



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



# *Report of the National Workshop on Fisheries Management Inventory (FMIInv) – Maldives*

08 – 09 February 2026

*In collaboration with*



Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources  
Republic of Maldives







Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



**BOBP** For Sustainable Fisheries  
**BAY OF BENGAL PROGRAMME**  
Inter-Governmental Organisation

# **National Workshop on *Fisheries Management Inventory (FMInv)***

**Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources, Malé,  
Maldives**

**08 – 09 February 2026**



**Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO)**

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## About the Organisers



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

### **Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

FAO is a specialized UN agency founded in 1945 to combat global hunger and promote sustainable agricultural development. Headquartered in Rome, FAO works with governments and international organizations to improve food security, nutrition, and rural livelihoods. It plays a key role in fisheries and aquaculture governance, developing international agreements



### **Bay of Bengal Inter Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO)**

The BOBP-IGO is a regional fisheries advisory body with Bangladesh, India, the Maldives and Sri Lanka as its contracting parties. It is mandated to enhance cooperation amongst its member countries and other countries (especially, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand) for sustainable fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal region. The BOBP-IGO Secretariat is located in Chennai. The Department of Fisheries, Government of India is the nodal agency from India and the hosting agency.

## **Report Preparation**

This report on the “National Workshop on Fisheries Management Inventory (FMInv) in Maldives”.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of BOBP-IGO concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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## Executive Summary

The Food and Agriculture Organisation has initiated information collection for preparation of Fishery Management Inventory (FMInv) to share best practices for fisheries assessment and management. The objective of FMInv is to allow fishery managers, fishers and other stakeholders to access information on other management systems and measures, and their effectiveness or not in achieving the intended objectives. During Phase I of FMInv data compilation for selected fisheries, the BOBP-IGO partnered with the FAO and developed database for 21 fisheries in its member countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka). Building on the information collected in Phase I, the FAO and BOBP-IGO proposed to develop a fully validated database for shortlisted fisheries, through a participatory process involving relevant stakeholders. For this purpose, national workshops were planned. A National Workshop on five short-listed fisheries for Maldives was held in Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources, Malé during 08 – 09 February 2026. The participants were fishery managers, researchers, fishers and NGOs either engaged in planning management framework and implementing management plans and measures, researchers involved in developing these plans and measures, or involved in following and supporting the measures. After the Opening Session, the participants discussed on the salient features of each fishery, management framework, management measures and monitoring, enforcement and compliance five breakout group discussions. Each group was moderated by a Facilitator. Based on the deliberations FMInv database for each fishery has been revised. As the next step, the FMInv survey data will be updated by the BOBP-IGO based on the information received from the participants in the workshop. The revised survey data will be sent for validation to the Facilitators and resource persons and submitted to the FAO. To develop better practical fisheries management approaches, adopting ideas and lessons from similar fisheries will be valuable. BOBP-IGO can undertake comparative assessments to understand regional variations and support the improvement of fisheries management strategies.

## Acronyms

<b>BOBLME</b>	Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem
<b>BOBP-IGO</b>	Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation
<b>CCRF</b>	Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries
<b>EAFM</b>	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FMIInv</b>	Fishery Management Inventory
<b>FIP</b>	Fishery Improvement Project
<b>MLS</b>	Minimum Legal Size
<b>MSC</b>	Marine Stewardship Council
<b>MSY</b>	Maximum Sustainable Yield
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>SOFIA</b>	State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture

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*Participants at the Workshop*

## 1. Background

Following a recommendation from the First Session of the Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management of the Committee on Fisheries<sup>1</sup>, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been developing a global process and tool to gather information on current practices for assessment and management of fisheries aimed at empowering fishery managers to improve sustainability. In this context, the FAO initiated information collection for preparation of Fishery Management Inventory (FMIInv) to share best practices for fisheries assessment and management and to understand “what is working where” in terms of fishery management measures. The objective of FMIInv is to allow fishery managers, fishers and other stakeholders to access information on other management systems and measures, and their effectiveness or not in achieving the intended objectives. This database is the first step to understanding the context and potential pathways for improvement, and ultimately contribute to the development of management plans in line with the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management.

