

# A Silent Hurricane: Covid-19 and Small-scale Artisanal Fisheries

Sebastian Mathew  
International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)



# Wuhan, Hubei Province, China

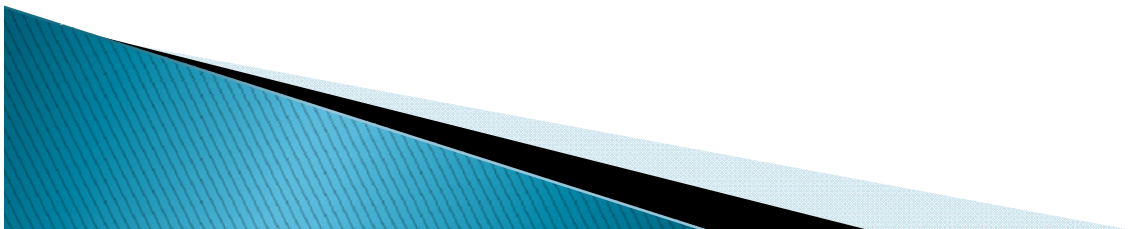
- ▶ Wei Guixian (57 years old), seafood merchant, Hua'nán market, Wuhan began to feel sick on 10 December 2019
- ▶ "...her doctors treated her as a suspected case. They donned masks, isolated her and tried to move her ... but she refused, thinking they were trying to get rid of her because **they suspected market workers were unhygienic.**
- ▶ "I thought to myself, I sell clean things," she said. "I sell live shrimp."

--Wall Street Journal, 06 March 2020



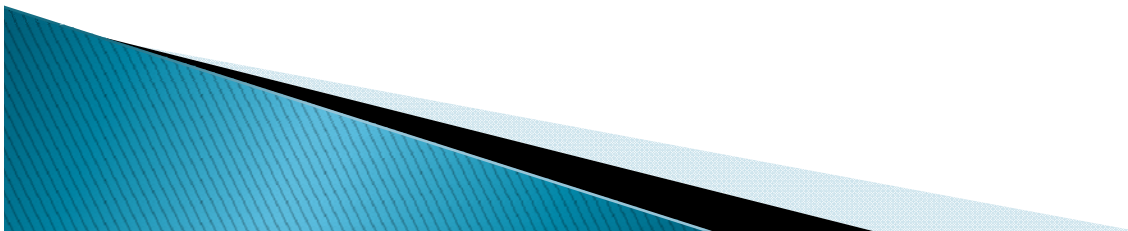
# China

- ▶ Virus stigma in Wuhan
- ▶ Heavy scrutiny of wet markets (selling fresh fish along with other live animals and animal products)



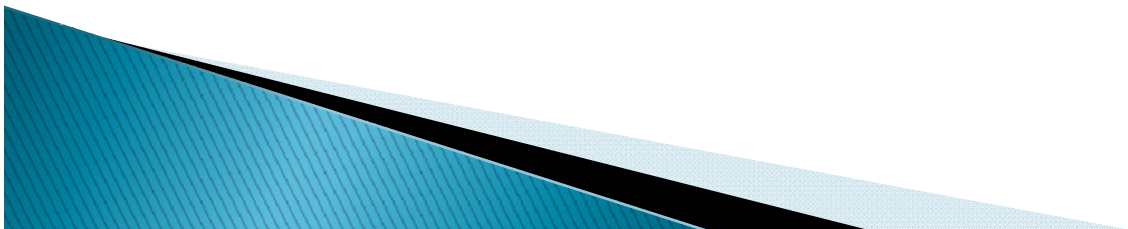
# United States

- ▶ Consumers shying away from perishables
- ▶ Crashing of Chinese import market for lobster
- ▶ Supply chain at a standstill in Alaska due to uncertainty of arrival of seasonal crew



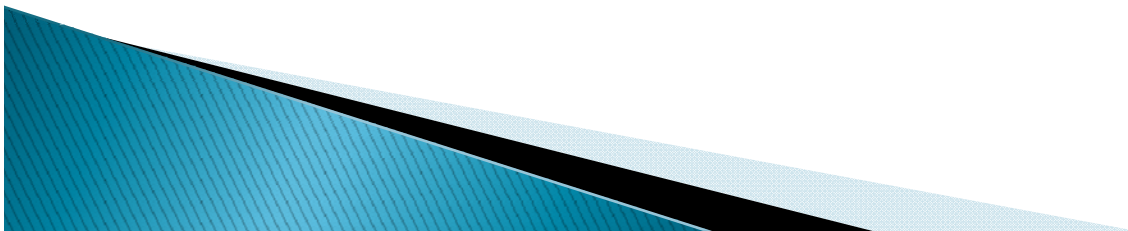
# Canada

- ▶ Eastern Quebec:
- ▶ “Cannot practice safe distancing with an influx of fishermen during crab season”
- ▶ How to fish respecting public health guidelines?
- ▶ Sought postponement of the fishing season to ensure workers and residents are not unnecessarily exposed to Covid-19



