



# Guidelines for Developing Jurisdictional Initiatives for the Seafood Sector: Overview

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This guidance document will be updated as additional information, knowledge, and implementation experience lead to learnings in the field.

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## Glossary

**Blended finance:** Blended finance can be broadly defined as the combination of public, concessional, official development assistance with private or public resources, generally with the aim of mobilizing or leveraging development finance from other actors (Oxfam 2017).

**Contextual analysis:** Identifies key systemic environmental and socio-economic challenges in the seafood production system of the jurisdictional initiative site and against which improvements and performance claims will be measured, as well as providing insights into whether key enabling conditions are in place, or could be created, to support the successful co-design of the jurisdictional initiative. This analysis is completed during the co-design phase.

**Credible:** Having rigor and a strong likelihood of success; worthy of belief and confidence.

**Market partners:** Seafood businesses, including end buyers, mid-supply chain suppliers, and local exporters.

**Marine protected area:** Any area of intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, and historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment (WCPA 1999).

**Monitoring:** An ongoing function that uses the systematic collection of data on specific indicators to assess and document the extent to which actions, progress, performance, and compliance are being carried out or achieved.

**Scoping assessment:** An assessment conducted in the Scoping phase to evaluate whether the key enabling conditions are in place, or could be created, to support the successful co-design of a jurisdictional initiative.

**Seascape:** Large, multiple-use marine area, defined scientifically and strategically, in which government authorities, private organizations, and other stakeholders cooperate to conserve the diversity and abundance of marine life and promote human well-being (Murphy, S. E. et al. 2021).

**Site:** The specific location/area of the jurisdictional initiative.

**Triple bottom line:** Improvement of a fishery/farm's environmental, social, and economic performance.

**Verification:** An assessment and validation of compliance, performance, and/or actions relative to a stated commitment, standard, or target. It utilizes monitoring data and other information sources as input to the verification process.

## List of Acronyms

AIP: aquaculture improvement project  
ASC: Aquaculture Stewardship Council  
BAP: Best Aquaculture Practices  
CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity  
CI: Conservation International  
CoC: chain of custody  
CRI: certification, ratings, and improvement  
EAA: ecosystem approach to aquaculture  
EAF: ecosystem approach to fisheries  
EBM: ecosystem-based management  
EEZ: exclusive economic zone  
EFT: ecological fiscal transfer  
ETP: endangered, threatened, and protected  
FAD: fish aggregating device  
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization  
FFIA: Fiji Fishing Industry Association  
FIP: fishery improvement project  
FISH: Fairness, Integrity, Safety, and Health  
FISHE: Framework for Integrated Stock and Habitat Evaluation  
FMP: fishery management plan  
FPI: fishery performance indicator  
GDP: gross domestic product  
GDST: Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability  
GTA: Global Tuna Alliance  
IMT: Implementation Monitoring Tool  
IPs: Indigenous peoples  
IUCN: International Union for the Conservation of Nature  
IUU: illegal, unreported, and unregulated  
JA: jurisdictional approach  
JI: jurisdictional initiative  
KDE: key data element  
KPI: key performance indicator  
MPA: marine protected area  
MSC: Marine Stewardship Council  
MSP: marine spatial planning  
MSP: multistakeholder process  
MOU: Memorandum of Understanding  
NGO: nongovernmental organization  
PNA: Parties to the Nauru Agreement  
RAT: rapid assessment tool  
RFMO: regional fishery management organization  
SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals



SIDS: Small Island Developing States  
SRA: Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector  
UN: United Nations  
UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea  
VDS: vessel day scheme  
WCPA: World Commission on Protected Areas  
WCPO: Western Central Pacific Ocean  
WWF: World Wildlife Fund/Worldwide Fund for Nature

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## About the Guidance Document

These guidelines were developed by Conservation International (CI) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in consultation with civil society organizations and seafood supply chain members. In the following pages, we present what a jurisdictional initiative for the seafood sector entails, guidance for when and how to develop such an initiative, and best practices to help producers, local communities, governments, the private sector, and civil society establish credible jurisdictional initiatives to address systemic drivers of decline of global biodiversity and increase the resilience of marine and freshwater ecosystems. The goal of this document is to provide useful guidance to build an approach that is more likely to address systemic and policy-level changes that improve social and environmental conditions; however, some jurisdictional initiatives may not require the implementation of all elements outlined in this guide. **The application of these initiatives is still nascent, especially in the seafood sector. The community will learn as we further develop jurisdictional initiatives. As such, this document provides early guidance and will be updated as experience in the field warrants.**

## Executive Summary

Over the past 25 years, seafood certification, ratings, and improvement (CRI) efforts have been effective at bringing awareness to environmental and social issues in seafood production (i.e., wild-capture fisheries and aquaculture) and improving their sustainability performance in many parts of the world. While CRI approaches are impactful and critical to continue, their current framework of working with individual fisheries or farms is not designed to achieve the scale of improvement needed in global seafood production, nor do they effectively engage many of the world's small-scale fisheries and farms and local communities who may not be incentivized by export market demand or cannot afford the costs associated with certification. In addition, these market-focused interventions alone are proving insufficient to fully address critical systemic issues that can be barriers to long-term environmental sustainability and social responsibility, such as cumulative environmental impacts, labor rights, climate change impacts, and biodiversity loss, which often can only be achieved through policy changes. Therefore, there is an opportunity for new approaches that aim to address systemic barriers at scale while engaging seafood sector stakeholders broadly in improvement efforts, as complementary to CRI approaches.

Frameworks for jurisdictional initiatives (JIs) have been developed by the nongovernmental organization (NGO) community in recent years to drive improvements at scale for environmental challenges in terrestrial commodities such as soy, palm oil, and timber (often called jurisdictional approaches (JAs)). These initiatives have provided added value to credible certification efforts by addressing not only environmental but also additional social and economic barriers to sustainability at a jurisdictional level or within the boundaries of a management system. Noting the successes in applying JAs to terrestrial commodities, recent efforts have focused on evaluating the applicability of these approaches to seafood commodities.

The JI concept is still nascent for fisheries and aquaculture, and there is a need for greater clarity around the key elements of successful JIs for seafood. Guidance for practitioners or companies is also needed to clarify what makes these initiatives for fisheries and aquaculture impactful and credible, and how to measure progress. For JIs to become more mainstream, it is critical to define what a credible JI for seafood should encompass to help ensure the greatest impact on aquatic ecosystem health and human well-being. This guide aims to provide some clarity on the rationale and importance, the process and key elements, and the engagement of key stakeholders for the establishment of a robust seafood JI.

**We define seafood JIs as place-based initiatives in key seafood commodity-producing regions that utilize policy and market-based approaches to drive holistic improvements in seafood production at relevant ecological and political scales (Kittinger et al. 2021). JIs aim to achieve positive environmental, social, and economic outcomes in seafood production, such as achieving environmentally sustainable harvesting practices, promoting equity and safe and decent working conditions, and enhancing the economic profitability of those involved. Through the application of ecosystem-based management (EBM), JIs also seek to**

**manage, restore, and/or protect critical habitats, threatened species, and biodiversity by addressing cumulative impacts, as well as to increase ecosystem and climate resilience. The success of JIs relies on a robust and inclusive multistakeholder dialogue and collaboration to align goals and incentives among government, market, and producer actors, and with local communities and Indigenous peoples (IPs).**

These initiatives are designed to be long-term engagements that drive systemic changes at ecologically and politically relevant scales, and rely on long-term efforts such as policy reform, public-private partnerships, and trust-based community engagement. As such, JIs can be particularly effective at driving alignment and collective action by government, IPs, local communities, the private sector, and civil society groups toward a shared vision and agenda for seafood production across a seascape. Locally driven and locally defined through a multistakeholder forum, JIs provide an opportunity to improve inclusivity and democratize planning and management. This allows for engagement of smallholders who might not participate in certification due to cost and capacity constraints.

We recommend developing a JI if stakeholders desire to increase the resilience of the ecosystem or tackle more systemic social and environmental drivers rather than focusing solely on the sustainability of a single fishery, farm/group of related farms, or supply chain. This would mean tackling issues that are not often or not fully addressed in established CRI efforts, such as ecosystem-level biodiversity, climate resilience, regional social issues (such as lack of decent work or equity), and industry/cross-industry cumulative impacts. Seafood JIs are complementary to CRI efforts and may occur before or after application of other mature and credible market-based tools, depending on political will and economic conditions. A JI could help address risks around the continued effectiveness of traditional CRI efforts, such as lack of government engagement at all levels.

Elements that help ensure success of a JI include setting the appropriate political and ecological scale, enabling legal frameworks, strong engagement and commitment from the government at relevant levels (e.g., national, regional, or local), strong commitment from other critical stakeholders (e.g., research institutions, local communities, producers, producer groups, and supply chain companies), a public reporting framework, traceability and transparency, and a viable pathway for financing the initiative.

JIs have the capacity to benefit many stakeholders throughout a region. Participation may benefit producers by addressing risk to their livelihoods (e.g., decline in fish populations and poor water quality), providing opportunity to organize into a more cohesive collective, promoting dialogue to resolve disputes and reach agreements regarding management of resources, helping ensure safe and decent work and community well-being, reducing reputational risks by demonstrating industry-wide progress in an ecosystem, obtaining equitable distribution of benefits, and obtaining a market incentive from suppliers and end buyers who are investing in these initiatives. The major benefits that these initiatives are meant to create for local communities and IPs are



platforms to engage and eventually secure improved socio-economic equity, continued dialogue with policy-makers and private actors (ensuring full and equitable participation and democratizing planning and management of resources), and potential access to financing through public-private partnerships. Governments can address risks from climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and unethical human rights and labor practices that threaten the long-term health of marine and aquatic resources, thereby increasing the stability of nationally important food products for domestic consumption or export. Governments can also meet their national and international commitments and increase their reputations as ones that manages their ocean and aquatic resources in ways that improve biodiversity, increase climate resilience, and protect the rights of fishers, farmers, and local communities. Similarly, suppliers and end-buyer partners can reduce potential local community risks, operation risks, and supply chain volatility. Participation in JIs can also help businesses deliver on their sustainability commitments, reduce leakage issues, and improve value-chain efficiency. When supported by robust monitoring and evaluation systems, JIs may also provide companies with a way to credibly claim positive impacts as part of larger-scale improvements.

All credible seafood JIs seeking to drive change need to have a strong monitoring framework in place, with metrics relevant to the jurisdiction that will enable stakeholders to assess progress against the initiative's targets and milestones. The most effective metrics will be tied directly to performance against environmental, social, and economic outcomes at the jurisdictional level. However, given that a JI can span 20 years, it is also recommended to include some pathway indicators that are not direct conservation outcomes but capture important initial steps believed to lead to measurable outcomes over time as well as process indicators that capture progress in JI development. The appropriate metrics for each specific initiative will depend on the local context but should tie to overall biodiversity, climate, social, and economic goals of the effort (e.g., fish stock biomass) and pathway goals focused on better management/policies and information to support effective implementation of those policies (e.g., precautionary management, effective enforcement).

There are a variety of claims that participants can utilize to communicate with internal and external stakeholders, including claims about process, objectives of the initiative, risk management, investment, actions being implemented, current performance status, and trends over time. To the extent possible, claims should have associated objective and measurable criteria so they can be verified. Stakeholders making claims should make the information publicly and easily accessible (e.g., on their website, in sustainability reports, or through public reporting by the JI itself). No single stakeholder group should make attribution claims (i.e., we are responsible for a specific performance outcome), as it is often difficult to show a direct cause-and-effect relationship, and it disregards the influence of others in achieving the outcomes. However, stakeholders can make claims about their specific contributions. It is important to note that seafood buyers and other stakeholders participating in a JI should not claim premature or augmented successes. These initiatives span a significant timeline, and associated claims should

appropriately reflect the improvement journey over time. In addition, claims made by seafood companies or by producers to obtain market access will require strong traceability systems in place to ensure the integrity of products across the supply chain and reduce the risk of greenwashing in some marketplaces.