## 2. FMIInv Phase I: Data Compilation for Selected Fisheries

During Phase I of FMIInv data compilation for selected fisheries, the BOBP-IGO partnered with the FAO. The BOBP-IGO adopted the data template developed by FAO and contributed to developing the database for 21 fisheries in its member countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka), covering a wide spectrum of fishery types, management systems, and management measures from the four countries, which was reviewed and finalized by the FAO. The required information was collected from researchers, managers, and other stakeholders associated with the selected fisheries (e.g. through literature surveys, interviews and questionnaires).

## 3. FMIInv Phase II: Developing a Validated FMIInv Database through National Workshop

Building on the information collected in Phase I, the FAO and BOBP-IGO proposed to develop a fully validated database for shortlisted fisheries, through a participatory process involving relevant stakeholders. For this purpose, national workshops were planned to review the implementation of current fisheries management plans or interventions for three or four fisheries in each country. From a series of discussions with experts from the FAO, BOBP-IGO and other stakeholders, the following five fisheries from Maldives were shortlisted for the workshop:

- Reef Fishery
- Grouper Fishery
- Sea cucumber Fishery

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/cd0256t/cd0256t.pdf>

- Maldives Marine Aquarium
- Neritic Tuna Fishery

Maldives 's National Workshop was conducted with the following objectives:

### 3.1 Specific objectives

- To understand the implementation challenges of current fishery management plans/measures through participatory assessment and cross-learning among fishery managers, researchers, and stakeholders; and
- To foster inclusive dialogue among fishers, managers, and NGOs to co-develop actionable solutions and finalize context-specific management actions for sustainable and participatory fisheries governance.

### 3.2 Expected outcomes

- Document grassroots-level challenges in implementing management plans and measures for the respective fishery, and identify mutually agreed solutions for their effective implementation among different stakeholders.
- Facilitate conversations among various stakeholders including fishery managers, researchers, fishers, and NGOs to raise awareness about the importance of management plans and measures for sustainable fisheries management.

### 3.3 Agenda and Venue

- Participants discussed the 4 short-listed fisheries in groups on 08th & 09th February 2026.
- Resource persons from BOBP-IGO facilitated the discussions of the groups. The agenda is placed on the Prospectus. (Annexure 1)
- The Workshop was held in the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources, Malé, Maldives

### 3.4 Coordinators

- **Dr. P. Krishnan**, Director, BOBP-IGO, Chennai
- **Dr. Nicolas Gutierrez**, Senior Fishery Officer, NFIFL, FAO, Rome
- **Mr. Carlos Montero Castaño**, Fishery Officer, NFIFM Assessment and Management, FAO, Rome
- **Mr. Varun Tandon**, Fisheries Consultant, NFIFL, FAO, Rome

### 3.5 Facilitators

- **Dr. E. Vivekanandan**, Senior Scientific Consultant, BOBP-IGO, Chennai

- **Dr. K. Sunil Mohamed**, Chair, Sustainable Seafood Network of India (SSNI), Kochi
- **Dr. P. S Ananthan**, Principal Scientist, ICAR- Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE), Mumbai

### 3.6 Participants

The participants were fishery managers, researchers, fishers and NGOs either engaged in planning management framework and implementing management plans and measures, researchers involved in developing these plans and measures, or involved in following and supporting the measures. The list of participants arranged by fishery is placed in **Annex 2**.

## 4. Opening Session

**Dr. E. Vivekanandan**, Senior Scientific Consultant, BOBP-IGO, presented an overview of the FMInv. He explained that the FMInv work is part of the larger Fisheries Management Portal (FISHMAP) and will be uploaded to the FAO global database.