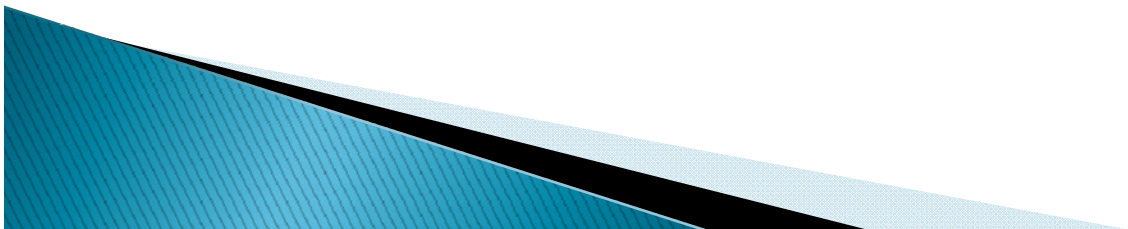
# Honduras

- ▶ Network of Artisanal Fishers of Honduras:
  - 35 fishers died due to Covid-19
  - positive cases: 426
  - Fisheries closed
  - Suspension of transport and communication
  - Lack of tourism impacted demand
  - **Easter marketing opportunities lost**
  - Emergency support measures did not reach fishers



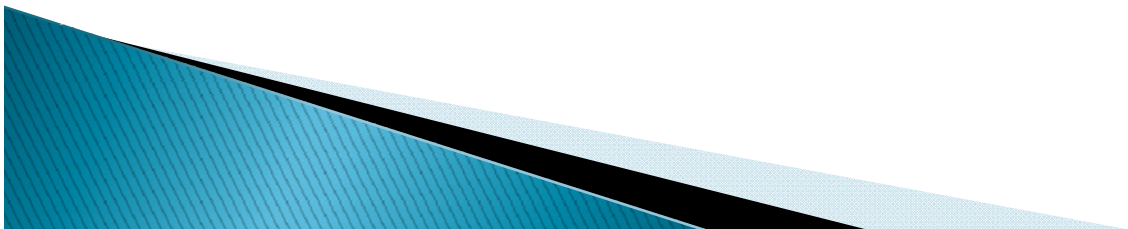
# Peru

- ▶ Anchovy fishing season (quota of 2.4 million tonnes) opened from 13 May subject to Covid-19 measures (daily landings of 40,000 tonnes now, which was around 6,000 tonnes in the beginning)
- ▶ Fishing vessels to act as places of isolation if the crew is affected by Covid-19
- ▶ Personnel older than 60 years not permitted to work in fishmeal plants
  - Source: [undercurrentnews.com](http://undercurrentnews.com)



# The Mediterranean

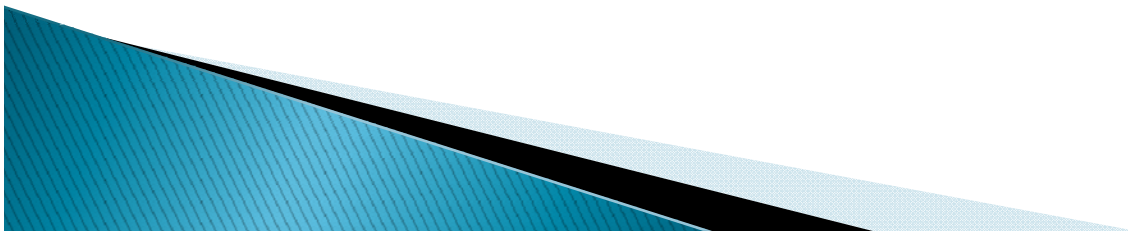
- ▶ 80% decline in the number of fishing vessels
- ▶ Small-scale fishing vessels were the hardest hit—only 10% still operating (social distancing the most difficult to comply with in SSF)
- ▶ Decrease in fish production by 75%
  - Source: General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)





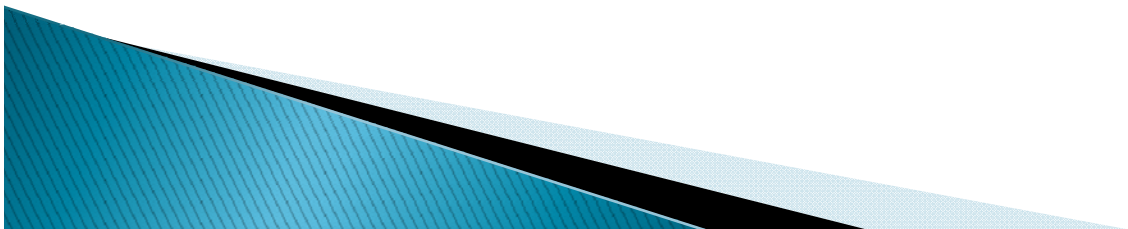
# Spain

- ▶ In Galicia, Spain, with a large segment of artisanal fishers of Europe, poor demand for fish due to the closure of restaurants directly affected the prices at first sale of caught fish
- ▶ Low prices led to many fishermen temporarily withdrawing from fishing to avoid losses
  - Source: Antonio Allut, Member, ICSF, Spain



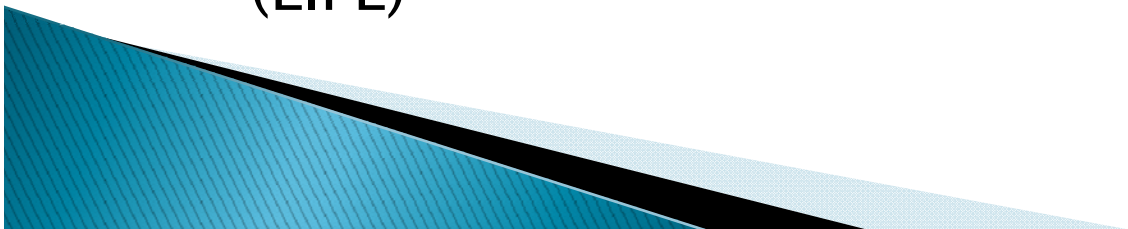
# The Netherlands

- ▶ The small-scale fishers in the Netherlands are seasonal and the season was to start in March/April
- ▶ The sector highly dependent on selling fresh fish to local/regional restaurants, which are all closed, and on tourism, which has collapsed
- ▶ Fishing, processing, trading and selling are allowed to operate; however, the Covid-19 crisis has an impact on the fish value chain
  - Source: Cornelia Quist, Member, ICSF