All effective JIs will have a progress framework with impact outcomes and an action plan with time-bound targets and milestones, as well as a monitoring and reporting framework to monitor and report on processes followed (including processes to ensure inclusivity) and progress against the time-bound milestones and performance improvements within the jurisdiction. Effective JIs will also have adequate capacity to manage and analyze the data. ISEAL has developed best practice guidance for these frameworks that should be followed.

Credible seafood JIs must also have sound verification frameworks that can assess the validity of different aspects of the JI's progress. These include validation of structural outcomes, action claims, and performance claims. To drive credibility of JIs, it is important to manage the expectations of stakeholders about their inability to make *performance/outcome* claims for quite some time, given the long timeframe of JIs. Stakeholders will need to focus first on *structural claims*, which highlight the progress in establishing the structures and systems for an effective JI, and *action claims*, which relate directly to actions companies may take to support development and progress in a JI. Different levels of verification are required for each type of claim due to the nature of the respective claims. Verification of the performance data and of the monitoring process helps build trust in the quality and reliability of the claim. The degree and level of independence of verification needed will depend on the claims being made, the track record of the JI, the level of transparency of the data, and the trustworthiness of the data providers. ISEAL has also developed guidance for verification that should be followed.

Learnings from relatively early-stage JIs (primarily terrestrial) show the following:

- Geographic boundaries need to align with the scope of environmental degradation and decision-making authority, capacity, and local frameworks.
- A coordinating backbone organization is necessary.
- A strong common vision and multiple, balanced objectives matter.
- Strong community engagement and stakeholder participation are critical.
- Meaningful engagement with Indigenous populations and local communities is key.
- Government engagement is a key driver.
- Private-sector actors are crucial for success.
- Strong partnerships with producer cooperatives or associations can boost success.
- Robust, transparent, and collaborative multistakeholder development processes and decision-making platforms are needed.
- Technical partners are needed to support blended finance.
- Transparency and traceability are crucial for verification of market claims.

## Section 1. Jurisdictional Initiatives for the Seafood Sector

### 1.1 What is a Jurisdictional Initiative for the Seafood Sector?

#### Background

Aquatic ecosystems across the world are in peril. The collapse of key commercial fisheries within the past 50 years has made clear the precarious position of the world's fish stocks. Decades of overfishing and coastal habitat conversions for fish farming have taken a significant toll on the health of aquatic ecosystems, human livelihoods, and global food security, and demand for seafood continues to increase. Over one-third of the world's commercial fish stocks are overfished, and the global fishing fleet is two–three times larger than the oceans can sustainably support. Unregulated growth of aquaculture has, in many places, led to conversion of marine and terrestrial habitats, water quality degradation, and biodiversity loss. Approximately 600 million livelihoods rely on fishing, aquaculture, and related activities, and more than 4 billion people around the world rely on seafood as an important source of animal protein.

We have reached a point where we need to achieve conservation impact at scale. In 2009, Rockström et al. proposed an approach to global sustainability based on nine planetary boundaries within which humanity can operate safely. They noted the deterioration of one or more planetary boundaries may be damaging or potentially catastrophic, pushing the Earth beyond a “safe operating space.” A 2015 update (Steffen et al. 2015) on this planetary boundary concept showed that two of the core boundaries, climate change and biosphere integrity (including genetic diversity), have reached a high-risk point that may push the Earth into a new state.

The historical and current realities of inconsistent and inadequate regulation and enforcement across regions have led many actors to turn toward voluntary and market-based mechanisms to drive or achieve better environmental and social practices in seafood production. Certification and eco-labeling schemes (including the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)), emerged in the 1990s–2010 to harness the purchasing power of seafood businesses to incentivize fishers and aquaculture producers to improve their fishing and farming practices. Certifications are usually granted to a single related farm or fishery or group of related farms and fisheries and do not often cover the entire area of production or whole fisheries. An eco-certification label on a product indicates that it has been grown and harvested in a manner that meets the associated standard. Consumers and retailers who value responsibly produced seafood can preference seafood products with a certification eco-label, rewarding better performance, which in theory can rise over time.

Some conservation nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) also provide seafood ratings based on their own methodology that reviews the status and environmental impacts of fisheries and aquaculture (e.g., Seafood Watch, WWF seafood guides). These ratings are then shared with consumers through wallet guides and mobile apps and on menus and seafood counters.

Over the past decade, fishery improvement projects (FIPs) and aquaculture improvement projects (AIPs) have been developed to provide a credible improvement pathway for fisheries and farms (especially those in the supply chains of retail, food service, broad line, and multinational companies with sustainable seafood commitments) that cannot immediately meet the certification standards (e.g., MSC and ASC). Like certifications, these improvement projects are primarily implemented at individual fishery and farm levels.

Together, these certification, ratings, and improvement (CRI) efforts have been effective at bringing awareness to environmental and social issues in fisheries and aquaculture and moving the needle toward improved fishing and aquaculture practices in many parts of the world. Indeed, there are numerous examples of improved performance in fisheries and aquaculture farms, large and small, around the world due to engagement in CRI efforts that provide the basis for seafood company commitments and related improvement efforts for specific fisheries or farms, particularly those that contribute to international trade.

While CRI approaches are impactful and critical to continue, their current framework of working with individual fisheries or farms is not designed to achieve the scale of improvement needed in global seafood production, nor do they effectively engage many of the world's small-scale fisheries and farms who are not always incentivized by export market demand or cannot afford the costs associated with certification. In addition, these market-focused interventions alone are proving insufficient to address critical, systemic issues that can be barriers to long-term environmental sustainability and social responsibility of individual fisheries and aquaculture farms, such as cumulative environmental impacts, labor rights, climate change impacts, and biodiversity loss, which often can only be achieved through policy changes. This shortcoming is in part due to CRI efforts not often addressing the vital role that governments play in allocating, regulating, and managing the use of marine/freshwater resources (Buchanan et al. 2019). Therefore, there is an opportunity for new approaches that aim to address systemic barriers at scale while engaging seafood sector stakeholders broadly in improvement efforts, as complementary to CRI approaches.

## **Jurisdictional Initiatives for the Seafood Sector**

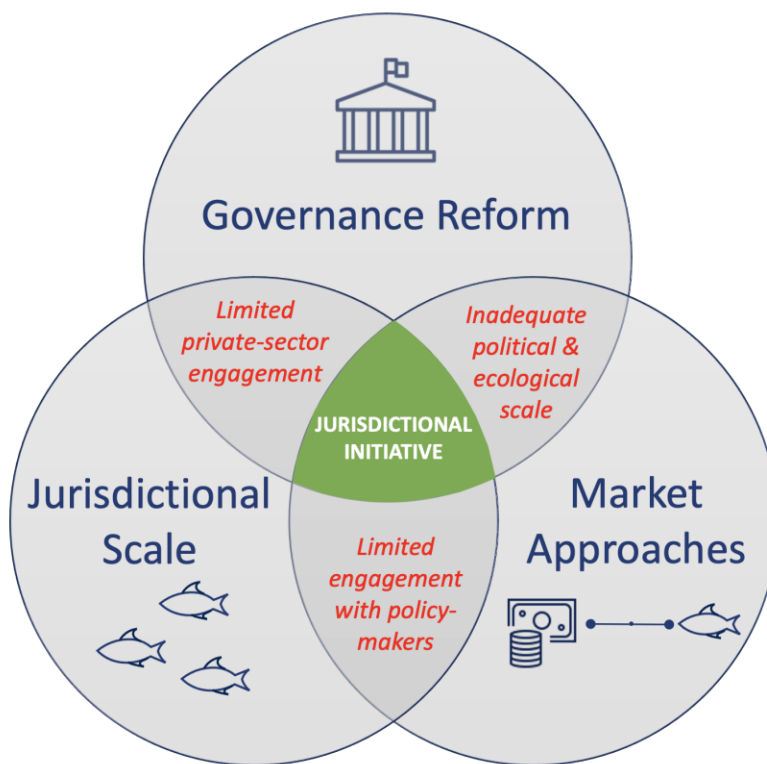
In recent years, new jurisdictional approach (JA) frameworks have been developed to drive improvements at scale for environmental challenges in terrestrial commodities such as soy, palm oil, and timber (FAO 2005, FAO 2010, Fishman et al. 2017, Boyd et al. 2018, CI 2018, Boshoven et al. 2021). JAs for terrestrial commodities have been defined as “an integrated landscape approach that aims to reconcile competing social, economic and environmental objectives through participation across stakeholders and sectors, implemented within governmental administrative boundaries, and with a form of government involvement” (CI 2018). These initiatives have restricted themselves to national and sub-national political jurisdictions and have provided added value to credible certification efforts by addressing not only environmental but also additional

social and economic barriers to sustainability at a jurisdictional level or within the boundaries of a management system. Noting the successes in applying JAs to terrestrial commodities, recent efforts have focused on evaluating the applicability of these approaches to seafood commodities.

Fisheries and aquaculture production raise new opportunities and challenges for the application of JIs. The mobile and transboundary nature of many wild fish species often confounds JIs from a fishery management perspective, as well as in terms of stakeholder behavior. In aquaculture, the interconnectivity of open (e.g., cages and pens) and semi-closed (e.g., ponds and raceways) production systems that rely on common water bodies creates the need for coordinated effluent and disease management, which can also influence stakeholder behavior and complicate JIs. Another key difference influencing the industry-level approach outlined in this document is linked to the realities of most seafood sectors and supply chains. In terrestrial landscapes with multiple commodities planted together (or in rotation), largely sold to a single buyer, and with readily available geospatial land-use monitoring tools, different models focused on multiple commodities in a region are possible.

**We define seafood jurisdictional initiatives (JIs) as place-based initiatives in key seafood commodity-producing regions that utilize policy and market-based approaches to drive holistic improvements in seafood production at relevant ecological and political scales (Kittinger et al. 2021; Figure 1). JIs aim to achieve positive environmental, social, and economic outcomes in seafood production, such as achieving environmentally sustainable harvesting practices, promoting equity and safe and decent working conditions, and enhancing the economic profitability of those involved. Through the application of ecosystem-based management (EBM), JIs also seek to manage, restore, and/or protect critical habitats, threatened species, and biodiversity by addressing cumulative impacts, as well as to increase ecosystem and climate resilience. The success of JIs relies on a robust and inclusive multistakeholder dialogue and collaboration to align goals and incentives among government, market, and producer actors, and with local communities and Indigenous peoples (IPs).**





**Figure 1.** Jurisdictional initiatives (JIs) simultaneously utilize governance reform and market-based approaches to drive holistic improvements in seafood production at a jurisdictional scale. By combining these approaches, JIs can deploy the considerable resources and innovation of the private sector and the regulatory authority of governments to drive seafood sustainability across entire production geographies.

Seafood JIs aim to initiate or accelerate more holistic policy-level approaches to private-sector seafood interventions across a whole region or jurisdiction. While these JIs may not be able to solve all ecosystem-level sustainability challenges on their own, by engaging with industry, government, local communities and IPs, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and within the context of the larger regional social and ecological realities, the JI process will begin to engage a wider set of necessary actors and contextualize for the industry those larger limits of the seascape. The reality is that success in achieving the ultimate outcomes and lasting systemic change may require patience, perseverance, and long-term financing.

These initiatives are designed to be long-term engagements that drive systemic changes at ecologically and politically relevant scales and rely on long-term efforts such as policy reform, public-private partnerships, and trust-based community engagement. As such, JIs can be particularly effective at driving alignment and collective action by government, IPs, local communities, the private sector, and civil society groups toward a shared vision and agenda for seafood production across a seascape.

JIs are not intended to be separate from existing government-led fisheries management frameworks for a particular geography and jurisdiction. JIs are instead seeking to address the

siloed way in which these policy efforts have oftentimes been implemented to date, with limited engagement by market and industry actors, resulting in slow adoption of best practices for seafood production. In Indonesia, for instance, the emergence of JIs was the result of a national recognition of the need to adopt a multistakeholder approach and the weaving together of multiple international initiatives to address deforestation, including the provision of financial and market-based incentives and strengthening Indigenous rights (Seymour et al. 2020).