At the inaugural programme, **Dr. Hussain Sinan**, Director General, Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources, appreciated the efforts of BOBP-IGO and FAO in organizing the workshop. He underscored that the Maldives has developed management plans for most of its fisheries and is currently in the process of implementing them. He further noted that the fisheries management measures practiced in the Maldives could serve as valuable lessons for similar fisheries globally, while the Maldives could also benefit from cross-learning good management practices from comparable fisheries elsewhere.

## 5. Breakout Group and Plenary Sessions

On Day 1 & 2, more than 7 hours were allotted for breakout group discussion consisting fishery managers and researchers. Long breakout group sessions facilitated in-depth discussion on the management measures and how they are implemented in the five short-listed fisheries. Segregating fishery managers and fishers permitted understanding the perceptions of the resource managers and resource users. three facilitators, identified from extensive pre-workshop interactions, generated questions and sought the views of the participants on the two days. Note-takers were assigned to each breakout group.

For interacting with the participants in the breakout sessions, the following documents were referred/ prepared in pre-workshop exercise:

- Data collected from experts on the four fisheries in the FMInv survey forms consisting 112 questions in Phase I;
- Brief profile of each fishery prepared from the FMInv survey forms; and
- Questionnaires related to each fishery prepared for discussion with the participants for the guiding the Facilitators.

The salient observations and takeaways for the management implementation of four fisheries based on the breakout group and plenary session discussion during two days are given below:

## 5.1 Reef Fishery

### Salient features of the fishery

- A small-scale, multi species (>60) and multi-gear fishery. Most common gears are hand-line, dropline, troll-lines. Fishers often adapt gear depending on location and target species, with day trips being the most common, though 2–3-day trips also occur. Notable target species include Snappers, Emperors, Jacks and Trevally.
- A large proportion of the fish caught in the reef fishery is utilised in tourism establishments. The catch is also consumed by locals, and a smaller proportion is exported.
- The annual catch was estimated as 18,000 – 23,400 t in 2014, but the fishery has expanded significantly since then. About 1400 boats and 5000 fishers were engaged in the fishery in 2017-2018. Fishery occurs throughout the year.

### Management framework

- Maldives Reef Fishery Management Plan was developed by the government in 2020 and came into force in January 2025 with five objectives at national level:
- Ensure that all activities associated with the harvest and trade of groupers are carried out through the application of principles of sustainability, ecosystem-based management and the Precautionary Approach;
- Prioritise evidence-based policymaking through the collection of biological, ecological, and socio-economic data on the reef fishery and associated resources;
- Implement Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) measures and strengthen data collection and data reporting mechanisms for the reef fishery and trade;
- Ensure equitable benefits to all Maldivians and improve their livelihoods through decentralised development of the reef fishery and trade; and
- Increase education and awareness on reef fishery and resources amongst stakeholders and the general public.
- Implementing the Plan is by an advisory committee formed under Regulation No. 2025/R-4 comprising: representative from Fisheries Department of MFOR (1); representative from MMRI (1); Reef fishers (2); Traders and Exporters (2), Ministry of Environment (1); Ministry of Tourism (1); Local Government Authority (1); Maldives Customs Services (1) and Relevant Locally Registered NGO (1)

### Management measures

- Commercial net fishing is strictly prohibited.
- Licensing system is in place for fishers, middlemen and processors.

- Fishing Vessels License Validity – 2 years
- Third-party traders (middle-men) play a significant role in the reef fish trade, and they are required to be licensed for the reef fisheries
- Digital Licensing system – Keyolhu (FIS) in place
- Digital Fishermen’s Registry - Keyolhu (FIS)
- Catch Documentation Scheme is in place; collection and management of comprehensive catch and effort data
- Gear regulation with controls on introduction of new types of fishing gear
- Destructive and non-selective fishing methods, such as use of explosives, poisons, and large-scale nets, are strictly prohibited.
- Key reef species, including parrotfish and Napoleon wrasse, are subject to harvest bans, with several more reef-based species under export ban (local use only).
- Export certification mandates that all exports must have a valid catch certificate.
- Various welfare programs are implemented for fishers, namely subsidised inputs, insurance schemes, and employment creation.