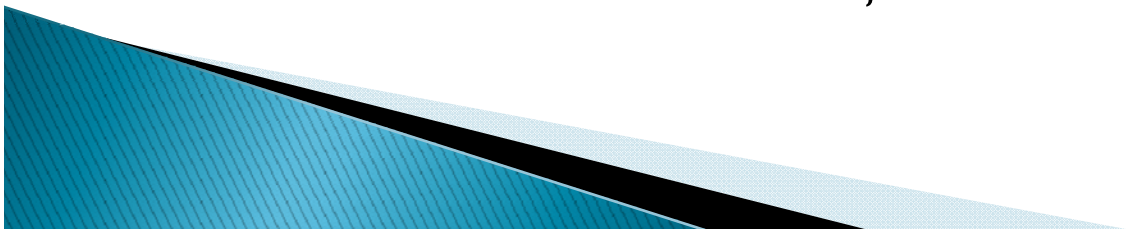
# European Union

- ▶ Overall fishing activity is reduced and vessels are tied up (main markets have collapsed and unable to meet sanitary requirements and need for physical distance)
- ▶ Three kinds of fishing activities continue:
  - Large scale, off-shore freezing vessels, whose catches go straight into cold storage;
  - fishmeal fisheries; and
  - coastal fisheries providing fresh fish for home delivery
- Source: Brian O’Riordan, Member, ICSF and Executive Secretary Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE)



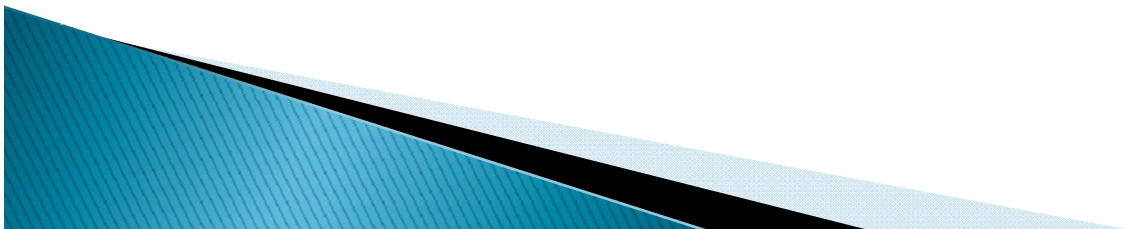
# Senegal

- ▶ Fishers, processors, and sellers are at risk of contracting Covid-19 due to congested working spaces in contact-intensive fisheries
- ▶ Night curfew severely limits work routines and distances to which fishers can sail
- ▶ Access to fishing grounds of neighbouring countries denied
- ▶ Key landing centres closed preventing fish movement
- ▶ Short supply of fresh fish (Sardinella) in local markets and higher prices adversely affecting women's access to fish in the fish processing sector
  - Source: Feed the Future, USAID



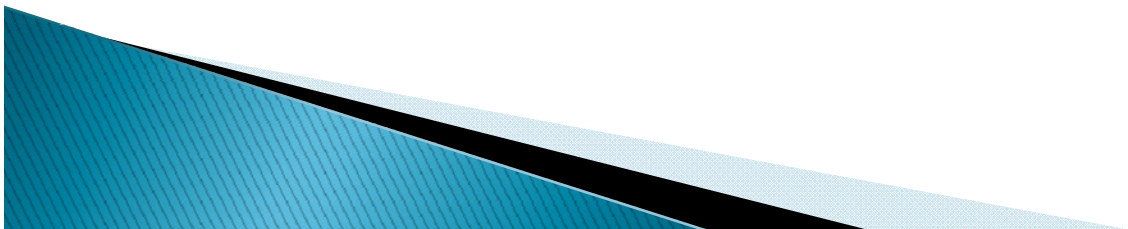
# The Pacific

- ▶ Foreign fishing vessels to spend up to 14 days quarantined at sea before going into port
- ▶ Prohibition on carrier vessels that originate from or transit through countries that have Covid-19 cases
- ▶ Suspension of observer coverage at sea
- ▶ Suspension of crew change
  - Source: SAMUDRA News



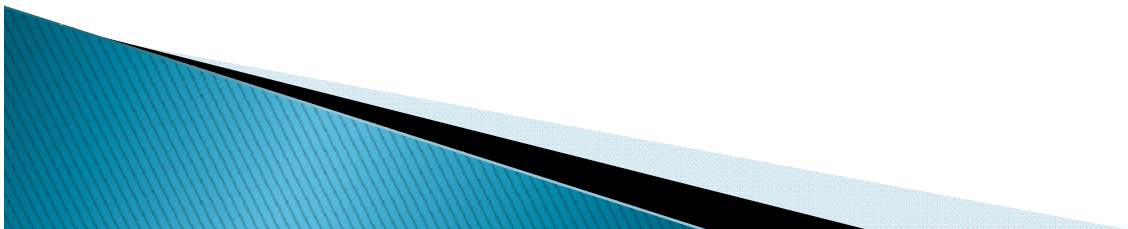
# Costa Rica, Chile

- ▶ Costa Rica: Artisanal fishers have trouble fishing and marketing their products due to the decline in tourism (Source: Vivienne Solis, Member, ICSF)
- ▶ Chile: Lack of demand, workers in processing plants falling ill to coronavirus



