Sustainable Fisheries
PARTNERSHIP

SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

SMALL-SCALE FISHING HAS IMMENSE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE IN THE GLOBAL FOOD SUPPLY. THERE ARE NOW SEVERAL MILLION SMALL-SCALE/ ARTISANAL FISHERS WORLDWIDE AND MILLIONS MORE WHOSE LIVELIHOOD AND WELL-BEING DEPEND ON WHAT THOSE FISHERS CATCH.

These small producers play a critical role in generating income and providing food security at a local level as well as creating products for export into world markets: It is estimated that close to 90 percent of all people directly dependent on capture fisheries work in the small-scale fisheries sector, and the catch from small-scale fisheries accounts for 45 percent of global fish production (including two thirds of fish used for human consumption).

Despite the vital role that small-scale fishers play in human well-being and the global seafood industry, they often live on the margins and their fisheries are poorly managed. As a result, their communities' welfare and individual livelihoods remain vulnerable to a wide array of threats. The FAO, through their recent Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, highlighted the importance of addressing these challenges. These guidelines are the first international policy instrument available for small-scale fisheries globally and are an extremely valuable strategic resource. But while they do have a strong focus on social issues, these guidelines mainly concentrate on the responsibilities of the states and resource users rather than the responsibilities of the markets—and this is exactly where we believe SFP can bring our expertise to bear.

SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES & SFP'S MODEL OF CHANGE

SFP'S CORE METHODOLOGY FOR CHANGE IS TO MOBILIZE THE SEAFOOD SUPPLY CHAIN TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENT IN FISHERIES THROUGH MULTI-STAKEHOLDER INITIATIVES CALLED FISHERY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (FIPS).

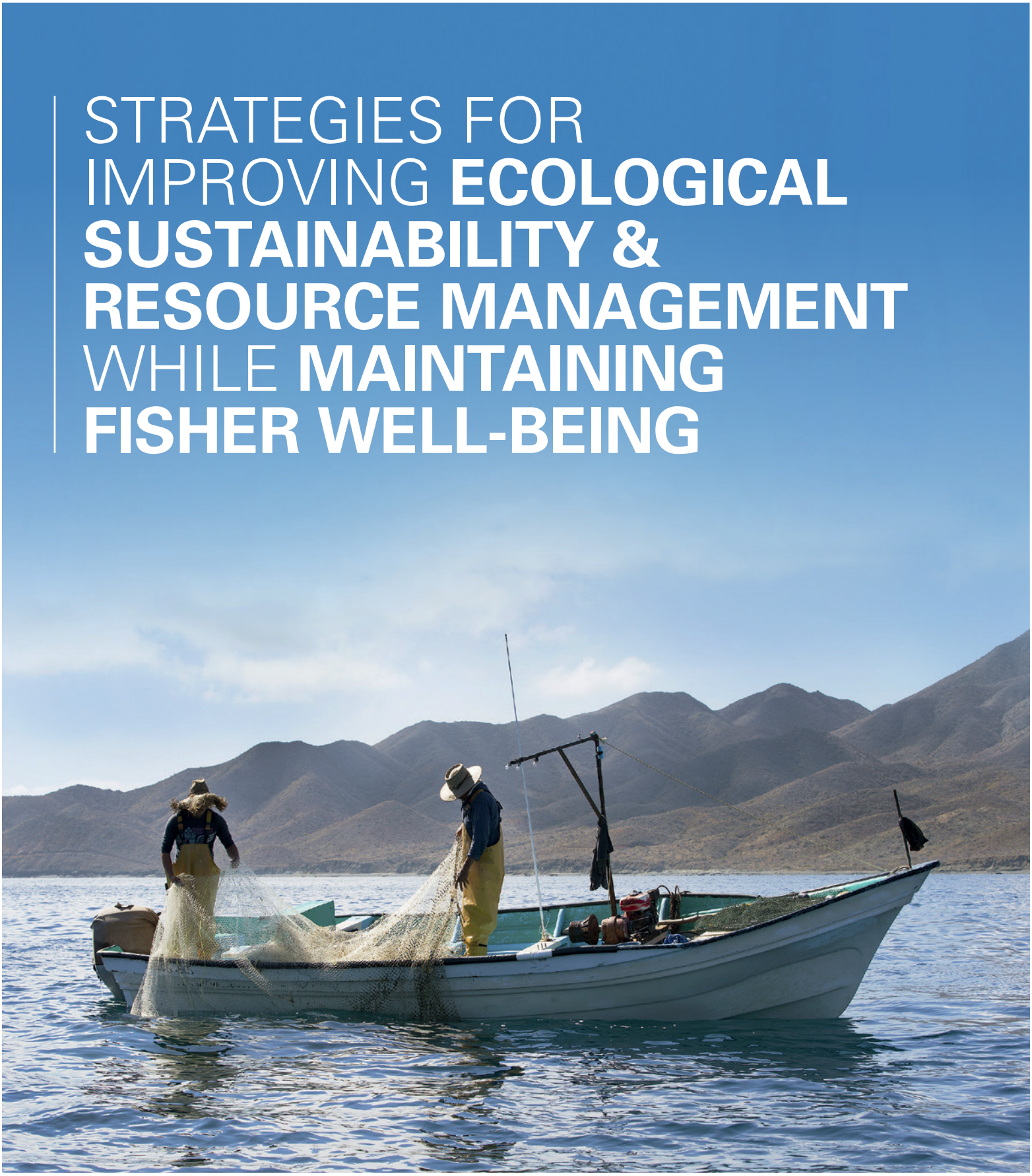
And we have invaluable experience with FIPs in small-scale fisheries; close to one third of all projects implemented by SFP over the past decade either are small-scale or have a significant small-scale component, decisively demonstrating the strategic appropriateness of the FIP model for these fisheries.