#### Monitoring, Enforcement and Compliance

- At present, fisheries data is received via logbooks and purchase records, the former on a voluntary basis, and the latter from processing facilities that are licensed for multiple fisheries. As reporting for the reef fishery became mandatory only in Mid-2025, the catch series is not yet substantial. The most extensive records are currently from export data, supplemented by some data on reef fish purchase records by resorts.
- Logbook/fishery data from
- Licensed fishing vessels
- Licensed reef fish processors/processing facilities
- Licensed third-party traders (resellers)
- Parties exporting reef fish and reef fish products
- MMRI also collects trip-based data, including size, catch composition and other relevant information through random landing site sampling and onboard observer programs when feasible.

#### Enforcement and Compliance

- The Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) is responsible for licensing all commercial fishing vessels.
- In addition, the MFOR is responsible for managing and developing fisheries. Its key duties include:

- Creating and enforcing laws and policies for sustainable fisheries and marine resource management,
- Protecting and conserving marine and land biodiversity, including endangered species,
- Collecting, processing, and publishing fisheries data and statistics,
- Fabricating, deploying and maintaining anchored fish aggregating devices (FADs)
- Implementing socio-economic development projects
- Conducting research and monitoring marine and terrestrial resources,
- Regulating scientific exploration and research in Maldivian waters.
- Coordinating with other enforcement bodies such as Maldives Police Service, MNDF Coast Guard and Maldives Customs Service.
- The management system is in the process of development, and therefore, the performance is yet to be fully assessed.

## 5.2 Grouper Fishery

### Salient features of the fishery:

- Small-scale, low volume, high value, handline fishery in coral reef habitats of the Maldives. Groupers are also caught by dropping baited line while snorkeling and visually aided handlines and gaff.
- Groupers are also targeted during spawning aggregations. The fishermen undertake 1 to 3 days fishing trips and sell their catch to exporter holding facilities situated across the country. In 2018, data from island councils showed that 146 vessels and 730 fishers were actively involved in the grouper fishery.
- Ten among 45 recorded species in Maldives are predominant in the catch. Groupers are exported as fresh, chilled or live fish. Export quantity averaged 869 t during 2011- 2018, and 10-17% was live groupers.
- About 97% of live groupers is exported to Hong Kong. Seven companies handle most of the trade, and they maintain cages in 8 locations, primarily around the Malé region.

### Management framework:

- Maldives Grouper Management Plan was developed by the government in 2020 and implementing regulation (2022/R-2) came into effect in 2022 with five objectives at national level:
  - i. Ensure that all activities associated with the harvest and trade of groupers are carried out through the application of principles of sustainability, ecosystem-based management and Precautionary Approach;
  - ii. Prioritise evidence-based policymaking through the collection of biological, ecological, and socio-economic data on the grouper fishery and associated resources;

- iii. Implement Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) measures and strengthen data collection and data reporting mechanisms for the grouper fishery and trade;
- iv. Ensure equitable benefits to all Maldivians and improve their livelihoods through decentralized development of the grouper fishery and trade;
- v. Increase education and awareness on grouper fishery and resources amongst stakeholders and the general public.
- Implementing the Plan is by an advisory committee comprising: Representative of Fisheries Department MFOR (1) ; representative from MMRI (1) : Grouper fishers (3); Grouper exporters (2); Ministry of Environment (1) ; Ministry of Economic Development (1); Ministry of Tourism (1) ; Local Government Authority (1); Maldives Customs Service (1); Maldives Police Service (1); Locally Registered NGO (1) and scientist involved in research of grouper and grouper fishery (1).

