Southern North Sea Crab and Lobster Fishery Improvement Project (FIP)

Project Proposal




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This proposal has been produced by Eastern IFCA with the view that the proposed FIP will be adopted, developed, and taken forward by industry members.

Background

The Marine Conservation Society's (MCS) Good Fish Guide rating for Southern North Sea (SNS) Edible crab (*Cancer pagurus*) has recently been downgraded from a *three* to a *four*. A rating of *four* states that the 'stock should not be considered sustainable, and the fish is likely to have significant environmental issues associated with its production'[1]. The rating has been reached following concerns for fishing pressure, stock status and a lack of management and has resulted in significant market impact on the crab fishery in the Eastern IFCA district.

The need for sustainability measures for the crab and lobster fisheries has been recognised and discussed with industry for some time; the East Anglia lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) stock also has a MCS rating of *four*. Following discussions with several industry members who have been affected by the change in rating it has been determined that the most appropriate way forward is to undertake a Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP) to identify and address sustainability concerns, work towards a more sustainable stock and improve the MCS ratings.

What is a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP)?

The conservation alliance for seafood solutions defines a FIP as a 'multi-stakeholder effort to address environmental challenges in a fishery' which 'harnesses the power of the private sector to incentivise positive changes towards sustainability' (CASS, 2019). FIP's are being widely adopted by seafood supply chains as a constructive approach to engaging fisheries that are not yet sustainably managed and once implemented can allow buyers to continue sourcing while improvements are underway.

To be viewed as a 'credible' FIP there are several minimum requirements that must be met by the project (CASS, 2019; FisheryProgress, 2020):

- Active participation by companies in the supply chain
- Participants must commit to financially invest (directly or in kind) and make improvements to the fishery
- The near-term scope of the project and a specific set of timebound objectives must be specified and based on an initial assessment of the fishery's challenges
- Must develop and implement a workplan designed to address the environmental challenges and achieve the projects objectives and with an associated budget and deadlines
- Must regularly track and report progress on the Fishery Progress website: https://fisheryprogress.org/

[1] https://www.mcsuk.org/goodfishguide/fish/521 [Accessed 24/09/2020]

FIP's are, therefore, industry led projects which require participation from stakeholders across the supply chain and geographically across the whole stock unit of concern. In this case, encompassing those involved in the crab and lobster fisheries across the whole of the SNS stock.

Successful FIPs can make an important contribution to improving overall fisheries health and in promoting sustainable seafood. To achieve this and ensure maximum benefit for industry the FIP will be transparent and clearly demonstrate improvement in fishery performance and sustainability through a robust assessment and reporting process. Further guidance on FIP's can be found on *fisheryprogress.org*.

Scope

Eastern IFCA proposes that an industry led Basic FIP is undertaken (and posted on *fisheryprogress.org*) for the UK Edible crab and Lobster pot fisheries in the Southern North Sea based on the following stock units:

- Southern North Sea crab fishery assessment unit
- East Anglia lobster fishery assessment unit

Aims and Objectives

The overarching **aim** of the FIP would be to:

Improve the sustainability of the SNS crab and lobster fisheries, and the MCS Good Fish Guide rating, by addressing its environmental challenges and improving performance of the fishery against the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Fisheries Standard.

The MSC fisheries standard provides a framework for measuring the performance of fisheries through the evaluation of indicators across the following three principle areas:

- Sustainable fish stocks
- Minimising environmental impact
- Effective fisheries management

Improvement in fishery performance will be evidenced by a positive colour change indicating an improvement in score (i.e. from red to amber or amber to green) in **at least** one of the MSC indicators across any of these three principle areas. This will be achieved by following the four-stage process of a credible and recognised FIP (CASS, 2019) (Appendix 1):

1) **Development:** Completion of a needs assessment[2] to identify environmental and sustainability challenges and identification of, and engagement with, relevant stakeholders

2) **Launch:** Confirmation of participants and development of an action plan for improvement

3) **Implementation:** Implantation of workplan actions, and tracking and reporting on progress using *fisheryprogress.org.*

4) **Improvements:** Document improvements in fishing practices or management and improvements to the environment

A needs assessment (part of Stage 1 of this process) has been completed by Eastern IFCA using the Oceans Seafood and Markets Initiative (OSMI) rapid assessment tool[3] and identifies which indicators have challenges that require addressing to improve fishery performance (EIFCA, 2020) (Appendix 2). After consideration of the outcome of this assessment and the recommendations made it is proposed that the FIP focuses on addressing the challenges associated with the indicators detailed in Table 1 through the following set of **objectives**:

1) Develop and implement Harvest Control Rules at stock level that allow an adaptive management response to stock status, local conditions, and where appropriate, aligned across relevant management authorities.