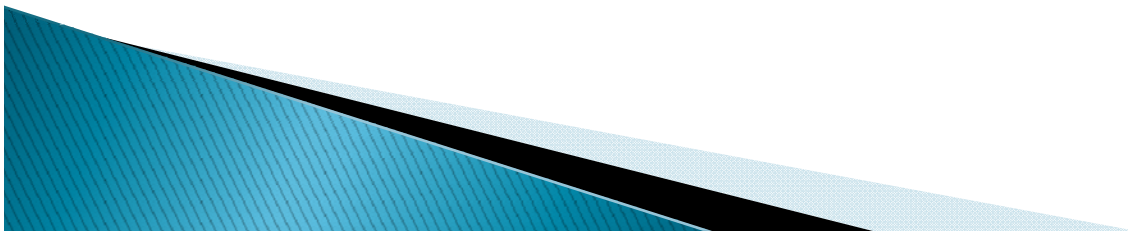
# Brazil

- ▶ Brazil: 12 deaths recorded due to the coronavirus in fishing communities (small-scale fishers hit very hard by Coronavirus)
- ▶ Fish sales down by 50% (shelter-in-place, restaurants closed, lack of demand for fish)
  - Source: Beatriz Mesquita, Member, ICSF



# Lake Albert, Uganda

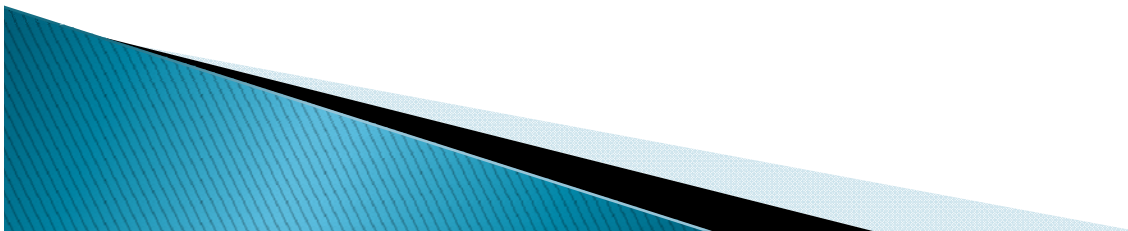
- ▶ Starvation among lake fishers due to the suspension of fishing activities (fear of coronavirus from Democratic Republic of Congo–DRC)





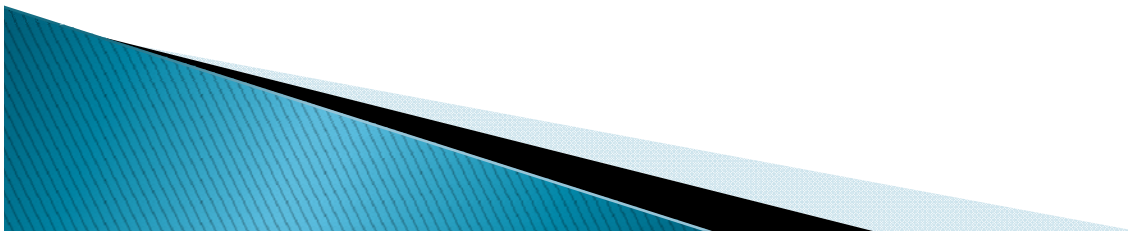
# Democratic Republic of Congo

- ▶ Covid-19 further worsened by epizootic ulcerative disease (EUS) of inland fish
- ▶ Ebola cases
- ▶ Internal unrest



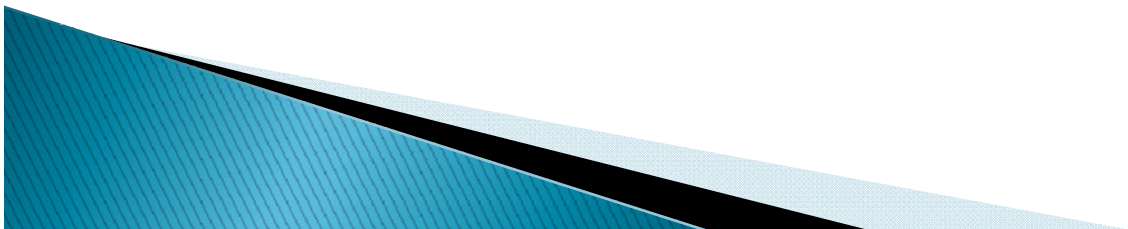
# Japan

- ▶ Training of young students to become tuna longline fishers disrupted (not possible to conduct onboard training due to closed and poorly ventilated spaces on fishing vessels)
  - Source: SAMUDRA News