Management measures:

- Use of nets in fishing is strictly prohibited in Maldives except Live-bait fisheries.
- Licensing system in place for fishers, processors and exporters
- Third-party traders (middle-men) play a significant role in the grouper trade, and they are required to be licensed for the grouper fisheries
- Fishing Vessels License Validity – 2 years
- Digital Licensing system – Keyolhu (FIS) in place
- Digital Fishermen’s Registry - Keyolhu (FIS)
- Spatial management designates 5 protected spawning aggregation sites under IUCN Category IV with prohibited activities including fishing, motorized watersports vessels, use of light, diving and snorkeling during spawning (23rd to 3rd day of the following lunar month). Following activities are prohibited within the sites at all times; All forms of fishing other than trolling, anchoring, sand, coral or stone mining, introduction of new species, fish feeding and aquaculture.
- Capture of juveniles, and large & reproductively active groupers is prohibited through minimum and maximum size regulations based on length at maturity and fecundity rates. Undersized and oversized groupers cannot be harvested, retained, processed, or exported.
- Gear management prohibits destructive fishing methods, including SCUBA-assisted fishing, and gaffs used in spawning aggregations or with lights.
- Spatial management designates protected spawning aggregation sites under IUCN Category IV, banning fishing, anchoring, and coral extraction. Marine Protected Areas are also in place.

- Time-based restrictions include seasonal closures of spawning sites, with fishing bans enforced from the 23rd of each lunar month to the 3rd of the next, along with limitations on diving and motorized water sports during aggregation periods.
- Export certification mandates that all grouper exports must have a valid catch certificate, ensuring compliance with size regulations and preventing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- Various welfare programs are implemented for fishers, namely subsidized inputs, insurance schemes, and employment creation.
- Other conservation measures include 93 Protected Areas with varying levels of species protection

#### Monitoring, Enforcement and Compliance:

- At present, fisheries data is received via logbooks and purchase records, the former on a voluntary basis, and the latter from processing facilities that are licensed for multiple fisheries. As reporting for the grouper fishery became mandatory only in 2022, the catch series is not yet substantial. The most extensive records are currently from export data, supplemented by some data on grouper purchase records by exporters.
- Logbook/fishery data from
- Licensed fishing vessels
- Licensed processors/processing facilities
- Licensed third-party traders (resellers)
- Parties exporting groupers
- MMRI also collects trip-based data, including size, catch composition and other relevant information through random landing site sampling and onboard observer programs when feasible. The Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) is responsible for licensing all commercial fishing vessels.
- In addition, the MFOR is responsible for managing and developing fisheries. Its key duties include: Creating and enforcing laws and policies for sustainable fisheries and marine resource management, Protecting and conserving marine and land biodiversity, including endangered species, Collecting, processing, and publishing fisheries data and statistics, Fabricating and deploying and maintaining anchored fish aggregating devices (FADs).
- Implementing socio-economic development projects
- Conducting research and monitoring marine and terrestrial resources,
- Regulating scientific exploration and research in Maldivian waters.
- Coordinating with other enforcement bodies such as Maldives Police Service, MNDF Coast Guard and Maldives Customs Service.

- Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) oversees policy-making, licensing, regulation enforcement, monitoring, and conservation.
- Maldives Marine Research Institute (MMRI) conducts scientific research, data collection, stock assessments, and tagging studies.
- Ministry of Environment (MoE) focuses on environmental protection, habitat conservation, and climate impact studies.
- Ministry of Economic Development (MoED) handles economic planning, market development, and trade regulations.
- Ministry of Tourism (MoT) plays a role in resolving conflicts between fisheries and tourism and promoting eco-tourism initiatives.
- Maldives Customs Service (MCS) is responsible for export monitoring, trade compliance as well as compliance with fisheries regulations.
- Maldives Food and Drug Authority (MFDA) ensure food safety, hygiene standards, and processing facility inspections.
- Maldives National Defence Force - Coast Guard (MNDF-CG) is responsible for marine surveillance and protected area enforcement.
- Maldives Police Service (MPS) handles investigations, law enforcement, and prosecution of violations.
- At the local level, the Local Government Authority (LGA) and Island Councils monitor fisheries, report illegal activities, and engage communities in conservation.
- Regional and international cooperation is supported by organizations like the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) and other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), providing technical support and policy recommendations.
- Export monitoring and licensing systems offer moderate enforcement. However, the enforcement of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and seasonal closures is inconsistent.
- Penalties for violations exist but there are challenges due to limited patrol capacity.
- To provide a comprehensive system of compilation and reporting, *Keyolhu* serves as a one-stop shop for vessel registration, the issuance of fishing and fish processing licenses, the data entry of fish purchases (by processors and traders), logbook data and catch certificates. Penalties for violations exist but there are challenges due to limited patrol capacity.

