

Value Rescue of Small-Scale Fisheries in Mexico by SmartFish Rescate de Valor AC



SmartFish’s Value Rescue Model (VRM) is an innovative and collaborative process that works across the seafood value chain to link small-scale fisher cooperatives that adopt or maintain sustainable fishing practices to better-paying markets. By improving quality, processing locally and differentiating their products, fisher groups are able to gain access to buyers that value sustainability and offer better purchase conditions. Over 4 years, SmartFish has achieved “proof-of-concept” of the VRM to increase the access of artisanal fishers to sustainable marine resources and markets (SDG 14.B). With UNDP OIC funding, the project will greatly accelerate the piloting, scaling, and replication of the VRM by a 150% increase in sustainable seafood production and engaged cooperatives, and a 20% increase in earned prices in 24 months. The training of over 300 fishers, establishing 2 solar power ice-makers for processing, and the inclusion of the cooperatives’ Confederation in the project are all innovations for this fisheries community.

The project started in July 2022 and is planning to be completed by end of June 2024.

Current status and achievements

- Signed subcontracts and workplans with two local organizations (CEDO, FOCN) for the implementation of the Value Rescue Model (VRM) in fisheries in Sonora and Oaxaca
- Developed report on the VRM guidebook and its formats and working documents.
- Signed subcontract with the fisheries cooperatives organization (CONMECOOP) to select the cooperatives to implement the VRM.
- Developed with the support of CONMECOOP the criteria for selecting cooperatives and list of possible candidates
- Signed subcontract with local Social expert to develop the methodology and workplan for analysis of gendered impact of VRM.
- Selected 2 sites to construct the 2 solar-powered Ice makers and signed contract with technical specifications for the required solar power system.

Target outputs and outcomes by end of project

- By end of 2023, the number of small-scale fisher cooperatives implementing the Value Rescue Model will increase from 6 to 15 cooperatives
- The annual volume of high-quality seafood sold by small-scale fisheries applying the Value Rescue Model increases from 24.5 tons in 2021 to 60 tons in 2024.
- Two local organizations have developed capacities to replicate the VRM in Mexico.
- Prepare a document with strategies and processes to replicate and scale up the VRM to 1,000 cooperatives (30% of total cooperatives in Mexico) by 2034.
- 15 cooperatives improve their economic performance and capacities
- Nine cooperatives maintain or improve their environmental fishery(ies) measures as measured by compliance with a minimum score of B on FisheryProgress.org
- Foster local economic development by installing processing capacities (infrastructure, equipment and training) in four coastal communities and creating 36 new jobs in seafood processing.



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The project will have significant positive impacts on the fisheries communities. It will increase fisher income by at least 20%, create jobs in processing for women in local communities and improve the management of the fisheries. The success of this phase will prepare SmartFish and the fisher cooperatives to expand in Mexico to contribute to SDG 14.4 and transfer the model to other geographic areas. OIC support is creating the capacities in other organizations to replicate the value rescue model (VRM) after the end of the project. The sustainability strategy for the long-term adoption of the innovation by the cooperatives is an integral part of the VRM design. The services are designed to be fully adopted by the fishers without ongoing philanthropic support. During the appropriation stage of the collaboration, the fishers, cooperative leadership team and plant personnel continue to implement best practices with fading support from the NGO.