Existing fisheries management and stakeholder consultation efforts that are being led by governments should similarly be incorporated within multistakeholder JIs' efforts to address system needs. In certain cases, these consultations may include broader jurisdictional ocean governance efforts, such as government commitments under the Global Biodiversity Framework and delivery of the 30x30 ocean protection agenda. If JI partners collectively agree to create new marine protected areas (MPAs) as part of the initiative, then a marine spatial planning (MSP) process should be undertaken to determine where and how to do so in a manner consistent with the objectives of the JI. The potential costs and benefits of new MPAs should be adequately assessed, and innovative mechanisms should be designed to alleviate potential losses incurred by JI participants, including by the seafood industry. The latter will help ensure that incentives among the pertinent public and private stakeholders are aligned, enabling collective action in securing ocean protection and holistic seafood production improvements at scale.

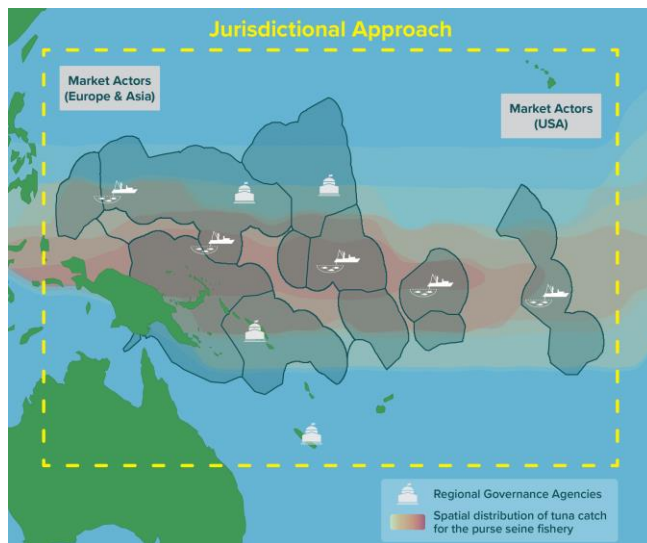
Given the central role envisioned for government in the design of a JI, a key barrier to long-term success is the inevitability of government turnover and the resulting change in policy priorities. Mechanisms should therefore be embedded in the initiative's design that insulate it from political shifts—for instance, developing a long-term financing strategy that provides sufficient resources for the long-term implementation of JIs or securing buy-in from leadership in the technical and regulatory agencies that are less susceptible to political shifts.

Producers, governments, and NGOs are accelerating efforts to develop and implement JIs to support seafood sustainability at scale (Box 1). Many of these initiatives are early iterations of terrestrial JA efforts.

## Box 1. Case Studies: Advancing seafood jurisdictional initiatives (JIs)

### 1.1 Fisheries:

One of the most notable examples of a JI for large-scale fisheries comes from the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) in the Western Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), wherein eight Pacific Islands' governments partnered to create a new tuna management jurisdiction and regime that extended across most of the area where the purse seine tuna fishery occurs (**policy-based approaches at a jurisdictional scale**). The PNA member countries subsequently obtained Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for the fishery and then developed joint ventures with private-sector partners to commercialize tuna coming from the new "verified sourcing area" (**market-based approaches at jurisdictional scale**). The latter efforts can be distinguished from traditional industry-led certifications, ratings, and improvement (CRI) efforts in a number of ways.



First, the creation of the PNA was **led by governments that had the jurisdictional authority to establish new policies, rules, and regulations. The latter governance mechanism was designed to achieve improved triple-bottom-line outcomes prioritized by the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) where the fishery occurs.** As a result, the new scheme established requirements that **all purse seine vessels fishing in the PNA area had to comply with**, such as restrictions to fishing in certain high seas pockets, seasonal bans on fish aggregating devices (FADs), and in-port transshipment requirements for monitoring, among others. Second, the **jurisdictional scale** of the PNA management area

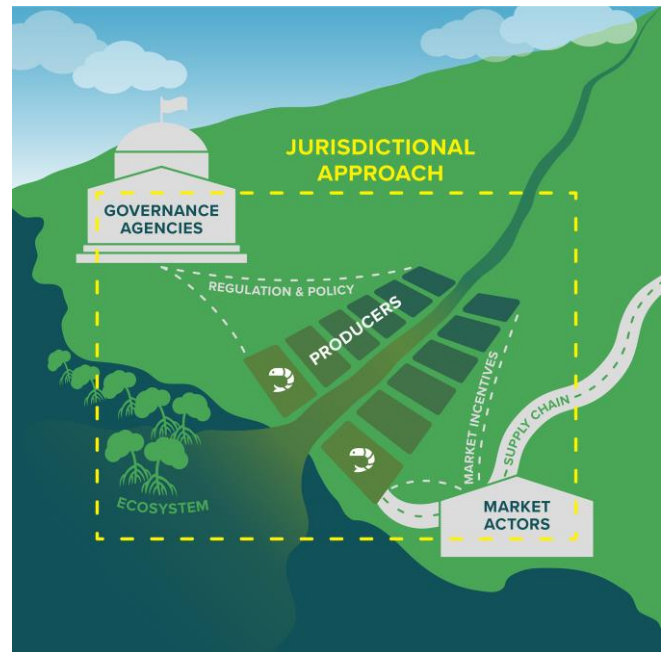
was designed to encompass most of the ecological distribution of skipjack tuna stocks, thereby ensuring that the regulatory requirements would apply to all fishing vessels operating in most of the area where fishing occurs. The latter is fundamentally different from many **industry-led CRI efforts, which are restricted to the vessels of participating companies**; as such, traditional CRI initiatives are susceptible to "free riding" by other fishery participants in the same areas, who are not engaged in CRI efforts, leading to leakage of benefits. **Industry-led CRI efforts can also be impaired by limited government participation and leadership**, which are needed to establish a regulatory framework that ensures ecosystem-based management across an entire production geography. Furthermore, **the scope of industry-led CRI objectives is oftentimes narrower**, focused on ensuring the environmental sustainability of a fishery rather than achieving triple-bottom-line outcomes. The PNA case study again illustrates how a broader set of policies can be implemented to **achieve socio-economic benefits beyond the scope of certifications**, such as through their catch retention requirement, ensuring that tuna catches that would otherwise be discarded at sea are instead landed or transshipped to meet local food security objectives.

While there remain challenges associated with management of the PNA fishery, including limitations in monitoring and enforcement that lead to violations of the agreement (Yeeting et al. 2018), the creation of the PNA scheme has nonetheless yielded undeniable environmental and socio-economic benefits for the purse seine fishery and for Pacific Island peoples. The stock status of these commercial tuna species in the WCPO, for instance, is one of the most sustainable on the planet (Brouwer et al. 2018, ISSF 2023). The revenues generated from the purse seine industry for the nine participating island nations have also

increased from US\$60 million in 2010 to close to US\$500 million in 2018 (PNA 2019). The financial in-flows, derived primarily from daily access fees levied on vessels who wish to fish PNA waters, provide a **long-term financing mechanism** to fund the regional JI scheme. The PNA management regime was also designed to enhance the **climate resilience** of member countries through the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) trading mechanism (Aqorau et al. 2018). The latter array of benefits illustrates the success of PNA members in integrating effective governance systems, together with market-based approaches within a politically and ecologically defined jurisdiction, to achieve holistic improvements (Kittinger et al. 2021).

### 1.2 Aquaculture:

A JI for shrimp aquaculture is currently being developed in Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia. The initiative focuses on enabling shrimp farms across the region to improve shrimp farm performance to match international environmental and social standards. Numerous aquaculture farms occupy multiple watersheds in the project region, resulting in these farms being ecologically connected through shared water resources and dependent on a range of ecosystem services. Disease outbreaks, pollution problems, and other unsustainable practices represent shared threats that require farmers to work together to reduce risks. A JI is currently underway in this area to incentivize the adoption of responsible practices through a zonal management approach, implemented collaboratively by producers, government, supply chain companies, universities, and nonprofit organizations (Kittinger et al. 2021).



The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2021) also highlights the example of Estero Real Delta in Nicaragua, a water body in which juvenile wild-caught shrimp harvesting and local farmed shrimp operations are engaged in holistic interventions around alternative livelihoods to improve economic and environmental outcomes of the farmed shrimp sector.

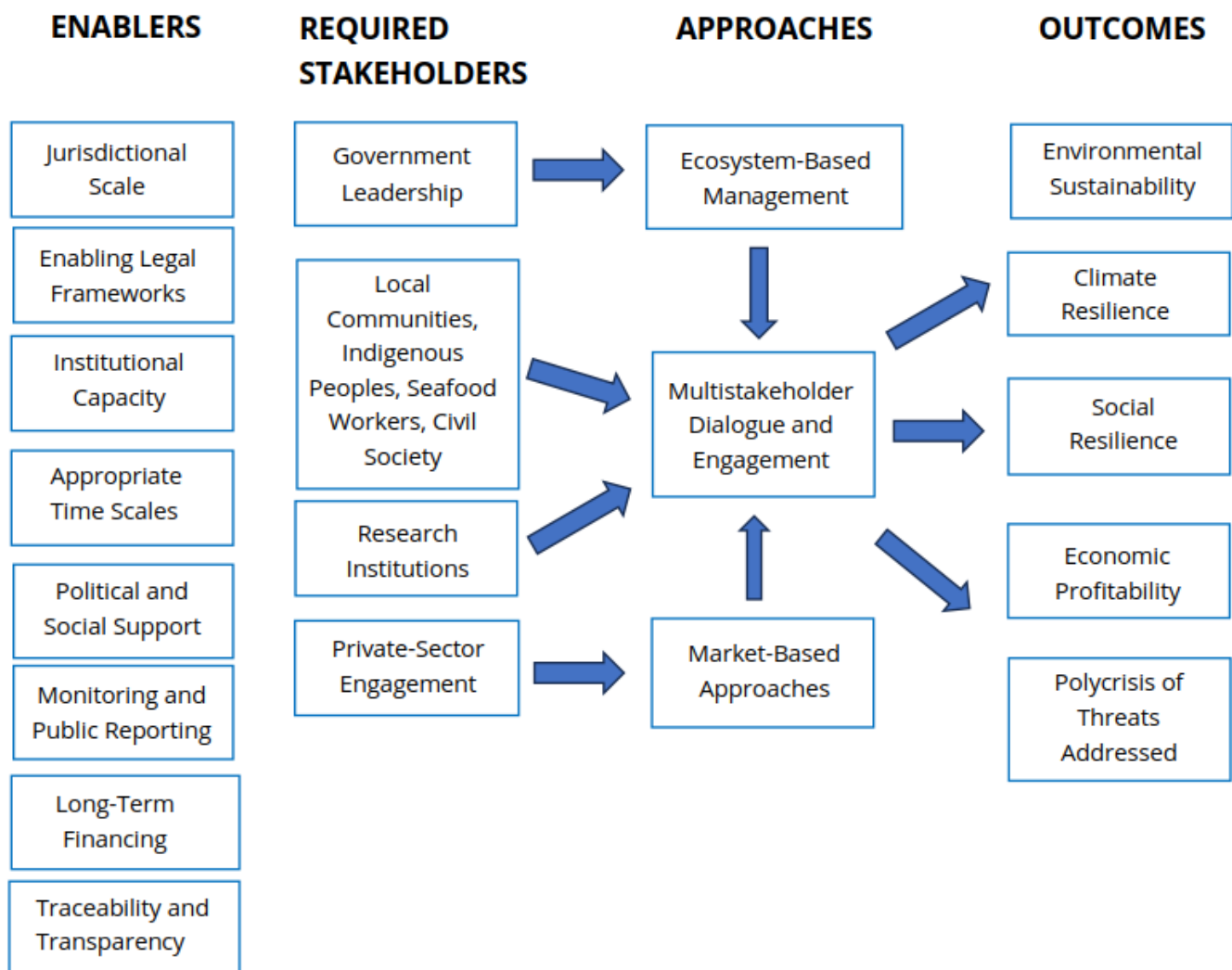
International market actors are also advancing significant commitments to support the development of these JIs. In 2021, the UK supermarket chain Tesco introduced a new “Seascope” sourcing approach, a similar concept to JI, to marine sustainability, aiming to manage whole marine ecosystems in a healthy, productive way. Through this new approach to tuna sourcing, developed in partnership with WWF, Tesco will work with suppliers and others across the industry to implement a road map to transition sourcing to only fisheries with an EBM approach by 2030 (Seafood Source, March 2021).