### 5.3. Sea cucumber Fishery

#### Salient features of the fishery

- A small-scale fishery conducted across the atolls of the Maldives. The fishery targets multiple species of sea cucumbers, harvested primarily from shallow lagoons, reef flats, and nearshore benthic habitats.
- Harvesting is largely undertaken by individual fishers and small groups, operating either full-time or seasonally. Collection is carried out by hand-picking during low tide, snorkelling, free-diving and SCUBA diving.
- Of the recorded 27 species in Maldives, around 15 are mainly targeted. The fishery supplies raw material for processing into dried *bêche-de-mer*, which is almost entirely destined for international export markets, making it economically significant despite its small-scale nature.

#### Management Framework:

- Sea Cucumber Fishery Management Plan was developed by the government in 2020 and the implementing regulation came in to effect in 2025 (2025/R-3) with five objectives at national level comprising the following:
- Ensure that the harvesting, processing and trading of sea cucumber is carried out through the application of principles of sustainability, ecosystem-based management and the Precautionary Approach;
- Prioritise evidence-based policymaking through the collection of biological, ecological, and socio-economic data on the sea cucumber fishery and associated resources;
- Implement a Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) mechanism and strengthen data collection and data reporting mechanisms for the sea cucumber fishery and trade;
- Ensure equitable benefits to all Maldivians and improve their livelihoods through decentralised development of the sea cucumber fishery and trade;
- Increase education and awareness amongst stakeholders and the general public.
- Supporting sustainable trade and export through licensing, traceability, and catch certification;
- Promoting value addition and diversification of sea cucumber products;
- Enhancing profitability for fishing communities through regulated access and alternative livelihoods such as aquaculture.
- Ensuring equitable benefit-sharing among Maldivians from the utilisation of sea cucumber resources;
- Improving livelihoods of fishing communities through decentralised development;
- Promoting stakeholder participation and inclusivity in management processes;

- Increasing education and awareness among fishers, traders, and the general public regarding sustainability and regulations.
- Implementing the Plan is by an advisory committee comprising: representative of Fisheries Department of MFOR (1); representatives from MMRI (1), sea cucumber harvesters (2); sea cucumber exporters (2); Ministry of Environment (1); Maldives Customs Service (1).

#### Management Measures

- Species-specific export bans (White Teatfish or *Holothuria fuscogilva* and Black Teatfish or *Holothuria nobilis*)
- Trade-based controls, including licensing of processors and exporters, mandatory registration in the Fisheries Information System, and requirement for catch certification for exports.
- Implemented through ministerial decisions, and export permit controls (CITES).
- Other conservation measures include 93 Protected Areas with varying levels of species protection

#### Monitoring and Assessment

- Maldives sea cucumber fishery does not use quantitative stock assessment models. Instead, stock status is inferred using: Historical catch trends; Export data as a proxy for removals and Species-specific biological and ecological studies conducted by MMRI. The Ministry of Fisheries has legal authority and institutional mechanisms to enforce sea cucumber regulations, including licensing, inspections, and sanctions.
- Maldives Marine Research Institute (MMRI) conducts scientific research, data collection and is the CITES scientific authority for marine species.
- Ministry of Environment (MoE) focuses on environmental protection, habitat conservation, climate impact studies and is the CITES management authority
- Maldives Customs Service (MCS) is responsible for export monitoring, trade compliance as well as compliance with fisheries regulations.
- Maldives Food and Drug Authority (MFDA) ensure food safety, hygiene standards, and processing facility inspections.
- Regional and international cooperation is supported by organizations like the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) and other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), providing technical support and policy recommendations.
- To provide a comprehensive system of compilation and reporting, Keyolhu serves as a one-stop shop for vessel registration, the issuance of fishing and fish processing licenses, the data entry of fish purchases (by processors and traders), logbook data and catch certificates. Penalties for violations exist but there are challenges due to limited.