A critical factor in the success of FIPs is the ability to mobilize market leverage to effect behavior change down through the supply chain to the producer. At the same time, we have to be careful in small-scale fisheries not to damage artisanal fishing communities through market intervention, which means any initiative will need to be concerned with threats to the social and economic stability of the community. This also means the approach must respect the local traditions and relationships, building whenever possible upon the authority structures that are already there. Additionally, any project must be aware that there are some noteworthy grassroots projects already going on in artisanal fishing communities and take care to not disrupt them, collaborating whenever possible.

In addition, the market leverage required to drive FIPs should not be limited to international markets; domestic markets and their supply chains are also extremely important. And because small-scale fisheries are a vital source of food security for regional and national populations in developing countries, major buyers in those domestic markets can also exert leverage. For this reason, SFP has been increasing engagement with domestic buyers over the past two or three years, particularly in Latin America and, more recently, Indonesia.

Despite having a clear methodology, we have always adapted our improvement model to the specific circumstances for each fishery. This is particularly important for issues such as governance, institution building, and developing policy frameworks. Industry may also struggle in small-scale fisheries to meet the challenges of fishery improvement projects on their own, and SFP is prepared to offer greater direct assistance than is required in larger, better capitalized fisheries.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING **ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT** WHILE **MAINTAINING FISHER WELL-BEING**



Three Mexican improvement projects – Gulf of California Sinaloa Artisanal Shrimp, Gulf of California Swimming Crab, and Magdalena Bay Artisanal Shrimp – are good examples of how we have applied our model of change in small-scale fisheries. In each case, we have important (and necessary) advantages:

1. There is committed industry leadership.

2. All of the parties involved – buyers, processors, producers, regulators – have a good understanding of the sustainability demands from the market.

3. We have some scientific data on the current health of the stock.

Nevertheless, while protecting fish stocks and habitats will yield significant social benefits in the long term, these improvement actions – especially those involving gear, effort, and changes to fishing grounds and cycle – often inflict short-term pain on fishers, reducing their catch and earnings. Fishers whose well-being is especially vulnerable due to their precarious economic situation will develop coping strategies in how they fish, where they fish, and what they fish for, which may then damage their equally vulnerable natural resource – their fishery. This can undermine fisher participation and compliance with improvement efforts, dooming them to failure. Conversely, if the pain can be mitigated by short-term support during the most difficult time, fishers will be more likely to comply, and the resulting improvement of the fishery should reduce the need to support them in the long term.