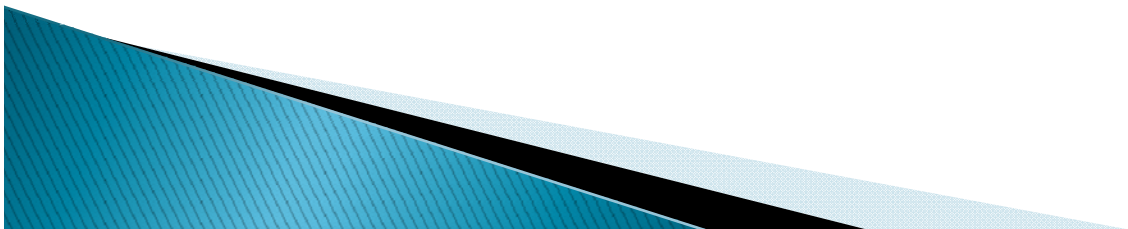
# The Philippines

- ▶ Supply chain and marketing problems (shortage of ice, transportation, etc.)
- ▶ Prices of squid, milkfish, crab, tunas and sailfish for the export market crashed
- ▶ Prices of oysters, dried fish and fermented fish for local market unaffected
- ▶ Illegal fishing in nearshore waters increased
  - Source: CNN



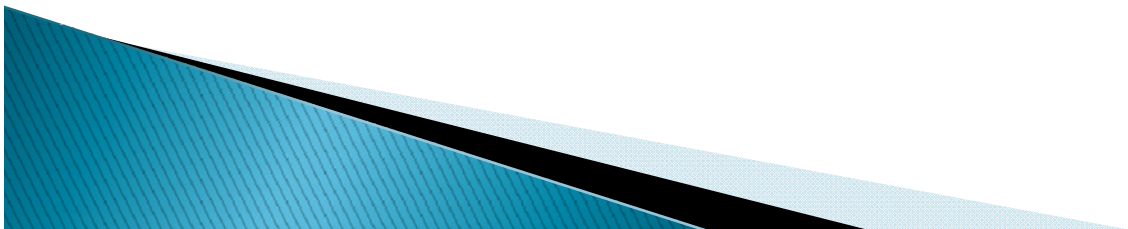
# The Philippines 2

- ▶ Fishers seek:
  - Cash for work (e.g. mangrove afforestation)
  - Honorarium for fishers to enforce fisheries laws
  - Procure fish for food relief packages
  - Improve supply of ice, transportation
    - Source: CNN



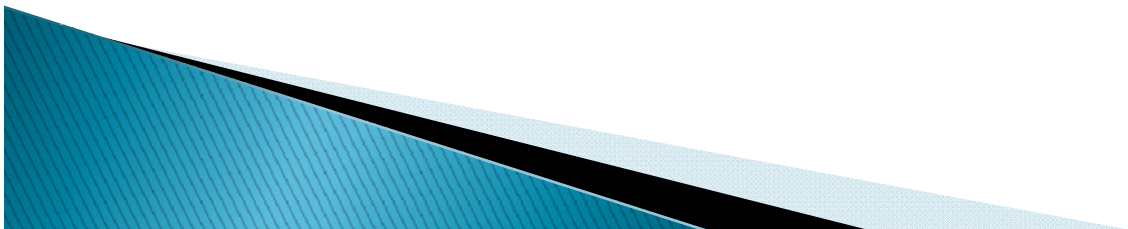
# Maldives

- ▶ Raw tuna exports were affected but canned tuna exports were not
  - Source: SAMUDRA News

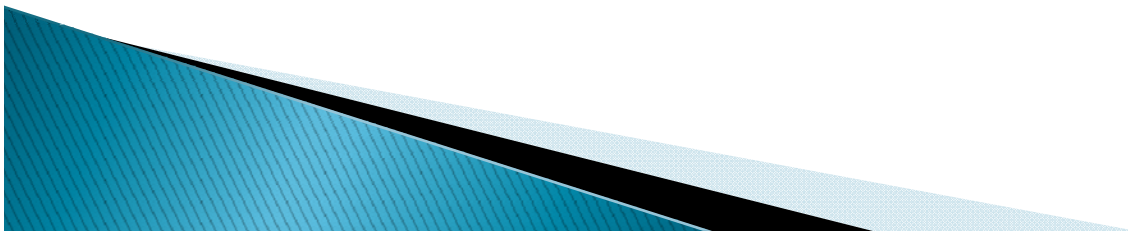


# FAO on Covid-19 Impacts

- ▶ Fleets relying on export market for higher value species are affected
- ▶ Sanitary measures like physical distancing between crew members at sea, facial masks make fishing difficult
- ▶ Limited supply of ice, gear, bait
- ▶ Inability to obtain inputs on credit
- ▶ Labour shortage