## 5.4. Aquarium Fishery

### Salient features of the fishery

- Small-scale and labour intensive, involving diver-based selective collection of ornamental reef species. Fishing conducted using small vessels with divers employing hand-held scoop-nets and hand-nets.
- The fishery operates across multiple atolls and is almost entirely export oriented. Approximately 250 species are in trade, but a relatively small number of species contribute substantially to exports.
- The fishery is demand-driven, with collection locations and target species determined by purchase orders from overseas buyers. It was estimated that ~400,000 individual fish were exported during 2019, valued at 8 million MVR. Less than 100 fishers are estimated to be directly engaged in the fishery.

### Management Framework:

- Maldives Marine Aquarium Fishery Management Plan was developed by the government in 2020 with major objectives at national level comprising the following:
  - Application of precautionary and ecosystem-based management approaches
  - Protection of coral reef ecosystems and associated biodiversity
  - Maintenance of ecological roles of key species
  - Establishment of Total Allowable Export (TAE) limits for species
  - Implementation of species-specific harvest bans and spatial protection measures
  - Supporting sustainable export-driven aquarium fish trade
  - Improving monitoring of trade flow and supply chain traceability
  - Enhancing fisheries sector development and ensuring stable economy contribution to the national economy
- Implementing the Plan is by an advisory committee comprising: Chairperson (representative of Fisheries Dept); representative from MMRI (1), marine aquarium fishers and export industry (3 No); Ministry of Environment (1); Ministry of Economic Development (1); Maldives Customs Service (1); Locally Registered NGO (1).

### Management Measures

- Implementation occurs through regulatory provisions under the Fisheries Act and licensing conditions.
- Applies Total Allowable Export (TAE) limits as the primary catch control mechanism

- Licensing is mandatory for commercial fishing vessels, and marine aquarium holding and packing facilities along with reporting requirements for exporters and holding facilities.
- Catch certification is mandatory, requiring exporters to submit approved catch certificates for each consignment.
- Catch documentation schemes, mandatory logbook submission, registration of participants in fisheries information systems are mandatory for fishers.
- Technical gear restrictions focus on preventing environmental damage and promoting selective fishing practices.
- Use of moxy nets prohibited.
- Fishing prohibited in designated MPAs.

#### Monitoring and Assessment

- Fisheries logbook data including catch, fishing location, trip details and effort information and data integration within fisheries information systems.
- Export and trade data maintained by Maldives Customs Service
- Purchase and holding facility records
- Monitoring is conducted through cross-verification of logbook, trade, and export documentation.
- Biological, ecological and socio-economic research data
- Species-level catch composition data collected through export documentation
- Effectiveness of gear restrictions is periodically reviewed through monitoring programmes and stakeholder consultations.
- Monitoring MPAs is through compliance inspections, research surveys, and enforcement patrols. MFOR has legal authority and institutional mechanisms to enforce aquarium fishery regulations, including licensing, inspections, and sanctions.
- Enforcement is through inspections at export points, holding facilities, and data verification, and coordination between fisheries authorities, customs, and enforcement agencies.
- Enforcement is by fisheries authorities, customs officials, and maritime enforcement agencies.
- Using poisonous or illegal methods, such as moxy nets, can lead to heavy penalties.
- Implementation of MPAs is through coordination between fisheries authorities, environmental agencies, and local councils. Enforcement is supported through regulatory restrictions on fishing activities within designated protected areas.