Despite these successes, the JI concept is still nascent for fisheries and aquaculture production systems, and there is need for greater clarity around the key elements of successful JIs for seafood. Guidance for practitioners or companies is also needed to clarify what makes JIs for fisheries and aquaculture impactful and credible and how to measure progress. For these

initiatives to become more mainstream, it is critical to define what a credible JI for seafood should encompass to help ensure the greatest impact and long-term viability.

### Elements of Successful Jurisdictional Initiatives

As summarized in Figure 1, JIs utilize policy- and market-based strategies at relevant political and ecological scales to achieve social, economic, and environmental objectives in a seafood production system. In addition, these initiatives are locally driven and locally defined through multistakeholder forums, providing an opportunity to improve inclusivity and democratize planning and management. This allows for engagement of smallholders who may not participate in certification due to cost and capacity constraints. The latter considerations, as well as other key elements needed for JIs to be successful and credible, are summarized below (Figure 2). NGO partners can help other stakeholders determine which elements should apply within a specific JI.



**Figure 2.** Elements of successful jurisdictional initiatives for seafood.



## Enablers:

- **Jurisdictional Scale:** JIs oftentimes occur at different scales than traditional CRI efforts. The appropriate political and ecological scale of a JI should be determined by the highest-level political jurisdiction that is needed to address the key sustainability challenges (environmental, social, economic) identified.
- **Enabling Legal Frameworks:** An enabling framework of laws, conventions, regulations, and policies exists, or can be developed, at the appropriate scale to facilitate the design and implementation of JIs.
- **Institutional Capacity:** Adequate institutional frameworks and capacity are present, including personnel, infrastructure, research, and equipment, to make the relevant governance structures (governmental, commercial, and civil) work effectively and efficiently.
- **Appropriate Timescales:** Timescales of successful JIs and ecosystem approaches to fisheries (EAF)/aquaculture (EAA) often range from eight to 20 years (Brugère et al., 2019). This is due to the focus on policy change, participatory and multistakeholder processes (MSPs), and ecosystem-level outcomes reliant on collective impact. The complexity and duration of JIs require sustained engagement and investment to achieve systemic change; therefore, local, and global expectations across all types of stakeholders need to be thoughtfully managed to create achievable goals and timescales and help ensure lasting results. These timescales also must be thoughtfully considered when discussing recognition, claims, and incentives.
- **Political and Social Support, Including Local Community Engagement:** Resilient processes are needed in the design of the initiative to ensure broad political support across levels of government (local, sub-national, national) and strong shared ownership by the private sector and civil society. This will help safeguard the initiative against political change. A strong narrative that articulates the initiative's goals, needs, and early successes is crucial to building support across stakeholders. Engagement with all who may be impacted, including IPs and local communities, is critical.
- **Monitoring and Public Reporting:** A public, multistakeholder reporting framework for communicating accessible information on a regular basis about outcomes achieved, key partners who contributed, and future actions to be taken is key for transparent dialogue. The latter will include a set of metrics to enable regular assessment of improvements against impact outcomes on a jurisdictional scale (beyond the individual entity, farm, or supply chain level).
- **Long-Term Financing:** A long-term financing strategy to cover the multimillion-dollar cost is essential. Early identification of various types of long-term financing models is needed to support and sustain a JI at its various stages. Nearly all JIs rely on a blended finance approach. Terrestrial JI implementers have noted that cost estimates for JIs are nearly impossible to make, as these initiatives vary greatly depending on the scope and approach. Landscape Finance Lab, an organization who supports practitioners in structuring and launching landscape-scale initiatives, such as JIs, estimates approximately US\$2.5 million per landscape over five years to cover their costs for capacity-building, baseline studies, technical assistance, and seed funding for feasibility studies. This cost estimate is only for

Landscape Finance Lab's support; additional coordination, resource mapping, etc., across the entire JI requires additional support.

- **Traceability and Transparency:** A set of metrics to enable regular assessment of product traceability. (See *Section 1.8: Traceability and Transparency* for additional information.)
- **Public-Private Collaboration:** Public-private collaboration is needed to develop and support necessary research for development and monitoring of metrics, generation of appropriate communication, and innovation.

#### Required Stakeholders:

- **Government Leadership:** Leadership from government is critical, and staff engagement at the sub-national level is often useful, supported by national-level commitments or initiatives. To ensure durable change, it is important to obtain political commitment and leadership of the initiative across various levels of government (local to national). Successful JIs often have sub-national implementation plans linked to national policy initiatives and embed the work in government operations. In some situations, other partners may be the initial driving force who bring government to the table. But to have a successful JI, the government needs to participate.
- **Local Communities, Indigenous Peoples, Seafood Workers, Civil Society:** It is important that local communities and IPs are engaged in the scoping and co-design to ensure that their rights are upheld, and their needs are heard. On-the-ground coordination and implementing partner(s) are needed to support management of the JI and its activities, including coordination of a multistakeholder entity.
- **Research Institutions:** Research institutions conduct the scientific research necessary to help inform management decisions. These institutions also can play an important role in sharing information and connecting with local communities to help ensure that local needs are addressed, and decisions are made from a common understanding among stakeholder groups.
- **Private-Sector Engagement:** Long-term commitments of private-sector actors throughout the supply chain (e.g., from producers to processors to retailers) are crucial for project success, given the dominant role the market plays in driving change in the seafood sector. Some actors may join the effort informally to engage with regional suppliers and reduce risks, while others may seek more formal involvement.

#### Approaches:

- **Ecosystem-Based Management:** JIs aim to achieve an adaptive, ecosystem-based, and climate-resilient approach to management. While a single industry and its stakeholders may not have the ability to achieve EBM alone, a JI will engage holistic levers and other important actors needed to ultimately achieve EBM. For additional information about the EAF, please reference the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) e-learning academy, including guidance for policy-makers, NGOs, and other practitioners about why, when, and how to use the EAF-Implementation Monitoring Tool (EAF-IMT) (FAO 2010; FAO 2022).
- **Multistakeholder Dialogue and Engagement:** Success depends on robust and inclusive stakeholder dialogue and engagement during scoping, design, and implementation. Stakeholder interests should be sufficiently aligned to develop shared goals. To ensure

success, we recommend that the main parties involved in the initiative document the degree of engagement and buy-in by different stakeholders, such as by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that defines the specific roles and responsibilities of each entity so that expectations are clear from the outset about the objectives and the role that each group plays. For additional guidance, see the FAO's recent guidance on how to design and secure multistakeholder collaboration to address environmental, social, and economic issues in food systems (FAO 2023).

- **Market-Based Approaches:** Market-based approaches comprise a wide array of strategies focused on generating incentives along the supply chain that favor sustainability (Jacquet et al. 2009, Sutton 1998, Murphy E.L., et al. 2021). The latter approaches are traditionally driven by the private sector and focus on encouraging sustainable behavior through market signals. Certification is a prominent example that has effectively promoted fishery sustainability due to its inclusion in the sourcing requirements of large retailers in Europe and North America.

#### Outcomes:

- **Environmental Sustainability, Including Ecosystem, Climate, and Biodiversity Resilience:** Goals to secure sustainable resource use through the application of EBM. As a result, JIs also seek to manage, restore, and/or protect critical habitats, threatened species, and biodiversity by addressing cumulative impacts, as well as to increase ecosystem and climate resilience.
- **Social Resilience:** Goals to help address a variety of social issues, including equity, community well-being, human and labor rights, safe and decent working conditions, and local (including Indigenous) community rights (including access rights) and engagement.
- **Economic Profitability:** Goals to help enhance the economic performance of a seafood production system, including by maximizing biological productivity, enhancing operational efficiency, and/or increasing market value (Holmes et al. 2014). Coupled with equity and inclusivity goals, economic profitability should be inclusive of local fishers, workers, and suppliers, enhancing worker and community well-being throughout the supply chain.
- **Polycrisis of Threats Addressed:** A JI aims to address multiple risks in fisheries and aquaculture that would otherwise lead to compounding negative impacts.

Claims made by JI stakeholders as a whole and/or individual participating entities should be appropriate to the phase of the initiative as well as verifiable. Credible and robust verification of monitoring, evaluation, and progress against goals is critical for ensuring the impact of the initiative's activities. (See *Section 1.6 Claims* and *Section 1.7: Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification* for additional information.)

## 1.2 When to Implement Jurisdictional Initiatives Versus Other Approaches

### Certifications, Ratings, and Improvement (CRI) Projects Versus Jurisdictional Initiatives

A common question that arises is when to implement a JI compared to other traditional certification or improvement project pathways<sup>1</sup> for fisheries and aquaculture production systems. We recommend developing a JI if stakeholders desire to increase the resilience of the ecosystem or tackle more systemic social and environmental drivers rather than focusing solely on the sustainability of a single fishery, farm/group of related farms, or supply chain. This would mean tackling issues that are not often or not fully addressed in established CRI efforts, such as ecosystem-level biodiversity, climate resilience, regional social issues (such as lack of decent work or equity), and industry/cross-industry cumulative impacts. For examples of when and how to implement a seafood JI, please refer to *Table 4. Case studies illustrating different ways in which jurisdictional initiatives for wild-caught tuna have been initiated* within Section 2 of *Developing Jurisdictional Initiatives for the Seafood Sector: Full Guidelines*.

Seafood JIs are complementary to CRI efforts and may occur before, during, or after application of other mature and credible market-based tools, depending on political will and economic conditions. A JI may help address risks around the continued effectiveness of traditional CRI efforts, such as lack of government engagement at all levels, or increase the leverage for improvement against jurisdictional-level environmental, social, and economic issues. JIs may also help expand the scope of certifications already present within a supply chain by integrating additional stakeholders (e.g., farms, fishing vessels, and/or communities).

Often, CRI approaches ensure that a company's seafood sourcing policies and practices address specific criteria within CRI standards, which enables seafood products to meet short-term sustainability goals, supports external communication to consumers, and bolsters company reputations. The combination of CRI efforts and JIs can help demonstrate that seafood suppliers and buyers care about *both* the immediate impacts of seafood production and the long-term sustainability of seafood supply chains, decent work, and the inclusiveness of local communities and IPs in setting goals and decision-making.

We recommend implementing JIs when there is strong commitment by a government to drive holistic improvements across an entire seafood production geography over which they have political jurisdiction. JIs should also be prioritized when the policy objectives extend beyond sustainable resource extraction and instead focus on application of EBM to manage, restore, and/or protect critical habitats, threatened species, and biodiversity across the ecological range of

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of certification schemes include Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), Best Aquaculture Practices (ASC), Responsible Fishing Vessel Standard, and Fair Trade USA. Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch rating system and fishery improvement projects (FIPs) and aquaculture improvement projects (AIPs) are examples of ratings and improvement schemes.

the seafood commodities of interest. JIs should also be prioritized when there is a need to address cumulative impacts on ecosystems, which will require robust and inclusive multistakeholder dialogue and collaboration with a range of stakeholders to align goals and incentives among government, market, and producer actors, as well as with local communities and IPs. A recent report commissioned by the ISEAL Alliance highlights when to pursue individual or collaborative improvement strategies, including value-chain and systemic strategies, which can also be used to decide when to implement JIs. (See *Step 1: Scoping* within Section 2 of *Developing Jurisdictional Initiatives for the Seafood Sector: Full Guidelines* for additional information.)

