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Peru enables 930 artisanal fishing vessels to access mahimahi, squid

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

Peru's mahimahi fishery generates more than 40 percent of the global supply by volume

The Peruvian Government last week issued a decree to enable fish-harvester cooperatives to legally register for two significant artisanal fisheries – mahimahi and jumbo flying squid.

The decision removes a barrier for 930 artisanal vessels in fisher organizations to be able to operate legally in Peruvian waters.

“The artisanal sector has long felt neglected by the state, facing endless bureaucratic obstacles,” said Elsa Vega, president of the Peruvian Artisanal Fishing Society (Sonapesca). “The new regulation marks a historic milestone for artisanal fishing, facilitating the completion of the formalization process initiated by many boat owners seven years ago. We now urge the relevant authorities to expedite the process, and invite registered boat owners to submit their applications for final fishing permits promptly.”

Peru's mahimahi fishery generates more than 40 percent of the global supply by volume. Jumbo flying squid is the world's largest invertebrate fishery, and Peru's fishery comprises nearly half of global landings. But these fisheries experienced uncontrolled fleet growth between 2000 and 2015 due to a



Peru last week issued a decree to enable fish-harvester cooperatives to legally register for its mahimahi and jumbo flying squid fisheries. Issue courtesy of Peru's Ministry of Production.

lack of research, management and political will paired with instability and weak governance, according to the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP).

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“In 2020, Supreme Decree No. 015-2020-PRODUCE mandated the issuance of definitive fishing permits to boat owners involved in cooperative formalization,” said Piero Rojas, legal consultant at SFP. “However, the procedure was not established in the legal framework. But through advocacy, the procedure (decree) was enacted now providing a clear path to obtain the permits and conclude the formalization process.”

The resulting risks, including lost investments and potential labeling of products as illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by importing countries, created an alignment of the supply chain around closing access and granting legal fishing rights to the operating artisanal fleet.



How artisanal fisheries can challenge typical parameters of success

Artisanal fisheries provide nutrition to millions while treading lightly on ocean health and biodiversity, but support is often a struggle.



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“After nearly 10 years since the initiation of this endeavor, it is evident that, when different stakeholders come together, align their perspectives, and collaborate with end markets, significant and positive transformations can occur,” continued Rojas. “This progress serves as a foundation for the establishment of sustainable management practices in artisanal fisheries.”

Processing plants are organized under Capecal and the Peru Mahi Alliance, and boat owners have a national organization, Sonapescal. Some of these organizations are also members of Calamasur and Coremahi, representing fishery stakeholder interests at the regional level.

“Despite the economic and institutional crises in Peru, the fishing sector has come together to formalize vessels targeting one of the country’s most significant species for human consumption,” said Alfonso Miranda, president of Calamasur. “This collaborative effort will ensure a better future for artisanal fishing and preserve the health of the hydrobiological resource. Jumbo flying squid processors demonstrate the importance of advancing sustainability and obtaining internationally recognized certifications.”

In 2021, with support from SFP and Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental, the Ministry of Production launched pescaformal.pe (<http://pescaformal.pe>), a transparency portal providing training material and expert advice to boat owners and the ability for buyers to verify if vessels are in the process of getting fishing licenses.

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