





## What you can do right now

Your situation	Your highest-leverage action
Evaluating a new FIP origin	Use the “Before you commit” checklist above.
Already sourcing from a FIP	Use the “While you source” checklist + make your engagement publicly visible.
FIP showing warning signs	Request a direct conversation with the FIP lead; consider co-financing a specific workplan activity.
No FIP exists in your origin	Connect with SFP, WWF, or other members of the CASS to assess feasibility and enabling conditions.

## FIP stages at a glance

Stage	What it means	What it means for you
Stage 3	FIP implementation underway; commitments in place but not yet verified	Credible commitment; monitor actively
Stage 4	Verified improvements in fishing practices or management achieved	Lower sourcing risk; stronger basis for procurement commitments

## Key resources

- [FisheryProgress.org](https://fisheryprogress.org) - Track FIP progress and verify reporting status
- Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions (CASS) - Guidelines for supporting FIPs
- SFP FIP Toolkit - Practical guidance for initiating and implementing FIPs
- MSC FIP Pathway - Route from FIP to full certification



*Based on interviews with 31 stakeholders across three Latin American mahi-mahi FIPs (Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica), conducted November 2025 - February 2026. SFP, 2026.*



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*If you'd like to learn more about Mahi-Mahi  
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