Certification systems can play an important role in seafood JIs. In collaboration with local JI conveners, certification systems can (ISEAL 2017):

- help shape sustainability objectives/targets at the jurisdictional level
- help adapt or develop new credible verification or monitoring methods for the initiative
- help align on and achieve common goals (e.g., advancing toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs))
- enable dialogue across producers and existing certificate holders on connectivity and other issues beyond individual production units (cumulative impacts)
- adapt their tools, guidance, and expertise for capacity-building to fit specific local needs
- identify laggards and high performers, enabling the use of financial incentives at site level to incentivize continuous improvement within the jurisdiction
- strengthen confidence and risk management for investors
- provide incentive for suppliers and end buyers to engage

In addition to certification having a role in JIs, the opposite is also true—JIs can be an avenue for advancing certifications. For example, the Fiji JI (referenced in *Table 4. Case studies illustrating different ways in which jurisdictional initiatives for wild-caught tuna have been initiated* within Section 2 of *Developing Jurisdictional Initiatives for the Seafood Sector: Full Guidelines*) is working toward MSC recertification for the tuna fisheries.

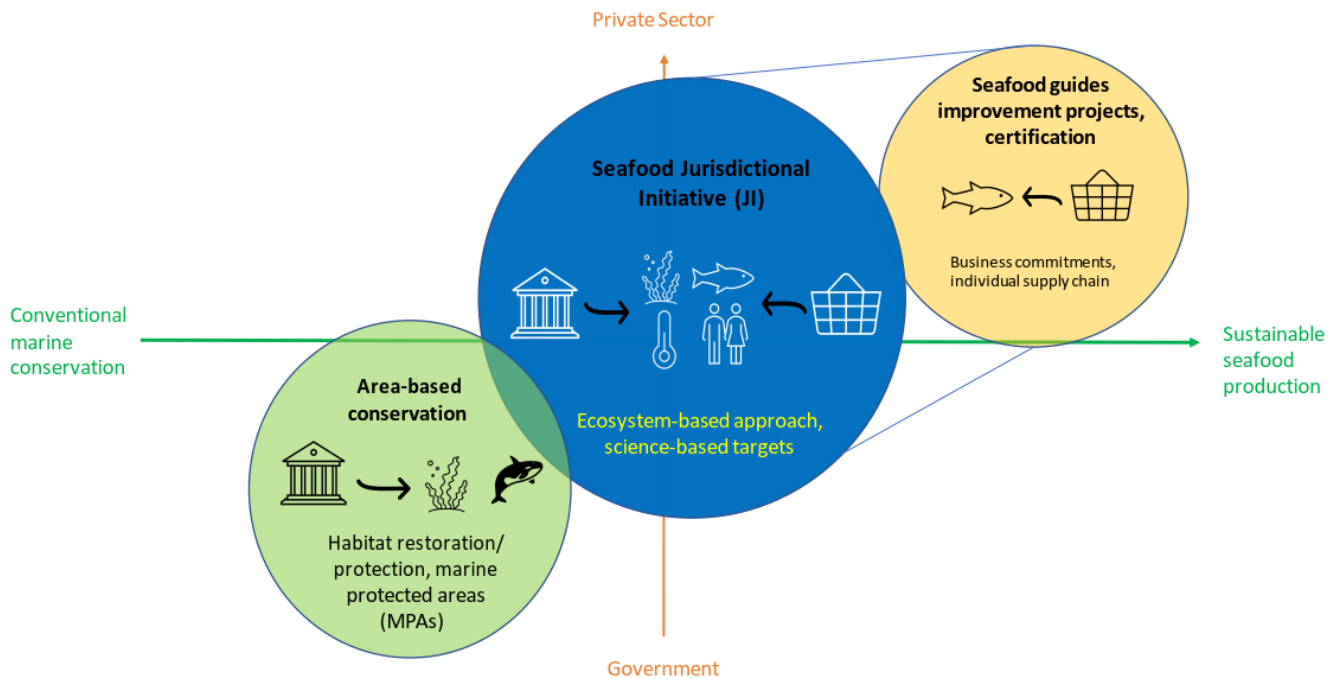


**Table 1.** Differences between certification, ratings, and improvement (CRI) efforts and jurisdictional initiatives (JIs) (adapted from CI 2019)

<b>Certifications, Ratings, Improvement Efforts</b>	<b>Jurisdictional Initiatives</b>
<p>Useful tools to drive improvements in individual fisheries and aquaculture farms.</p>	<p>Approach to drive holistic improvements across an entire seafood production geography (multiple fisheries/farms) as determined by the ecological range of one or two key species of focus. To address cumulative impacts, JIs may need to include other blue economy sectors to address key drivers of ecosystem degradation. For example, if the species of focus is impacted by deep-sea mining, the JI would need to include interventions that address deep-sea mining impacts. Farmed shrimp JIs may need to include activities around mangrove protection/restoration.</p>
<p>Depending upon the unit of assessment, there may be a mismatch between the scale of management and the scale of ecological processes being managed. This means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For fisheries certification, the geographical area may not cover the complete range of the species across its life cycle (e.g., larval to juvenile to adult).</li> <li>• Spatial interactions key to sustainability may not be considered (e.g., among interdependent fisheries or multiple fleets harvesting a single stock, or aquaculture farms in a watershed that rely on shared resources).</li> <li>• Ecological criteria are written to maintain individual stock health and may fail to consider the entirety of ecosystem services that may be impacted by fishing or aquaculture production.</li> <li>• May address farm and vessel practices and resource use efficiencies but may not protect all trophic interactions and key habitat functions.</li> </ul>	<p>Applied at the appropriate ecosystem level and political boundary needed to address sustainability challenges appropriately. This means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For fisheries, the defined territory within the JI can match the full range of the target species across its life cycle. For tuna and other highly migratory species that span across entire ocean basins, JIs can begin within more discrete politically relevant production areas (i.e., one–two national exclusive economic zones (EEZs)). Scaling pathways should be designed however to ensure that the national-scale interventions can eventually be extended to the broader production area that matches the ecological distribution of the target species. (See Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) Case Study in Box 1.)</li> <li>• By focusing on a defined production geography, JIs may improve coordination among multiple economic sectors or entities that overlap or interact with one another (Boyd et al. 2018, CI, 2018). For example, terrestrial JIs focused on preventing deforestation of regional forests by working</li> </ul>

	<p>to coordinate multiple producers and production types (Stickler et al. 2020).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JIs are more likely to recognize and invest in conservation measures that support the full suite of ecosystem functions in that geography.</li> <li>• JIs are more likely to recognize and address key habitat functions and trophic interactions.</li> <li>• JIs are more likely to include biosecurity risks that can include risks to human health and/or the natural environment/wildlife.</li> </ul>
Typically, does not require a holistic approach to address systemic issues, including those that extend beyond environmental sustainability, such as social responsibility. Some aquaculture CRIs include area-based criteria, including social engagement, but the practice remains limited.	Address broader policy/systemic issues, including areas not currently required under CRI, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ecosystem-based approach/cumulative impacts</li> <li>• biodiversity focus</li> <li>• social equity/inclusivity</li> <li>• building blocks for climate resilience</li> </ul>
Depending upon the unit of certification and stakeholders involved, may not adequately/equally include the interests and rights of smallholders, Indigenous peoples (IPs), and local communities.	Locally driven and locally defined through multistakeholder forum. JIs allow for engagement of smallholders who may not participate in certification due to cost and capacity constraints.
Certification provides a certain level of traceability, assurance, and verification (ratings and improvements do not), and as such, participants may be able to make performance claims shortly after certification.	Participants likely cannot make performance claims until many years into the project, but engagement can reduce risks and raise opportunities for joint problem-solving among sectors, including government, fishers, farmers, and market/supply chain actors.

Some of the similarities and differences between JIs and CRIs are illustrated below, including a comparison to the objectives and stakeholders for MPAs (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Comparison of objectives (green x-axis) and stakeholder participation (orange y-axis) in MPAs, JIs, and certification, ratings, and improvement (CRI) projects. Note the partial overlap of the circles to indicate that JIs can incorporate CRI efforts and PAs as part of a holistic seafood production improvement strategy.

## Seascapes Versus Jurisdictional Initiatives

Recent debate has emerged around the similarities and differences between seascapes and JIs. The first difficulty in contrasting these two approaches centers on the multiple definitions for the term **seascape** and the way in which they have historically been implemented by different groups:

- **Working Land and Seascapes:** Working seascapes include coastlines, near- and offshore waters, estuaries, and open ocean, all of which have been transformed by humans for millennia. Working seascapes provide livelihoods, food security, and cultural identity to millions globally through wild-caught fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, recreation, and infrastructure (Deichmann et al. 2019).
- **WWF:** We define a seascape as a large, geographically bound area that supports integrated management of marine resources to conserve ecosystems that benefit the planet, people, prosperity, and peace. Our seascapes include both protected areas—created primarily to achieve conservation outcomes—and other effective area-based conservation measures—which deliver conservation of biodiversity regardless of their primary management objectives. Species management is also a critical piece of area-based conservation. Within each seascape, we identify target species that include species on which people rely for food and income and species critical to ecosystem health (WWF 2023).
- **Conservation International (CI):** Seascapes are large, multiple-use marine areas, defined scientifically and strategically, in which government authorities, private organizations, and

other stakeholders cooperate to conserve the diversity and abundance of marine life and promote human well-being (Murphy S.E., et al. 2021).

- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN): Where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural, and scenic value and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated values.
- Tesco: The UK retailer Tesco advocates for a Seascope approach (a similar concept to JI that mirrors Tesco's landscape approach on their deforestation-free commodities commitment) to marine sustainability, which is designed to ensure whole marine ecosystems are maintained in a healthy and productive way (Tesco 2021). The retailer will first adopt the Seascope approach for its tuna sourcing and has set out a road map to transition to ecosystem-based fisheries management by 2030 with an interim target of 100% MSC certification across its tuna ranges by 2025. The approach also includes the following key asks:
  - Product is sourced from a marine environment in which the number of breeding fish present is at least 40% of the number in the unfished populations, a key component of maintaining healthy marine ecosystems.
  - Fishing mortality levels are required to be kept below a certain level, best-practice bycatch mitigation is implemented, and all fisheries put 100% non-retention policies in place and promote best-practice fish handling and monitoring on board fishing vessels.
  - Robust management is to be put in place, including precautionary harvest control rules or harvest strategies, management of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and integration of MPAs.

In some cases, JIs and Seascope approaches can be analogous; Murphy, S.E., et al., 2021, identify nine essential elements of seascapes, which are also included within the elements of successful JIs for seafood (Figure 2). Both approaches aim to engage and benefit multiple stakeholders and rightsholders and stress the importance of adopting EBM to achieve threatened species recovery and human well-being. Similarly, terminology and conceptual overlap with freshwater basin management/relevant water body concepts and freshwater ecosystem aquaculture and fishing JIs occur and will continue to evolve as the frameworks develop further.

With that said, there have been some tangible differences in how some seascapes have been implemented compared with JIs. For instance, some of the seascapes described by Murphy, S.E., et al., 2021, were not established in key seafood commodity-producing regions but rather in biodiversity-rich areas to prioritize conservation and community-level human well-being as a primary objective. The latter divergence in objective prioritization has implications for the types of stakeholders who lead each of the approaches (private-sector engagement: commercial/industrial sector versus small-scale/artisanal fishers), as well as the types of financing mechanisms (i.e., commercial sourcing agreements versus tourism fees, grants, endowments, etc.) and management strategies that are employed to achieve the stated objectives (i.e., fisheries management versus MPAs).

Despite these occasional differences, both Seascapes and JIs seek to balance conservation with economic and social benefits through spatial planning with rules governing what activities are permitted where. In cases when those objectives overlap, a Seascape can be a JI.

### 1.3 Why Launch a Jurisdictional Initiative?

Over one-third of the world's commercial fish stocks are at biologically unsustainable levels, aquaculture is growing to meet global demand for seafood, two planetary boundaries are at high risk of being surpassed (climate change and biosphere integrity, including genetic diversity), and impacts from climate change are growing. This demonstrates a clear need to move beyond mature market-based tools, such as CRI models, toward JIs that aim to address marine and freshwater health in a spatially meaningful and holistic way, increasing biodiversity, climate change resilience, and equity and democratization of often marginalized local communities and IPs.