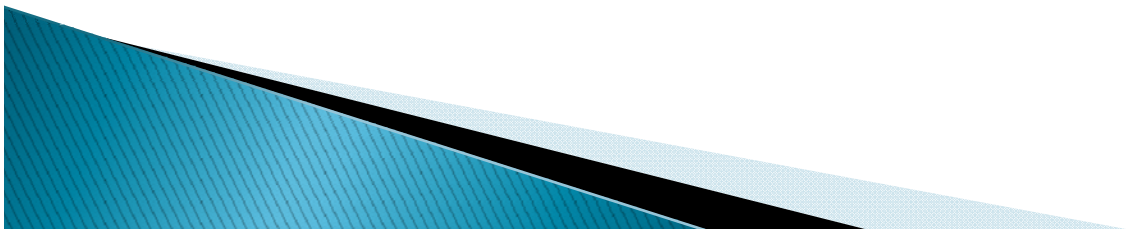


# Response



# Canada

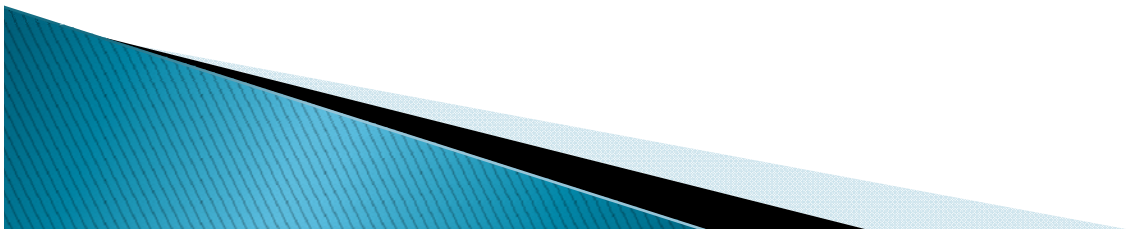
- ▶ US\$350 million Coronavirus package (12.5% of the annual landed value of fish)
- ▶ Support to licensed, self-employed fish harvesters and share fishing crew
- ▶ Assistance to modify fish processing plants to meet Covid-19 health regulations





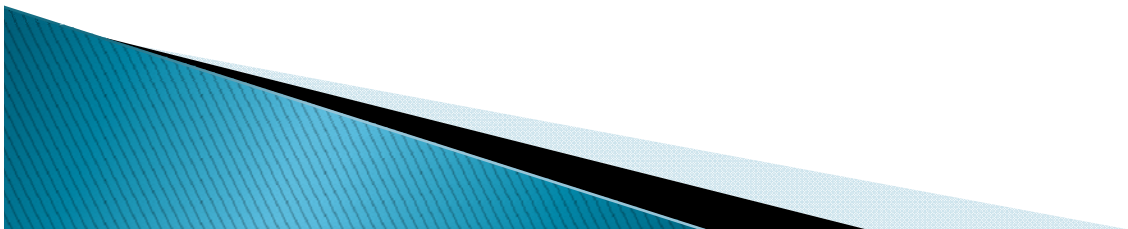
# United States

- ▶ US\$300 million in cash transfers, wage subsidies and sick leave benefits to tribal nations, fishermen, fishing community (about 5.5% of the annual landed value of fish)
  - US\$600 weekly benefit to unemployed workers



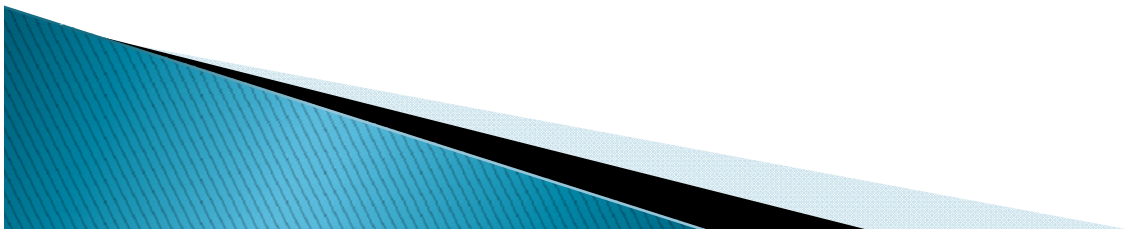
# European Union

- ▶ US\$565 million under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) redirected to absorb the impact of the crisis, to protect jobs and to maintain food security (77% of annual landed value of fish) to:
- ▶ Support temporary cessation of fishing activities
- ▶ Support producer organizations for the storage of fishery products



# The Netherlands

- ▶ Compensation for cessation of fishing: The Dutch government is compensating up to 90 percent of the wages of workers in businesses affected by Covid-19
- ▶ Large majority of Dutch fishers are considered self-employed (including share fishers and unpaid women family members), and are not eligible for this compensation
- ▶ Only a one-time lump sum compensation given to self employed who demonstrate that they lost their income as a result of Covid-19 measures
  - Source: Cornelia Quist, Member, ICSF



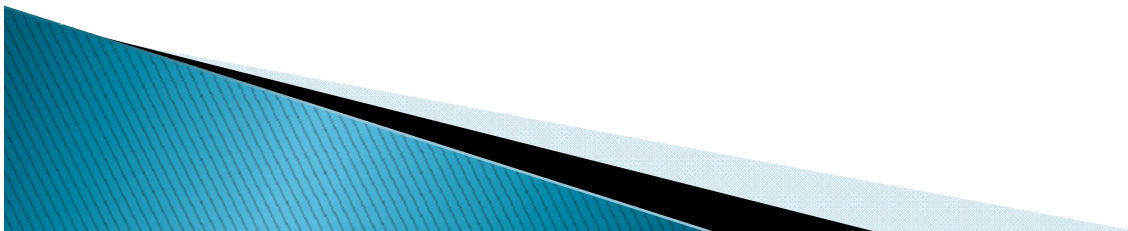
# United Kingdom

- ▶ Nearly US\$13 million to increase supply of local seafood to domestic markets (1.04% of annual landed value of fish)
- ▶ Social protection measures
  - Prioritized education provisions for children of “key” workers
  - Income support schemes such as self-employment income support scheme including for share fishers; job retention scheme
- ▶ Credit schemes such as Coronavirus bounceback loans