2) Develop and implement mechanisms by which higher resolution fishing activity data can be obtained and is comparable across whole of the Southern North Sea potting fleet

3) Map the extent of vulnerable rugged chalk features found within the Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds MCZ.

4) Where required, develop appropriate management measures to protect vulnerable rugged chalk features.

5) Develop a Fishery Management Plan for the SNS crab and lobster fisheries which sets out specific near and long-term sustainability objectives and a fisheries management system and focuses on a joint approach across management authorities.

[2] A needs assessment should include recommended strategies for addressing the fishery's challenges to improve its performance against the MSC standard and/or provide rationale for why all indicators were not included (e.g. lack of available data, financial resources, management cooperation). If it does not, then the FIP must also submit a scoping document to provide this information.

[3] Template and methodology available from: https://fisheryprogress.org/resources/launching-fip [Accessed 24/09/2020].

These objectives have the capacity to address some of the challenges identified within the SNS crab and lobster fisheries (Table 1) and will work towards achieving the overarching aim for the FIP outlined above.

The FIP will be a long-term project spanning over a 5-year period. Appendix 1 details a proposed project outline which identifies the key phases of the project and the current progress.

Table 1: Proposed MSC indicators to be addressed by the FIP. Colours indicate needs assessments score (Red: High risk (<60), Amber: Medium risk (60-79))**.**

MSC Principle area indicators		
1. Sustainable fish stocks	**2. Minimising environmental impact**	**3. Effective fisheries management**
1.2.2. Management: Harvest control rules	2.4.3. Habitats: Information	3.1.2. Government & Policy: Consultation, roles and responsibilities
1.2.3. Management: Information and Monitoring	2.4.1. Habitats: Outcome	3.2.1. Fishery specific management system: Fishery-specific objectives
	2.4.2. Habitats: Management	3.2.3. Fishery specific management system: Compliance and Enforcement

Stakeholder Engagement and Participation

Credible FIP's must include active participation[4] by at least one company in the supply chain. To ensure stakeholder participation across the supply chain, Eastern IFCA propose that a FIP Working Group is developed. This group will comprise of FIP participants and other stakeholders active in the SNS crab and lobster fisheries and/or interested in developing and promoting sustainable commercial fisheries, responsible for decision-making processes and the development of the FIP. Stakeholders should include but are not limited to, fishing industry representatives, supply chain members, retailers, government bodies, fishery managers and fishing associations. Appendix 3 details a list of potential/suggested participants or stakeholders.

Representation from fishing industry can often be found through Producer Organisations (PO's), however, for the SNS crab and lobster fisheries PO's are not appropriate as they do not represent the local potting fleets. Instead, it is proposed that representatives from local working groups or associations will sit on the FIP working group to ensure representation across the large geographical scope of the project. Where such local working groups or associations do not already exist, they will need to be created.

[4] In this context, participation means contributing financial or in-kind support to the project and/or implementing the workplan.

Budget and Funding

Budgets and funding sources have not been considered at this stage. Costs that need to be considered include:

- Consultancy support
- Travel and expenses
- Working group meetings and workshops
- Project management and staff time
- Production of action plans, annual reviews
- Research costs
- Actions and contingency

Potential funding sources include:

- Seafish
- Maritime and Fisheries Fund (MFF)
- Supply chain funding
- Resources legacy fund

Next steps

- Identify costs and source funding for project
- Identify FIP participants and develop FIP working group
- Identify a co-ordinator to take the project forward
- Development of an action plan

References

CASS, 2019. Guidelines for supporting Fishery Improvement Projects. Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions.

FisheryProgress, 2020. FIP Review Guidelines. Available at: https://fisheryprogress.org/sites/default/files/document_files/FisheryProgress%20org%20Review%20Guidelines%202020%20-%20FINAL.pdf [Accessed 2nd October 2020]

EIFCA, 2020. Southern North Sea Crab and Lobster Fisheries Improvement Project Needs Assessment. Eastern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority.