#### Ecological Considerations

- There is a need to address seafood sustainability issues at an appropriate political and ecological scale that ensures the long-term sustainability of seafood resources and of the underlying ecosystems upon which they depend. Traditional certification and ratings schemes tend to function on a fleet-by-fleet or individual farm basis. While this can address some important issues, such as farm practices and farm resource use, it can also present key challenges around “leakage” and “free riding.” “Bad actors” can operate in the same area as a certified fishery or farm if critical issues are not addressed at a system-wide level. Seafood JIs seek to address this by incorporating as many actors as possible at the relevant jurisdictional scale.
- Seafood JIs also seek to address other environmental issues that impact the health and resilience of the ecosystem and are not explicitly accounted for in traditional CRI efforts, such as climate change impacts on production and associated ecosystems, cumulative environmental impacts in a region, and ecosystem-level biodiversity loss.

#### Social Considerations

- Because traditional CRI efforts were built with a focus on environmental sustainability, these approaches do not fully incorporate social responsibility considerations. Although social certifications for the seafood sector have recently been developed, these schemes typically focus on decent and legal work and do not address all six categories of human rights: civil, political, economic, cultural, social, and collective.
- In addition, traditional CRI efforts often focus on a specific supply chain or fishery/farming operation, limiting larger regional or national mitigation, and/or remediation efforts with respect to human and labor rights violations.
- JIs are locally driven and locally defined through a multistakeholder forum, providing an opportunity to improve inclusivity of IPs and local communities and democratize planning and management. This also allows for potential engagement of smallholders who often do

not participate in certification due to cost, capacity constraints, and geographic spread. Via focusing on root causes, appropriate geographic and political scales, and engagement of intentional stakeholder dialogue throughout all steps of a JI, JIs can support critical bridges among local and Indigenous communities, seafood buyers, and policy-makers that often do not occur in traditional CRI approaches.

## Political Considerations

- The co-development of a seafood JI with local stakeholders creates an opportunity for regional, national, and sub-national political priorities to be incorporated within the improvement framework to catalyze more durable change. While a seafood JI will be focused on a particular commodity, including its local stakeholders and relevant governance structure, it will also need to address and consider other users/industries and their stakeholders and regulatory frameworks to drive systemic changes.
- While JIs are commodity-focused, they may aid government entities seeking to improve adherence to national and/or international laws and conventions. By focusing on root-cause analyses and building direct communication between producers and policy-makers, JIs can help shape or improve local and regional policies that can help drive larger systemic change.

## Economic Considerations

- Certification and improvement efforts often put the onus on fishers, farmers, workers, or companies to invest in meeting the performance standards, which can be especially difficult and expensive for small-scale fishers and farmers. Multistakeholder efforts, such as JIs, provide opportunities to share costs across the public and private sectors and potentially financial institutions. Through blending of financial sources, risk profiles in the different components of a JI can be matched with appropriate risk appetites of the various financing sources.

Although JIs use a robust multistakeholder approach and aim to establish outcomes that are desirable to all, it is likely that there will be trade-offs, given the competing interests within the jurisdiction.

Figure 4 presents a high-level, generic Theory of Change for JIs for the seafood sector. Each JI should develop its own specific, more detailed theory of change to identify the underlying assumptions and risks to ensure the approach will contribute to the desired outcomes, and to support planning, implementation, and evaluation of the specific initiative.

Legend

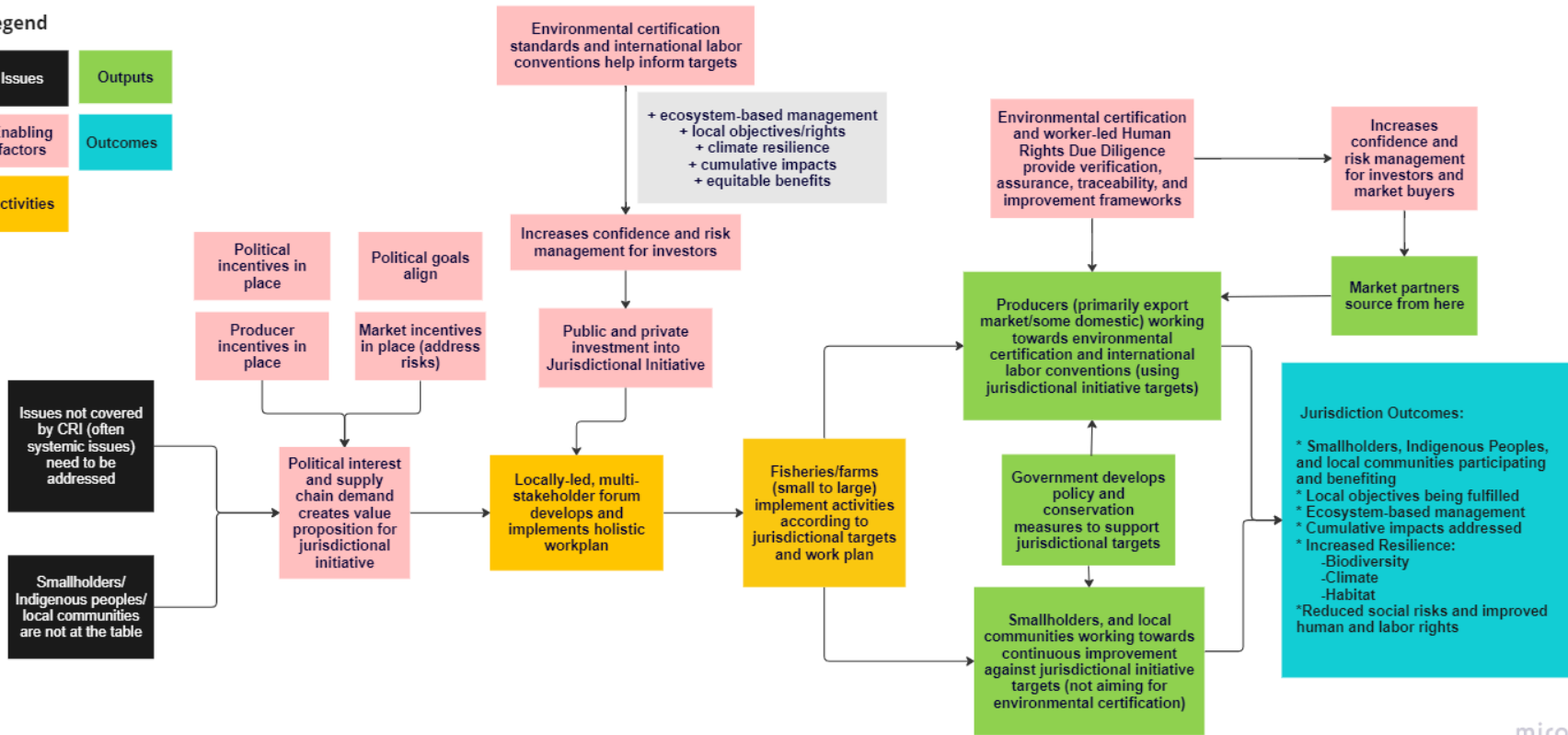


Figure 4. Generic Theory of Change for jurisdictional initiatives for the seafood sector



## 1.4 Who Benefits From a Jurisdictional Initiative?

JIs have the capacity to benefit stakeholders throughout a jurisdiction, including producers, government, supply chain companies, local communities, and IPs.

### Producers

- Suppliers and end buyers are increasingly committed to preferentially sourcing from and investing in the development of initiatives at the jurisdictional level that address risks to their business, potentially providing a market incentive for producers to engage in JIs (e.g., higher, or fairer prices for product and/or access to new buyers, maintaining sourcing contracts).
- For small-scale fishers and farmers, JIs can offer the opportunity to organize into a more cohesive collective, better leveraging their voices to drive change and reach end buyers.
- Seafood JIs provide a process for creating a common, long-term vision and the promotion of dialogue as a mechanism to resolve disputes and reach agreements regarding the management of natural resources on a larger scale.
- In some regions, fishers and farmers may seek stronger, science-based management on an ecosystem level because they see risks to their livelihoods/industry from factors such as declines in marine fisheries and marine wildlife, poor water quality, erosion from habitat loss, and mortality from unmanaged disease that could be better addressed by improvements in policy and enforcement. Engagement in a seafood JI may thereby help ensure sustainable livelihoods.
- Across the world, poor aquaculture practices and overfishing have increasingly become public opinion concerns, in some places even threatening continued social license to operate. A seafood JI can offer additional opportunities for industry leaders to engage in credible and meaningful efforts to demonstrate industry-wide progress in an ecosystem. They also offer an approach to raising the minimum bar, which may reduce overall industry reputational risks exacerbated by sometimes highly visible bad actors.
- Some JIs may be able to provide more equitable distribution of economic benefits throughout the supply chain (i.e., higher product prices for producers and/or access to new markets) and ensure fishers, farmers, and workers are not bearing the cost of improvements—something that has not often been seen in traditional CRI efforts.
- JIs incorporate both environmental and social considerations (such as decent work, human rights, and community well-being). Historically, traditional CRI efforts have focused on one or the other or both, but in a limited way.

### Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples

- JIs provide local communities and IPs with a platform to engage and eventually secure improved socio-economic equity, continued dialogue with policy-makers and private actors, and potential access to financing through public-private partnerships. Ensuring that IPs and local communities are empowered to have full and equitable participation is

critically important, especially as they are often at a disadvantage in negotiations with vested interests or multinational entities. Prioritization of local voices, access to participation, and incorporation of local stakeholder needs are critical to the success of JIs.

- JIs provide an opportunity to improve inclusivity and democratize planning and management of resources via intentional stakeholder-driven engagement built around cultural and community needs, with the goal of improving equity and community well-being.

## **Governments**

- JIs can address risks from climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and unethical human rights and labor practices that threaten productivity within a sourcing region, helping secure the long-term health of marine and aquatic resources and thus increasing the health and resilience of national fisheries and aquaculture production. This, in turn, supports national and local governments to deliver national- and international-level commitments against conventions, such as the Convention of Biodiversity (CBD) and the Paris Agreement on climate change.
- Stability of nationally important food products for domestic consumption and export will be increased, protecting the economic security and livelihoods of constituents.
- Governments can build a reputation as ones who manage their ocean and aquatic resources in ways that improve biodiversity, increase climate resilience, and protect the rights of fishers, farmers, and local communities.
- JIs provide governments with the opportunity to align political agendas across different ministries and departments so that obstacles are addressed, and more collective momentum is created across a shared vision (UNDP 2019). In addition, governments can use the opportunity to align with international conventions and standards.
- Having a stronger shared vision and a clearer action plan for sustainable seafood production provides a better context for attracting increased investment and support (across companies and international donors) for sector development (UNDP 2019).
- JIs provide a platform for government authorities to hear and support the needs of local communities.

## **Suppliers and End Buyers**

- JIs can address risks from climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and unethical human rights and labor practices that threaten productivity within a sourcing region, helping secure the long-term health of marine resources, thus stabilizing supply and leading to a more resilient value chain.
- The strong emphasis on multistakeholder engagement across the jurisdiction and alignment with government priorities helps reduce potential local community and operational risks and ensure equity.

- Companies will benefit from stronger legal and regulatory frameworks for the seafood sector, helping businesses deliver on their sustainability commitments and reduce risks related to security of supply and reputation (UNDP 2019).
- Seafood JIs offer a framework to contribute meaningfully to restoration, protection, and sustainable production that can address these larger, systemic challenges while simultaneously supporting wider corporate social responsibility and sustainability targets.
- JIs address sustainability challenges beyond individual supply chains to the broader sourcing region, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, meaningfully contributing to sustainable production, protection, and restoration of a production region, for example by addressing cumulative water quality impacts that affect farm mortality rates and, therefore, ultimately supply stability.
- Leakage issues can be reduced through a JI. Traditional CRI efforts may avoid or limit harm locally, but the harm may be displaced nearby or transferred to other entities rather than eliminated. Working at a jurisdictional scale may reduce leakage; however, some pressures may move to other jurisdictions. Appropriate regional, national, and/or international policies will likely be necessary to eliminate issues altogether.
- JIs can deliver a scaled version of the systems individual companies need in place to obtain certification. For example, if a certification standard requires that a company demonstrate zero bycatch from supplier vessels, a JI could develop a jurisdiction-wide system to monitor bycatch, which would obviate the need for companies to do so within their own supply chains and thus make it easier to meet certification requirements.
- Seafood JIs can help improve value-chain efficiency (including social and environmental externalities that increasingly affect bottom lines), mainly through avoided costs.
- Through multistakeholder collaboration, companies can share costs with the public sector and other private-sector partners to complete essential actions that would likely be prohibitively expensive for any individual company to complete on their own (UNDP 2019).
- When supported by robust monitoring and evaluation systems, JIs may provide companies with a way to credibly claim positive impacts as part of larger-scale improvements.

