



The Blue Swimming Crab Bulletin No.1

January to June 2014

Welcome to the Seafood Exporters' Association of Sri Lanka's (SEASL) first *Blue Swimming Crab Bulletin*. This edition explains the progress the SEASL has made to develop and implement activities to improve the Sri Lankan blue swimming crab (SLBSC) fishery in the first half of 2014; the results of the first independent assessment of the fishery and a summary of initial suggestions proposed by fishermen's leaders, seafood companies and government agencies to improve the fishery.

Inaugural SLBSC FIP Steering Committee Meeting:

The first meeting of the SLBSC Steering Committee was held at the Conference Hall of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR) in Colombo on 7th March 2014. The meeting was presided over by the Director General DFAR, Mr. Nimal Hettiarachchi, and attended by the presidents of fishing community organisations from Kalpitiya, Mannar, Kilinochchi and Jaffna. Seafood companies were represented by Taprobane Seafood Pvt Ltd. Officers of the DFAR's Fisheries Management and Quality Control Divisions, as well as the National Aquatic Resource Research and Development Agency's (NARA) Marine Biological Resources Division also took part in the meeting.



The SEASL / NFICC partnership continues: In March the National Fisheries Institute Crab Council (NFICC) approved the first year budget of SEASL's SLBSC three year FIP at its annual general meeting in Washington. The NFI CC has generously agreed to provide core funding to the SEASL to develop the FIP and implement activities to improve the fishery in 2014 – 2015. Key activities that will be implemented using NFI CC funds include a study of the population biology of BSC (NARA); a SPR based stock assessment (DFAR and fishing communities) in Mannar and performance monitoring and evaluation of the FIP.

Assistance to fishing communities from ILO UN's LEED Project: In May, the International Labour Organisation of the United Nation's (ILO UN) Local Empowerment through Economic Development (LEED) project offered to support fishing communities' involvement in the FIP. The LEED project, funded by AusAID's ACRP3, will provide financial and technical assistance the Kilinochchi Fishermen's Cooperative Society Union to assess crab fishing gear selectivity and to facilitate northern fishing communities' participation in the FIP.

Assistance from IOM's Stability Support Programme: In June, the International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) offered to support the FIP, under IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AusAID / DIBP). Financial and technical assistance will be provided by IOM to assist the DFAR and fishing communities in Kalpitiya to undertake an assessment of the SLBSC stock(s).

The SLBSC FIP adopts SPR for Stock Assessment: At the end of June, with the assistance of Jeremy Crawford, NFI CC's Asian Coordinator, the SEASL contacted Dr. Jeremy [Prince](#), Associate Professor at Murdoch University, Western Australia, to learn more about length based spawning potential ratio (LB SPR) and the possibility of using this technique to assess SLBSC stocks(s).

MSC based SLBSC Fishery Assessment

An independent assessment of the SLBSC fishery, co-financed by the NFI CC, was conducted by the SEASL in 2012. The assessment was undertaken in accordance with the principles, criteria and principal indicators for sustainable fisheries, proposed by the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) Fishery Assessment Methodology. The assessment suggests that the SLBSC fishery would currently fail all three of MSC's core principles (see below). The lack of data and information describing the biological status and ecological impact of the fishery, as well as the absence of fishery specific management strategies and regulations are the main reasons why the fishery's failed to 24 of MSC's 31 principal indicators.

The assessment highlights the key areas that need to be addressed by the FIP, to move the fishery towards sustainable exploitation of the SLBSC resource.

MSC Principles	<60	60-79	≥80	Score
P1 Biological Status	7	0	0	0.0
P2 Ecological Impact	13	2	0	0.07
P3 Fishery Management	4	5	0	0.28
Overall Score	24	7	0	0.11

The FIP in Brief: The SLBSC FIP is a collaborative initiative by northern and north western fishing communities, the SEASL and the Sri Lankan authorities and agencies responsible for fishery management (see right). The immediate objectives of the SLBSC FIP are to understand and improve the biological status of the stock; to reduce the ecological impact of the fishery; to strengthen and encourage consultative co-management of the resource; to encourage economic equity between producers and processors and to encourage social equity between fishing communities. The long term goal of the SLBSC FIP is to maximise both production and direct and indirect income from the fishery, without undermining the future viability of the crab stock(s) or causing damage to the marine environment.

Suggestions to Improve the SLBSC Fishery

- ✓ increase information & knowledge about the fishery
- ✓ enforce regulations that prohibits monofilament nets
- ✓ introduce a regulation for the SLBSC fishery
- ✓ stop Indian trawlers from fishing in Sri Lankan waters
- ✓ enforce the regulation that prohibits trawling by Sri Lankan fishermen
- ✓ ensure that the Steering Committee represents the participants in the fishery .
- ✓ increase information & knowledge about the social & economic status of the fishery.
- ✓ encourage & promote producer organisation in marketing & processing
- ✓ introduce a minimum mesh size for the fishery
- ✓ explore alternative fishing gears that can be adapted for use by Sri Lankan trawlers
- ✓ reduce the number of small crabs caught by fishermen / bought & processed by seafood companies
- ✓ reduce the impact of catching berried females