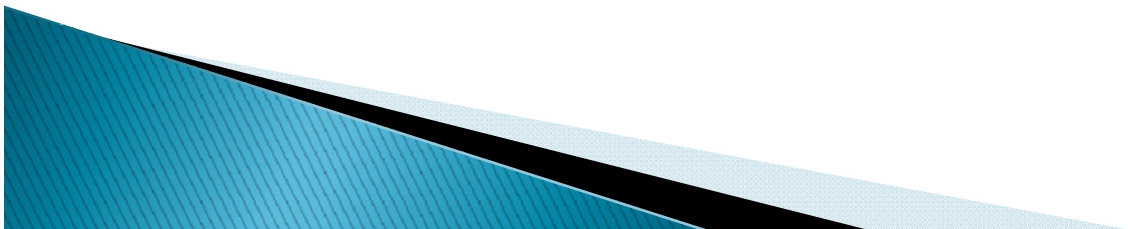
# New Zealand

- ▶ Fishing permitted if physical distancing is possible
- ▶ If physical distancing not possible:
  - Staggered meal breaks
  - Flexible leave arrangements
  - Personal protective equipment
  - If crew already in your bubble, if they are part of your family who you live with, then you can maintain normal distance on your vessel



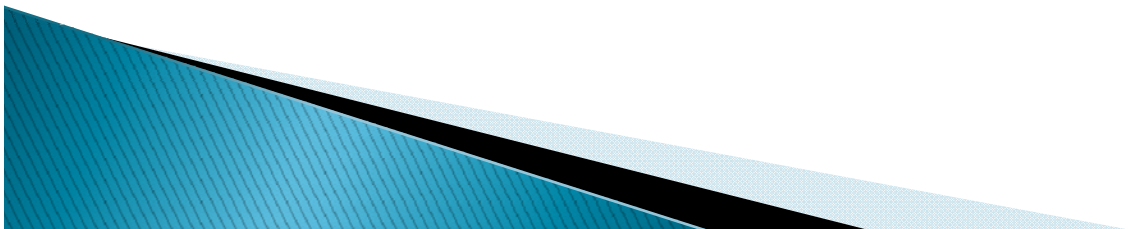
# French Polynesia

- ▶ Fishermen's union went to court to rectify Covid-19 package to include temporary monthly payment for fishers including for self-employed fishers who could prove that they were forced to abandon their fishing activities due to Covid-19



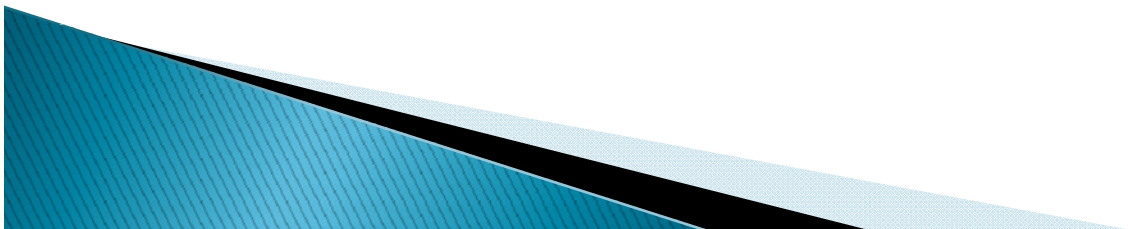
# Brazil, Costa Rica

- ▶ 60% of the minimum wage paid to informal fishers for three months in Brazil after protests from informal fishers who were initially excluded
  - Source; Beatriz Mesquita, Member, ICSF
- ▶ Large number of informal fishers are not eligible for compensation in Costa Rica
  - Source: Vivienne Solis, Member, ICSF



# South Africa

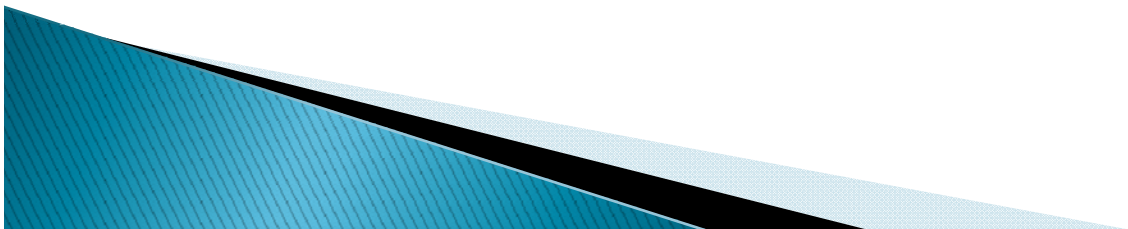
- ▶ Snoek fishing permitted after dialogue between fishers and authorities to ease lockdown restrictions
  - Source: CFFA
- ▶ All fishing permitted except charter fishing (with valid permit, social distancing, following health protocols and prohibiting movement of groups and gatherings)





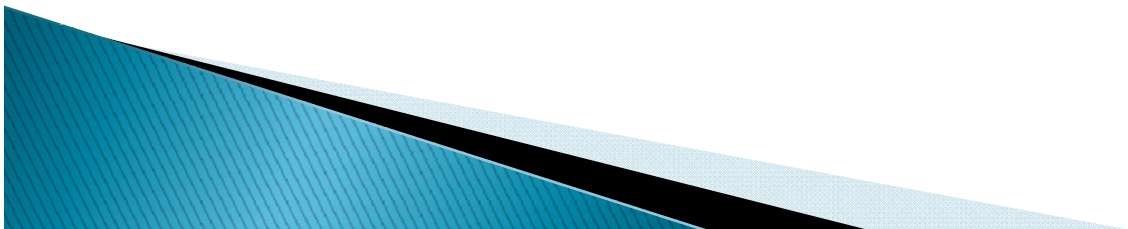
# Civil Society Initiatives

- ▶ Mexico: In Oaxaca fishermen from the ports of Salina Cruz donated fresh fish to families who have limited resources. Fishermen from Alianza Pesquera de Oaxaca offered two tonnes of fish of various species
- ▶ Costa Rica: Providing food for informal fisherfolk families; opening of fair markets to benefit informal fishers
- ▶ Sri Lanka: A group of concerned academics and engineers from Sri Lanka and the Netherlands, provided financial support to help families to cope with COVID-19 crisis in a poor district
- ▶ Netherlands: Small-scale fishers collectively sell fish online, in farmers markets and through consumer cooperatives