## 1.5 Metrics

All credible seafood JIs seeking to drive change need to have a strong monitoring framework in place, with metrics relevant to the jurisdiction that will enable stakeholders to assess progress against the initiative's targets and milestones. The most desirable results will be tied directly to performance against environmental, social, and economic outcomes at the jurisdictional level. However, given that a JI can span eight to 20 years, it is recommended to include not only outcome indicators but also pathway indicators to capture important initial steps that will lead to measurable outcomes over time, as well as process indicators that capture progress in JI development.

The appropriate metrics for a specific JI will depend on the local context but should tie to overall biodiversity, climate, social, and economic goals of the effort, including outcome goals (e.g., fish stock biomass) and pathway goals focused on better management/policies and information to support effective implementation of those policies (e.g., precautionary management, effective enforcement, national data collection systems (Table 2)).

ISEAL (2022b) describes that appropriate metrics for assessing performance improvements relative to targets should aspire to do the following:

- Measure the status or trends in a specific sustainability outcome.
- Be standardized and applied consistently to facilitate comparability of findings over time. This is also a prerequisite for being able to aggregate data from multiple actors in a jurisdiction.
- Align with existing Seascope or jurisdictional metrics, linking the monitoring with that of the states and municipalities within the Seascope or jurisdiction.
- Be sensitive enough to detect relevant changes from a baseline state.
- Be consistent with SMART guidelines (i.e., specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) so they can be objectively measured.
- Be cost-efficient and not overly complex, recognizing that in some cases, more costly or specialized data might provide more reliable results.
- Be defined in quantitative terms but supplemented by qualitative information when appropriate (e.g., for social issues like land conflict or forced labor).

It is important to consider the credibility and scope of potential metrics for tracking progress against identified indicators. While the best outcome and pathway metrics for a specific JI will depend on the local context, when identifying appropriate metrics, one should also consider factors such as the frequency of external assessments that may be relied upon and/or the funding and capacity available within a project to conduct regular monitoring. In addition, because fishery and aquaculture production frequently occur within data-deficient systems and existing indices and metrics often are incomplete or come with caveats, it is critical to carefully define and communicate what is truly captured by the metrics identified for the JI.

Table 2 recommends minimum JI components to be measured. JIs seek to drive improvement in four main areas: biodiversity, climate, social, and economic. Specific components under each area, which will vary depending on whether the JI is developed for fisheries or aquaculture as well as the local context, are suggested in Table 2. For each component, it is important to consider not only the environmental, social, or economic outcomes desired but also the legal frameworks/policies and information systems that support achieving the outcomes. In this way, stakeholders can strive to design and implement management and information systems that will support the achievement of good outcomes in perpetuity.

A set of core metrics is desirable for all seafood JIs (to mirror terrestrial JIs, which are further advanced) that would ensure common goals across JIs as well as high ambition. The seafood community should develop these core metrics jointly through a process that includes engagement with local practitioners, governments, NGOs, and seafood companies. Once this process takes

place and core metrics are developed, the JI Guidance will be updated accordingly. In the meantime, it is recommended that leading CRI resources, such as the MSC and ASC standards, be used as a minimum set of performance indicators that a JI should strive to achieve at the relevant political and ecosystem scale. Stakeholders can also decide to target the existing standards at a higher level of ambition that would be required for certification and at the jurisdictional scale.

Table 3 includes suggested resources to consult when setting location- and issue-specific metrics for a JI. This resource list is not exhaustive but includes some of the most credible and commonly used tools for setting goals against, measuring, and monitoring biodiversity, climate, social, and economic outcomes in fisheries and aquaculture.

At the outset of a JI, it is critically important to establish a credible baseline of data for the metrics that will be tracked throughout the duration of the initiative. This baseline data collection may be costly and may not have full support from those stakeholders who are not yet committed to the JI; therefore, it is important early on to engage stakeholders and develop a fundraising plan.

Sufficient improvement against the metrics outlined in Table 2 is likely to take several years. For that reason, the JI stakeholder group should also identify process metrics to track development of the JI structure and investment required to lead toward successful improvement activities. Individual seafood JIs can reference the steps of a JI (outlined in Figure 5 within Section 2 of *Developing Jurisdictional Initiatives for the Seafood Sector: Full Guidelines*) to develop their own process metrics. Process metrics will be used to determine process claims as outlined in Section 1.6.



**Table 2.** Suggested minimum jurisdictional initiative (JI) components. For each component, JI implementers should consider metrics based on outcomes (current status), effective legal frameworks and policies to ensure good outcomes, and the availability, quality, and frequency of information to support effective management and monitoring.

<b>JI Category</b>	<b>Component</b>	<b>Metric Category</b>
<b>Biodiversity</b>	Target fish stock/species health and abundance	Outcomes
		Legal Frameworks/Policies
		Information
	Non-target species health and abundance (including Endangered, Threatened, and Protected species; bycatch; ghost fishing)	Outcomes
		Legal Frameworks/Policies
		Information
Habitat impacts	Outcomes	
	Legal Frameworks/Policies	
	Information	
<b>Climate</b>	Climate-resilient fishery management	Outcomes
		Legal Frameworks/Policies
		Information
	Climate-resilient aquaculture	Outcomes
		Legal Frameworks/Policies
		Information
Carbon emissions (fishing/transshipment/production)	Outcomes	
	Legal Frameworks/Policies	
	Information	
<b>Social</b>	Human and labor rights (including civil, political, Indigenous, cultural, economic, social, access, and collective rights)	Outcomes
		Legal Frameworks/Policies
		Information
	Participation, inclusion, and informed consent in decision-making, resource planning, and management	Outcomes
		Legal Frameworks/Policies
		Information
<b>Economic</b>	Socio-economic benefits from fishing/aquaculture (direct and indirect)	Outcomes
		Legal Frameworks/Policies
		Information

**Table 3.** Suggested resources for jurisdictional initiative metrics.

<b>Suggested Resources</b>
<b>Biodiversity</b>
Ocean Health Index
MSC performance indicators
ASC performance indicators
Stock assessment databases, e.g.:
o ICES Stock Assessment Database
o NAFO Stock Assessment Database
o Australian Stock Assessment Database
o Mediterranean Stock Assessments
ISSF Best Practices reports
IUCN Red List Database
CITES Appendix I and II
Living Planet Index
Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) Data Portal
FAO abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear guidance
FAO Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem (VME) Database
FAO benthic biodiversity indices
Clark Labs Coastal Habitat Mapping: Mangrove and Pond Aquaculture Conversion
Global Mangrove Watch
Global Fishing Watch
WTO Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes
PAS 1550
Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability
<b>Climate</b>
EDF Climate-Resilient Fisheries Toolkit
MSC performance indicators
ASC performance indicators
ISSF Best Practices reports
Setting Science-Based Targets in the Seafood Sector
Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Seafood Production
Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch and Dalhousie University Seafood Carbon Emissions Tool
World Economic Forum on Scope 1, 2 and 3
<b>Social</b>
ILO Fundamental Conventions & Rights at Work, ILO C188
Social Responsibility Assessment Tool
Seafood Stewardship Index Social Responsibility Methodology
Worker- Driven Social Responsibility Statement of Principles
Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication
The International Bill of Human Rights
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights
ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, ILO Fundamental Conventions
ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy
PAS 1550: 2017 Code of Practice
UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
SDG Tracker
Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples
Attributes of social equity in (Bennett et al. 2021)
Framework for social equity in ocean governance (Crossman et al. 2022)
<b>Economic</b>
Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples
Attributes of social equity (Bennett et al. 2021)
Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security



## 1.6 Claims

Jl participants may choose to become involved simply to engage with other actors around risks, risk mitigation, or problem-solving opportunities, whereas others may be driven by other incentives associated with participation. There are a variety of claims that seafood Jl participants can utilize to communicate with internal and external stakeholders (ISEAL 2022b):

- process, outcome, and risk management claims about jurisdictional structures
- investment or action claims
- status and trend claims about jurisdictional progress

The following statements showcase examples of claims concerning Jl **structures** (i.e., the structural elements necessary for the initiative to be effective, such as engaged stakeholders, governance, a progress framework outlining time-bound milestones, financing, and a monitoring system (ISEAL 2022b)). No single stakeholder group should claim they have achieved these outcomes on their own, given the collaborative process of Jls.

- Process: *We are co-developing a Jl that will help align practices among our seafood suppliers in the Pacific Island region within the next five years.*
  - Credible process-related claims can be made once timelines and milestones have been defined, against which future progress can be measured.
- Outcome: *We have a strong foundation in place to ensure strong and deep community engagement throughout the initiative.*
  - These initiatives can make claims about the structures and governance systems they have put in place (around stakeholder engagement, governance, financing, outcomes, action plans, and monitoring), but only after they have been established.
- Risk management: *We have processes in place to manage risks of human and labor rights violations within the supply chains, and local communities are actively engaged in the initiative.*
  - Claims about managing risk tied to negative environmental, social, or economic outcomes can only be made if the risk area is a focus of the Jl and the necessary structural elements are in place (e.g., governance and monitoring systems). The Jl coordinator can help verify this information.

Investment or direct action in a jurisdiction aims to address sustainability challenges at a scale that is meaningful for delivering impact. However, improvements in sustainability performance at the scale of the jurisdiction can take time to transpire. Prior to those jurisdictional performance improvements being achieved, stakeholders can make claims about their investments or participation in jurisdictional actions. For seafood companies engaging in Jls, robust action claims can help support their corporate reporting and disclosure (ISEAL 2023).

ISEAL (2023) outlines the following seven core elements that jurisdictional action claims are expected to include:

1. a description of the type of jurisdictional action

2. the sustainability outcome prioritized by local stakeholders toward which the action is contributing
3. scale and duration of the action or investment, and whether it is financial or in-kind
4. geographic area where the action is occurring
5. timing and duration of the action
6. the name of the JI
7. partners with whom the action is being implemented

To the extent possible, claims should have associated objectives and measurable criteria. This helps with verification of claims.

The following is an example of an **action claim** that incorporates the core elements:

- [Company name] is contributing \$X over five years to support the goals of the local communities in [insert geographic name] with [insert name of implementing partners]. Our goal is to support [insert name of the JI] to achieve its vision of [insert initiative's overall goal, including date by which goal will be achieved]. Since [X date], we have been investing in [A and B types of activities] that aim to [insert the initiative's outcome(s) that the actions contribute to] by [Y date].

Stakeholders making claims about their jurisdictional investments or actions should make the information publicly and easily accessible (e.g., on their website, in sustainability reports, or through public reporting by the JI itself).

The following showcase examples of claims concerning **performance** of the JI (ISEAL 2022b):

- **Status:** *Within this jurisdiction, 30% of the fish stocks are overfished.*
  - These claims state the current performance status of an issue and use actual data.
- **Trend:** *Within this jurisdiction, wages of local workers have increased by 15% over the past three years, aligning with living wage estimates for the region.*
  - These claims express change in performance against a baseline.

No single stakeholder group should make **attribution** claims (e.g., We are responsible for a specific performance outcome), as it is often difficult to show a direct cause-and-effect relationship, and it disregards the influence of others in achieving the outcomes (ISEAL 2022a).

Claims made by seafood companies or by producers to obtain market access will require strong traceability systems in place to ensure integrity of products across the supply chain and reduce the risk of greenwashing in some marketplaces.