Appendix 1: Proposed project outline

Project tasks	Task outline	Status
Phase 0: FIP Identification		
1	Assess where we already are against the basic FIP requirements and identify broad scope of project.	**Complete**
2	Meet with industry to discuss leadership of the FIP and conduct a supply chain analysis to understand who else is involved in the fishery and what market leverage exists.	**Ongoing**
Phase 1: FIP Development		
3	Complete a needs assessment - must cover at least one indicator in all three principle areas of MSC standard to determine environmental challenges and improvements needed in the fishery. If possible, include all MSC indicators and consider conducting an MSC pre-assessment if plan to transition to a comprehensive FIP in the future. This must be made public.	**Complete**
4	If needed complete a scoping document[5]. This must be made public.	**NA – all indicators assessed in Needs Assessment**
5	Stakeholder engagement and mapping - identify parties most relevant to the FIP and determine who needs to become a participant in the FIP.	**Ongoing**
Phase 2: FIP launch (recognised as a FIP)		
6	Confirmation of project participants - A memorandum of understanding or list of fishery improvement project participants is posted publicly.	**Not started**
7	Participant meeting - The fishery improvement project participants meet in person to discuss the assessment and determine a course of action.	

[5] The needs assessment should include recommended strategies for addressing the fishery's challenges to improve its performance against the MSC standard and/or provide rationale for why all indicators were not included (e.g. lack of available data, financial resources, management cooperation). If it does not, then the FIP must submit a scoping document to provide this information.

8	Development of workplan - based on the assessment, scoping document, and participant input. Details activities/actions that will help correct the deficiencies necessary to achieve its objectives. Must include: objectives, list of actions, responsible parties, timeframes, metrics and key performance indicators and an associated budget.	
Phase 3: FIP implementation		
9	Implement actions/tasks in the workplan and conduct consistent engagement with regulators on activities.	**Not started**
10	Track and publicly report progress on implementing work plans every 6 months. Update indicator scores and provide supporting evidence for changes every 6 months on *Fishery.Progress*. If milestones have been missed these should be reflected in the workplan and deadlines adjusted.	
Phase 4: Improvements in fishing practices or fishery management		
11	Document any demonstrated improvements based on implementation of the workplan. These include improvements in policy, management or modifications in fishing practices and increases in scores for MSC performance indicators focused on management or information.	**Not started**
Phase 5: Improvements on the water		
12	Document any demonstrated improvements on the water. Increases in scores for MSC performance indicators focused on outcomes and verifiable change, such as reduction in fishing mortality, an increase in biomass of the target stock, a reduction in habitat impact.	**Not started**

Appendix 2: Summary of Needs Assessment scores

Score: Red = High risk (<60); Amber = Medium risk (60-79); Green = Low risk (80+)

Principle	Component	PI #	Performance Indicator	Score
1. **Sustainable fish stocks**	Outcome	1.1.1	Stock status	
		1.1.2	Stock rebuilding	
	Management	1.2.1	Harvest Strategy	
		1.2.2	Harvest control rules	
		1.2.3	Information and monitoring	
		1.2.4	Assessment of stock status	
2. Minimising environmental impact	Other species	2.2.3	Information	
		2.2.1	Outcome	
		2.2.2	Management	
	ETP species	2.3.3	Information	
		2.3.1	Outcome	
		2.3.2	Management	
	Habitats	2.4.3	Information	
		2.4.1	Outcome	
		2.4.2	Management	
	Ecosystem	2.5.3	Information	
		2.5.1	Outcome	
		2.5.2	Management	
3. Effective fisheries management	Governance & policy	3.1.1	Legal and customary framework	
		3.1.2	Consultation, roles and responsibilities	
		3.1.3	Long term objectives	
	Fishery specific management system	3.2.1	Fishery-specific objectives	
		3.2.2	Decision-making processes	
		3.2.3	Compliance and enforcement	
		3.2.4	Management performance evaluation	

Appendix 4: Potential participants/ interested stakeholders

- Big Prawn
- CEFAS
- Coles of Kings Lynn
- Defra
- Eastern IFCA
- Jonas Seafoods
- Kent and Essex IFCA
- Local Advisory Groups[6]/working groups/associations
- Marine Conservation Society
- Marrfish
- MMO
- Morrison's
- Natural England
- NUTFA (New Under Ten Fisherman's Association)
- North Eastern IFCA
- Scientific expertise/Universities/Academics
- Seafish
- Shellfish association of Great Britain
- SIAG/Crab management group
- Waitrose

[6] Fishermen and industry members representing different ports/locations and business models across the district.