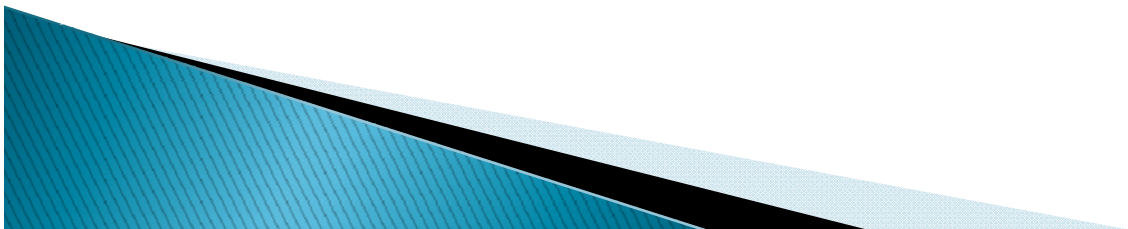
# WFFP Statement on Covid-19

- ▶ Small-scale fishing communities have not been heard in the conversation on how to respond to Covid-19
- ▶ Need for massive support to up-scale health infrastructure and necessary measures to stop the spread of the disease
- ▶ Lack of demand impacting small-scale fishing activities and the income of fishers in many countries (Honduras, Ecuador, Turkey, South Africa, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Gambia, Thailand, Malaysia, Spain, France and Maldives)



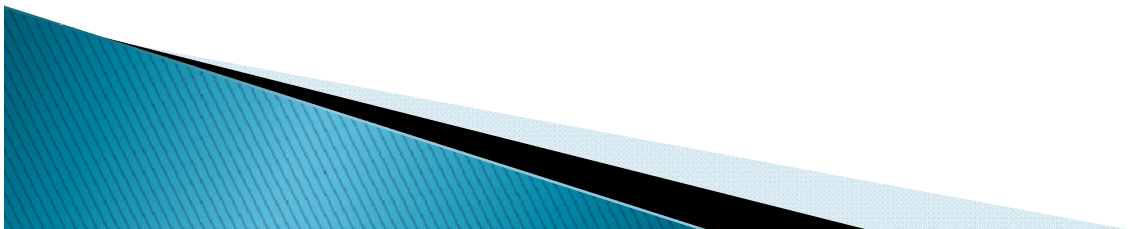
# WFFP Statement (Cont.)

- ▶ Reduce burden on women, their loss of livelihood in the fish processing sector, improve their access to alternate employment like tourism; reduce domestic violence, food insecurity and improve access to medicine and health services
- ▶ Support small-scale fishers (and other small-scale food producers) and their localized food systems, building up on the principles of food sovereignty
- ▶ Guarantee access to food for everyone, especially isolated and marginalized communities and those disproportionately affected by Covid-19



# World Bank

- ▶ New Covid-19 assistance projects in 68 countries under Emergency Preparedness and Response Project (EPRP) and Feed the Future (FTF) project
- ▶ Existing projects restructured in 36 countries
  - Public health system preparedness
  - Social distancing
  - Communication preparedness (information outreach)
  - Risk mitigation measures (protective equipment)

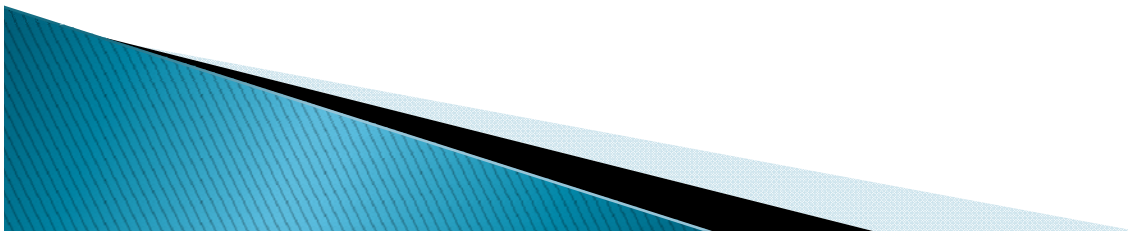


# FAO Recommendations

- ▶ Recognize fishers as essential workers, they provide food to the nation
- ▶ Link fishing centres to villages where smaller varieties can be supplied for a fixed price
- ▶ Governments to purchase seafood for institutional use (prisons, hospitals, etc.) and for distribution as food assistance
- ▶ Extend fishing season
- ▶ Provide compensation to the owners and crew of vessels prevented from fishing
- ▶ Set minimum floor price for each of the important species



- ▶ “Hurricanes you can wrap your head around, but the coronavirus is the silent hurricane”
  - Tom Hill, Key Largo Fisheries, Florida



*Thank You*