**It is important to note that seafood suppliers, end buyers, and other stakeholders participating in a JI should not claim premature or augmented successes. As noted previously, JIs span a significant timeline, and associated claims should appropriately**

**reflect the improvement journey over time. Given initiative duration, participants should expect that outcomes may not be obtained for many years (for example, improved fish stock health, given species generation times), and participants will need to focus for some time on process and engagement claims first, which highlight ongoing progress toward laying the groundwork for an effective JI.**

## **1.7 Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification**

Each seafood JI will need to develop monitoring, reporting, and verification frameworks that fit their context and follow best practices. ISEAL has developed best practice guidance for these frameworks, as detailed in this section.

### **Monitoring and Reporting Framework**

All effective JIs will have a progress framework with impact outcomes and an action plan with time-bound targets and milestones, as well as a monitoring and reporting framework to monitor and report on processes followed (including processes to ensure inclusivity) and progress against the time-bound milestones and performance improvements within the jurisdiction. Effective JIs will also have adequate capacity to manage and analyze the data.

A credible monitoring framework allows a JI to make claims about current performance status and improvements that have been made against set goals and targets and should include the following elements:

1. A set of metrics is in place that will enable meaningful assessments of progress toward targets and milestones in the action plan.
2. Primary and secondary data sources for measuring jurisdictional performance. Primary data is collected by the JI participants themselves. Secondary data is often existing data that has been collected by another entity.
3. Data management protocols are in place to gather credibly and consistently, store, analyze, and use the collected data.

Further detail on each of these elements is provided in ISEAL 2022b.

Where appropriate, JIs should utilize existing governmental, sectoral, or other context-specific monitoring systems that are already in place.

### **Verification of Claims**

Credible seafood JIs must have sound verification frameworks that can assess the validity of different aspects of the JIs' progress. These include validation of structural outcomes, action claims, and performance claims. Different levels of verification are required for each type of claim due to the nature of the respective claims. Verification of the performance data and of the monitoring process helps build trust in the quality and reliability of the claim.

The degree and level of independence of verification needed will depend on the claims being made, the track record of the JI, the level of transparency of the data, and the trustworthiness of the data providers. ISEAL notes the appropriate extent and independence of verification should be determined by the amount of confidence the makers and receivers of the JI claims need to have. The appropriate level of assurance will be affected by factors such as the

- type of claims being made
- importance of the environmental and/or socio-economic issues being addressed
- past performance of the JI
- transparency of the performance data
- reliability of the data sources and providers

Where verification is determined to be necessary and/or beneficial, it must evaluate both the quality and relevance of the collected data with respect to the specific performance or process claims, as well as the reliability and trustworthiness of the monitoring process. The quality of data can be reflected in the relevance, accuracy, spatial and temporal resolution, and availability of the data source.

To drive credibility of JIs, it is important to manage the expectations of seafood companies and other stakeholders about their inability to make **performance/outcome** claims for quite some time, given the long timeframe of JIs. ISEAL is leading in generating industry-oriented tools to help companies understand the need to focus first on **structural claims**, which highlight the progress in establishing the structures and systems for an effective JI, and **action claims**, which relate directly to actions companies may take to support development and progress in a JI.

#### *Verification of Structural Claims*

Verification of structural claims consists of reviewing documentation of the structures and operating systems that have been put into place. A high degree of transparency is necessary. Information about the structure, agreements, financing, timelines, milestones, and actions of the JI should be made publicly accessible (such as on the JI's public website), or documentation should be formally reviewed by either a second or third party (ISEAL 2022b). For example, local or regional academic institutions can help with verification.

#### *Verification of Action Claims*

Participants making action claims should make sufficient supporting information publicly and easily accessible, so others are able to confirm the accuracy of the statements made, including that the stated actions have been undertaken. In practice, progress will often be communicated by the implementing partner or JI (ISEAL 2023). These types of claims should be verified by a second party (e.g., local, or regional academic institutions).

### *Verification of Performance Claims*

Performance claims require a higher level of verification, given the importance of these claims and the potential benefits participants can receive. These types of claims should be verified by an independent third party.

As noted previously, a credible monitoring framework is key—one that specifies the indicators being monitored, guidance for measuring accurately and consistently against the indicators, the quality and relevance of data required, and how well the data are collected and managed (ISEAL 2022b).

ISEAL (2022b) provides best practice guidance on how to assess the quality of the data provided, the relevance of the data to the claims being made, and the integrity of the monitoring process. Verification approaches should meet the following principles:

- A consistent, documented methodology is applied when assessing data integrity.
- Evaluators have documented qualifications appropriate for the topics being verified.
- There is some degree of independence in the verification process (data collectors, data managers, and those conducting verification should be impartial). Independent third-party verification is important when market-facing claims are being made to minimize risks of partiality and ensure transparency.
- A high degree of transparency—relevant information is made easily and publicly accessible.

Credible verification that ensures the integrity of the monitoring process also relies on

- whether the metrics used to evaluate performance are appropriate and relevant to the key issues within the jurisdiction and whether they align with established jurisdictional measurement frameworks
- the degree to which the data management protocols have been effectively implemented in practice
- the reliability of the data analysis in drawing valid conclusions about the jurisdiction's performance
- the accuracy and clarity of communication in presenting the findings of the analysis

The final verification approach should strive to meet the four key principles for verification of performance in jurisdictional projects defined by ISEAL (2022b): consistency, competence, impartiality, and transparency. Verification is ideally conducted by a second or third party to help ensure alignment with these principles.

Verification of data and monitoring systems can be carried out by a variety of stakeholders, from formal certification bodies to qualified NGOs or second-party organizations. As JIs span environmental, social, and economic indicators, there will likely need to be an interdisciplinary verification team.

As seafood JIs are still relatively new, there is no global public reporting platform to provide transparency and context for claims. Each seafood JI will likely develop their own public website where they will share information and data in a transparent manner. In the future, the seafood community should aim to develop a global reporting platform, like LandScale for terrestrial JIs.

## **1.8 Traceability and Transparency**

Traceability and transparency are critical components of seafood JIs, helping to address seafood fraud and IUU fishing/farming, worker exploitation, and environmental risk. Traceability is also a “must-have” for the verification of sustainable and responsible practices and stakeholder participation. Transparent and easily shared harvest/farm data provides governments with the information needed for decision-making and fisheries/aquaculture management strategies; enables buyers to verify claims about legal, social, and environmental performance of products; and empowers producers to meet both local and import market requirements (e.g., legality, food safety) and help them meet consumer demands for more transparent and responsible supply chains.

Government officials and fishery/farm managers can use traceability tools as part of their work to improve the regulatory management of their fisheries and aquaculture farms. For example, traceability information can complement data used to set up management plans and protected areas and establish effective policies and regulations. Traceability systems are required for fisheries and aquaculture farms that aim to meet a seafood certification scheme and can benefit developing countries with data-poor fisheries/farms. In addition, traceability systems can directly complement and facilitate the collection and sharing of data critical to managing JIs, especially where data come from multiple agencies and companies.

Supply chain transparency and traceability are fundamental if companies are to credibly claim they are supporting improvements—both within their supply chains and at the jurisdictional level. This requires companies to be able to trace seafood products back to the source of production and to provide essential information (“key data elements” or KDEs) about the conditions of production (such as vessel identity and fishing trip date, the geographic location of aquaculture farms, or the location and inputs of feed production). Various technology platforms exist to help companies advance their supply chain traceability and better understand their jurisdictional-level impacts. Ensuring transparent processes and structures is critical to both the internal and external credibility of a JI.

When JIs get to the point where claims associated with seafood products are sought, seafood JIs should follow best practice guidelines for supply chain traceability. This includes obtaining chain of custody (CoC) certification for fisheries/farms (e.g., ASC/MSC) and following industry-wide interoperable standards developed by the Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability (GDST). The GDST has four core areas: (i) defining which KDEs should be collected and when, (ii) aligning

industry expectations around criteria for verifiable data, (iii) fostering data sharing and interoperability by defining technology standards and data access protocols that allow proprietary traceability systems to communicate with one another, and (iv) aligning seafood traceability systems with modernizing regulatory standards, such as national IUU regulations (e.g., EU, US, and UK). The GDST standards can and should be implemented within both industry and government systems, harmonizing data reporting requirements, streamlining data exchange, and easing compliance with both government regulations and end-buyer policies. While implementation of GDST standards is still in its early phases, governments and stakeholders are already moving toward, for example, using the standards to align the use of electronic vessel logbooks with both data systems used to track commercial transactions and governmental systems for collecting catch documentation and landing data.

The following resources provide further guidance on the tools mentioned in this section, which can be used to implement robust traceability within a JI (we recommend reviewing these resources in the order in which they are listed):

- [Guidance and Tools for Traceability in Fishery Improvement Projects](#): Comprehensive guidance and practical tools to help FIP practitioners and stakeholders successfully implement traceability in fisheries to achieve improved FIP outcomes and encourage more transparent and responsible practices across the fishing industry
- [GDST Standards and Materials](#): Resource library containing up-to-date information about the GDST, the GDST technical standards, and other supportive materials
- [MSC Chain of Custody Standard](#): Resources on the MSC CoC Standard
- [ASC Chain of Custody Standard](#): Resources on the ASC CoC Standard

## 1.9 Lessons Learned

Lessons learned described here are learnings from relatively early-stage (and primarily terrestrial) JIs, with over half operating for five years or less.

- **Appropriate geographic boundaries need to be defined.** The boundaries of the initiative need to align the scope of environmental degradation with decision-making authority, capacity, and policy frameworks, without being too large. The boundary should produce enough product volume to meet market demand, and the trade value should be large enough to attract financial institutions to engage and invest.
- **A backbone organization is necessary.** A coordinating body is necessary for driving stakeholder engagement, vision-building, and technical assistance for capacity-building. This organization should have the skills, reputation, and credibility to engage with and bring in diverse actors and stakeholders.
- **A common vision and multiple, balanced objectives matter.** A strong vision for management of natural resources within the jurisdiction facilitates effective



multistakeholder engagement and helps orient resources and human capacity toward common goals. The objectives of the initiative must carefully balance local needs and goals with larger regional, national, or even international targets.

- **Strong community engagement and stakeholder participation is critical.** Strong multistakeholder engagement is critical for building trust and incentivizing best practices, for data collection (especially in data-poor regions), and for ensuring policies and actions serve all stakeholders.
- **Meaningful engagement with Indigenous populations and local communities is key.** Participation of IPs and local communities helps focus governance on addressing issues around land/sea/resource rights, human and labor rights abuses, equity, conflict resolution, and wider challenges to sustainability.
- **Government engagement is a key driver.** Government must be a core stakeholder committed to formal multistakeholder participation and decision-making. Initiatives that lack government engagement, such as supply chain improvements, do not fit into the JI definition.
- **Private-sector actors are crucial for success.** Companies must be engaged, influential, and supportive of the vision and plan, given the dominant role that market forces often play in driving jurisdictional-level change.
- **Strong partnerships with producer cooperatives or associations are crucial for success.** These cooperatives/associations are often the entry point to scaling impact across dozens to thousands of small-scale fishers/farmers.
- **Robust, transparent, and collaborative multistakeholder development processes and decision-making platforms are needed.** A strong collaborative platform that provides transparency, frequent communication, and continued coordination is necessary to keep the project on course and ensure strong engagement across government, industry, local communities, and civil society sectors, which is necessary for success.
- **Technical partners are needed to support blended finance.** A technical assistance partner is needed to coordinate and develop an integrated set of investable projects to attract private capital and coordinate activities across the blended finance landscape. Having such a partner helps in de-risking the initiative for investors.
- **Transparency and traceability are crucial for verification of claims.** Transparency and traceability within private-sector supply chains are critical for monitoring and verification of JI claims made by industry partners.

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## Conclusion

As governments, seafood companies, and civil society organizations around the world seek opportunities to improve seafood production systems and commit to place-based ecosystem approaches, opportunities for seafood JIs are greater than ever. Initiatives that tackle systemic barriers to sustainable production are an important tool for working toward a future where ocean ecosystems can continue to support the people and businesses who depend on them. By bringing stakeholders together (such as IPs and local communities, government representatives, civil society organizations, and seafood supply chain companies) to implement and support these initiatives, we can deliver significant conservation outcomes by addressing environmental, social, and economic barriers to environmental sustainability and social responsibility at relevant political and ecological scales. We hope this guide will help you join these efforts.



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