A major effort by SFP in this area is the Indonesian Blue Swimming Crab FIP, which is led by the association of Indonesian processors, APRI, and has the full engagement of the National Fisheries Institute Crab Council, the major importers of this product in the United States (receiving some 50 percent of Indonesia's international crab export). Despite this significant market leverage, however, the FIP has had difficulty implementing necessary improvement measures, mainly due to the limited monitoring and enforcement capabilities of regulatory institutions. Fishing grounds for blue swimming crab are spread across Indonesian waters with some 70,000 fishers and a post-harvest work force of 140,000, most of them women. There is also a near absence of recent scientific data to assess the ecological and management status of the fishery.

We have been working with the industry for the past year on a "FIP plus" strategy, which recognizes that what happens on the water in small-scale fisheries reflects what is happening in the community. It has two interlinked components:

1. The industry will implement a form of self-regulation through a control document – essentially, a contract among key supply chain stakeholders, where they agree to comply with government regulations – in this case focused on minimum landing size, with full traceability and independent third-party auditing at all points along the supply chain.

2. SFP will carry out bio-economic studies in several demonstration fishing areas to evaluate the possible negative social consequences of such actions and then work with industry – including the fishers – to devise a mitigation program. We are committed to developing a plan that makes this combined "FIP plus" approach viable at a national level in the future.

THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF **IMPROVED GOVERNANCE**

SOCIOECONOMIC VULNERABILITY IS JUST ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL BARRIERS TO SMALL-SCALE FISHERY IMPROVEMENT; INADEQUATE FISHERY MANAGEMENT IS THE OTHER.

This is especially the case with national governments in developing countries that commonly do not have the capacity and resources to develop and enforce mainstream fisheries management measures.

Consequently, one of SFP's long-term goals is to get national governments to recognize that investing in the regulation and management of fishing is going to deliver social and economic benefits. Once again, the role of industry is critical. Additionally, to support effective fisheries management, it is crucial to enhance the governance capabilities of those closest to the fishery – local institutions and their traditional authorities and fishing communities – with support from supply chain stakeholders; the result should be a more effective form of co-management.

One example here would be the employment of the control document in Indonesia's blue swimming crab fishery, which should provide a solid foundation for co-management: Through self-regulation, the industry is sharing the management roles and responsibilities that would otherwise be left to the government's Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries and its local agencies – regulatory responsibilities that the authorities cannot carry out on their own due to limited resources, complicated by the fishery's sheer geographic scope and its many thousands of individual and largely self-employed fishers.

The missing co-management piece at this early stage in Indonesia is the involvement of these fishers, who need to be organized in a way that allows for formally taking on some of the management responsibilities. Their participation in management and, in the short term, their support for the control document strategy are critical for the success of improvement efforts. In the long term, without some form of co-management among government, industry, and fishers that includes access control over the fishing, efforts at stock recovery (such as setting a minimum legal size) run a high risk of failing, as a recovered stock will likely attract more fishers, leading to an overcapacity problem followed by stock depletion.

Closely related to this work, we are collaborating with Starling Resources and the Environmental Defense Fund in the Crab Sustainable Fisheries Management Initiative (IPPRB), centered in the Indonesian coastal waters of East Lampung, which brings together all the relevant stakeholders – local and national government authorities, members of the processor association, picking plant owners, collectors, and fishers – to develop an effective management plan for that region's fishing grounds, adapting the national management plan that was created in late 2016 to the local situation. Additionally, we have been very actively supporting the government's efforts at establishing regional management committees with similar makeup in East Java, Central Java, and Southeast Sulawesi.

OPPORTUNITIES TO **GO TO SCALE**

ACHIEVING COMPREHENSIVE IMPROVEMENTS IN SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES ON A SIGNIFICANT SCALE – EXTENDING CHANGE BEYOND INDIVIDUAL FISHERIES AND COMMUNITIES TO A REGIONAL OR, WHEN PRACTICAL, WORLDWIDE LEVEL – REMAINS OUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE.

We do not believe we can succeed here through a blueprint approach, simply standardizing solutions; we have to treat every fishery as a unique challenge, while also using the lessons we have learned in the past.

