

Rift between Papua New Guinea and Pacific threatens the future of regional tuna MSC certification

The industry group representing tuna canning and processing companies in Papua New Guinea is seeking its own Marine Stewardship Council certification for the nation's skipjack and yellowfin fisheries, threatening a split between Papua New Guinea and the other eight island-nations in the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, and Pacific – which was founded to market the region's tuna internationally.

On 30 August 2018, Papua New Guinea's tuna industry – organized under the banner of the Fishing Industry Association of Papua New Guinea (FIA) – signed a memorandum of understanding with the country's National Fisheries Authority to pursue its own MSC certification. The goal of the MoU is to pursue MSC certification of the country's purse seine fleet fishing skipjack and yellowfin tuna on anchored and drifting fads and free schools in both the country's exclusive economic zone and archipelagic waters. The FIA formally contracted with SCS Global Services on 12 September, 2018, to begin that process, according to a statement the FIA sent to SeafoodSource.

“The immediate benefits to PNG in pursuing the MSC certification includes improving the robustness of the PNG's national fisheries management and governance framework; opening new markets for PNG-made products, which will result in expansion of the domestic tuna industry production base thereby effecting increased employment and increase foreign exchange receipts; [and] promot[ing] a global image for PNG as ‘clean, green, sustainable,’ while adding value to PNG as a country that promotes a well-managed fishery resource,” FIA Executive Officer Jonathan Manieva told SeafoodSource.

“For FIA, it is very important to go for a full responsible management of the entire fishery,” he said.

Once MSC certification is achieved for the country's tuna fisheries, the MoU signed between the FIA and Papua New Guinea's National Fishery Authority calls for the FIA to subsequently pursue MSC certification for the country's other major fisheries, including its prawn, lobster, crab, and sea cucumber fisheries, according to Manieva.

In a statement provided by FIA and attributed to Norman Barnabas, the First Secretary of Papua New Guinea's Office of the Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Barnabas said the FIA has full government backing of its efforts.

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