



A new era of protection and support begins for Maldives' tuna

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An important Memorandum of Understanding has been finalised between the International Pole & Line Foundation (IPNLF) and the Maldives Seafood Processors and Exporters Association (MSPEA), which defines significant long-term objectives on joint sustainability initiatives

This five-year agreement, ratified between the two parties in Malé, Republic of Maldives, establishes a dynamic, collaborative commitment to support the local tuna sector. The initiative aims to improve the livelihoods of communities connected to these fisheries, and ensure that the Maldives remains at the forefront of the global one-by-one tuna supply. The two organisations will also share office facilities in Malé.

One-by-one fisheries in the Maldives are people-centric, and comprise 100% locally-owned fishing operations engaged in traditional practices. For this reason, an important element of the IPNLF-MSPEA cooperation will be to continue to study, and ultimately quantify, the social and economic contributions of these fisheries.

These endeavours will further drive IPNLF's social sustainability manifesto which states that investing in the one-by-one tuna supply chain must be done in tandem with delivering social benefits to those coastal communities involved in responsible pole-and-line, handline and troll fisheries.

Another priority for IPNLF, MSPEA, and their Maldives' partners over the coming years is to further improve the traceability and transparency of one-by-one tuna harvests. This will be done with a variety of new technologies and tools which are either already available or will be implemented in the near future.

"The Maldives is widely considered the home of pole-and-line tuna, and so the signing of this MOU is a very important step for all those connected locally and internationally to these fisheries. [...] We want to continue to build a stronger and more commercially competitive Maldivian one-by-one tuna sector, thereby ensuring that it is better positioned to meet the future needs of the many dependent coastal communities, as well as the ever-growing demands of consumer markets." - Martin Purves, IPNLF Managing Director



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By signing the MOU, IPNLF and MSPEA agree to the following:

- Support activities that will ensure an improved understanding of the social and economic conditions of the fishery and fishing communities to help develop and formulate fishery development policies and management plans
- Develop and improve fishery data collection, compilation and reporting systems to meet and exceed the standards required for IOTC reporting
- Improve the monitoring of the livebait fishery data collection by educating the fishermen on best-practice livebait fishing methods and improving routine collection of livebait data
- Facilitate bycatch and catch monitoring through an agreed observer programme and help improve the Regional Observer Programme of the IOTC
- Facilitate the formulation and implementation of fishery improvement projects (FIPs)
- Support the G16 Group of Like-Minded Coastal States of the Indian Ocean in improving their engagement with the IOTC

The parties shall also focus on the maintenance of the Maldives' tuna fisheries' MSC certification, including any fishery improvement plans. It shall also help facilitate the continued compliance of the Maldives with the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) requirements and help to promote the Maldivian tuna fishery globally. Furthermore, MSPEA will liaise with the Maldives Government to obtain any permits or support required to implement the agreed activities in accordance with government rules and regulations.

"There is so much that the Maldives needs to do to promote and protect this unique fishery [...] key stocks are overexploited and the use of drifting Fish Aggregating Device (dFAD) on the high seas is not effectively regulated or monitored, leading to high juvenile tuna catches in the purse seine dFAD fishery [...] The G16 Group of Indian Ocean Coastal States need to work together before it is too late. It is time the Maldives and other coastal states claim their rightful place in the Indian Ocean tuna fishery." - Umar Jamaal, MSPEA President

With 2022 being declared as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture helping to focus attention on the small-scale fishermen and women who comprise 90 percent of the world's fisheries workforce, important work lies ahead for the MSPEA-IPNLF partnership to showcase the potential of the Maldives one-by-one tuna fisheries and point to the benefits which can be gained from strengthening the small-scale fishery sector. Businesses wanting to align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can ensure that their procurement decisions drive positive change by providing access to markets and resources for small-scale fishers. Continued market support for the Maldives fisheries is vital to ensure that sustainable fishing practices are rewarded, healthy coastal ecosystems are maintained and the communities that depend on these resources are further strengthened.

ABOUT - MSPEA

The Maldives Seafood Processors and Exporters Association (MSPEA) represents a number of the major the Maldivian tuna processing companies, including MIFCO and others, and is the certificate holder for the Maldives pole-and-line skipjack tuna fishery Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. The group works to ensure that the MSC certificate can be upheld, providing the financial mechanisms to maintain the certificate in the long-term. It is also a firm champion of the one-by-one tuna fishing method.