SFP remains enthusiastic to work with other organizations that share our objectives for small-scale fisheries and can bring complementary expertise to meeting the formidable challenges ahead. We seek partners in mobilizing influence networks across fisheries as well as with those with technical knowledge or skills in engaging fishers. We recognize how much we still have to learn and appreciate the many other potential collaborators who share our mission.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

www.sustainablefish.org

For additional information please contact us at:
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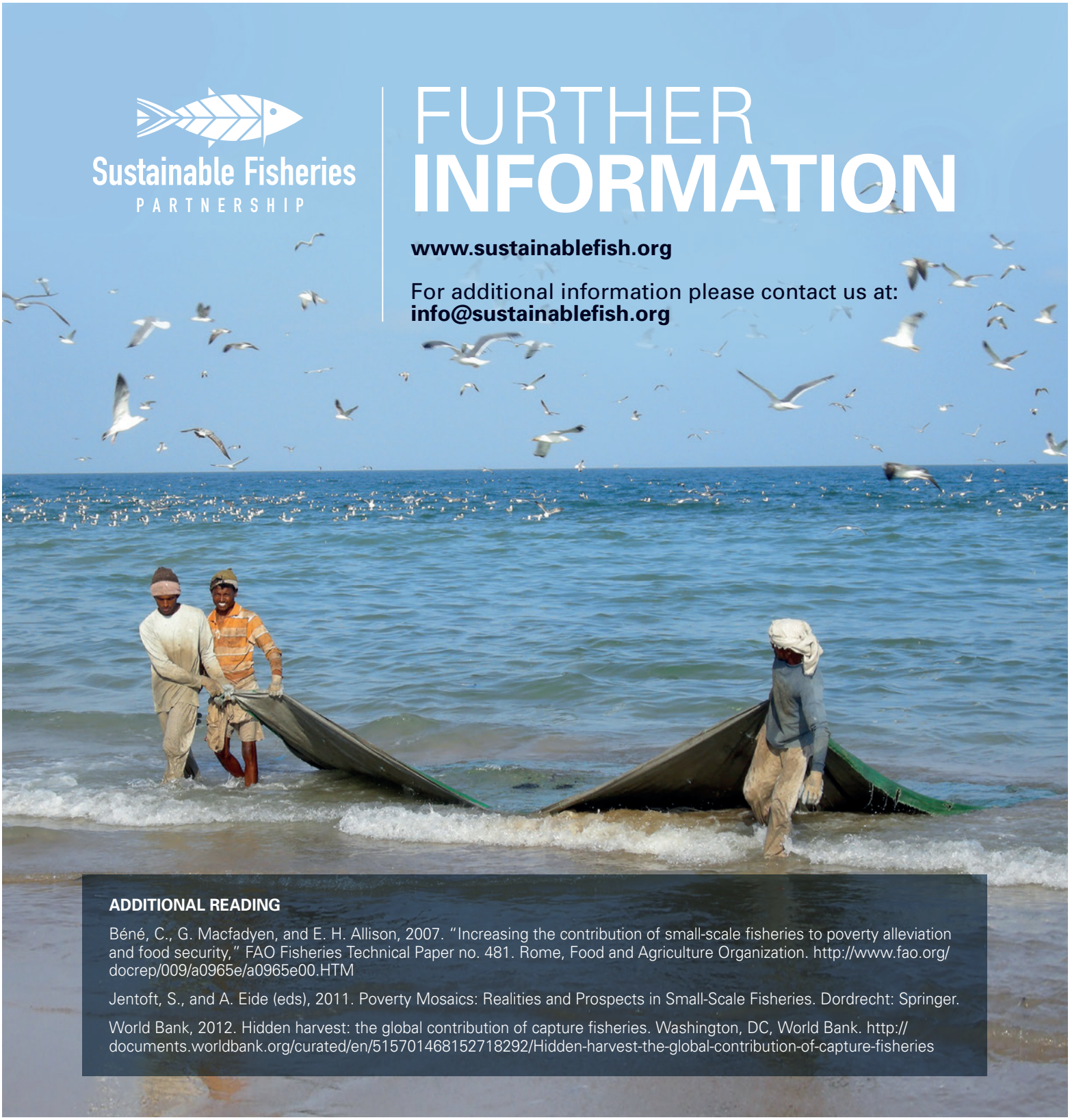

ADDITIONAL READING

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