## 5.5. Neritic Tuna Fishery

### Salient features of the fishery

- Neritic tuna fisheries in the Maldives is a smallscale fishery, primarily targeting species like frigate tuna (*Auxis thazard*) and kawakawa (*Euthynnus affinis*), which are crucial for local consumption and export.
- The catch of both species was 218 t in 2020 by all gears. The fishery mainly employs pole-and-line and handline methods. Boats are small (<24 m LoA), and operations are concentrated mainly in the central and south-central atolls, close to the atolls, and occasionally inside the atoll lagoon with crew of 3-5. Prior to 1980, the troll fishery for neritic tunas was well established.
- However, with subsequent expansion and development of the pole-and-line and handline fisheries targeting skipjack and yellowfin tuna, the economic importance of the neritic tuna fishery has declined significantly.

### Management Framework:

- Maldives Tuna Fishery Management Plan was developed for all tuna species (including neritic tunas) by the government in 2021 with five objectives at national level:
- Ensure all activities associated with the harvest and trade of tuna are carried out through the application of principles of sustainability, ecosystem-based management and the Precautionary Approach to fishery management, in a manner most beneficial to Maldivians;
- Maximise the economic benefits from the tuna resources through improved commercial operations and by diversifying the tuna processing sector through use of modern technology;
- Enhance contribution to food security and contribute to the improvement of quality of life in the Maldives by ensuring equitable distribution of wealth generated from the fishery;
- Strengthen Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) to prevent, deter and eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing for tuna and to protect the rights of tuna fishers and ensure their safety.
- Ensure all management measures taken under the Management Plan facilitate Maldives to implement its national, regional and international tuna fishery management and trade obligations.
- Implementing the Plan is by an advisory committee comprising: Chairperson (from DoF); representatives from the following: MMRI, tuna fishers (4 No); tuna processors for export and domestic market (2); Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Economic Development; Local Government Authority; Locally Registered NGO (2) and scientist involved in research of tuna and tuna fishery.

## Management Measures

- Implementation occurs through regulatory provisions under the Fisheries Act and licensing conditions. There are no specific management measures for neritic tunas and it is considered along with management of oceanic tunas.
- Fisheries Information System (FIS)-online platform that monitors catch logbooks, fish purchase information, fishing vessel license details, and catch certificates, enhancing traceability and data accuracy within the tuna fishery sector,
- Observer Programs-Onboard observers collect vital information on the fishery, including the size and number of tuna caught, different species used as baitfish, and fuel efficiency of vessels,
- Electronic Monitoring Systems- Implementation of electronic monitoring technologies, such as vessel locating devices and electronic reporting systems, improves fisheries transparency and enhances ecological and socioeconomic resilience across large-scale fisheries,
- Maldives collaborates with regional fisheries management organizations, such as the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), to align national monitoring efforts with international conservation and management measures.
- Commercial net fishing is strictly prohibited.
- Licensing system in place for fishers, processors and exporters.
- Boat registration system – Keyolhu in place.
- Fishing in MPAs prohibited.
- All licensed tuna fishing vessels of 24 meters and above in overall length shall install and keep in operation a VMS that meets standards and specifications set out by the Ministry.
- Export certification mandates that all tuna exports must have a valid catch certificate, ensuring compliance with size regulations and preventing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- Various welfare programs are implemented for fishers, namely subsidised inputs, insurance schemes, and employment creation.
- The handline fishery for neritic tunas presents cooperation challenges because it is more individualistic than pole-and-line operations. Small-scale fishermen and more commercialised fleets occasionally clash. In order to facilitate communication with the government, fishermen in the Maldives' neritic tuna fisheries are grouped into organisations such as the Maldives Fishermen's Association (MFA) and Atoll or Island-level Fisher Committees. Under the Maldives Fisheries Act (2019), they participate in a co-management system, sharing local knowledge and consulting with the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) on measures like MPAs, seasonal closures, and gear restrictions.

### Monitoring and Assessment and enforcement

- No system is established specifically for neritic tunas. In general, for tuna fisheries, there is system of data recording - catch documentation scheme established from 2010 to fulfil the various international obligations and requirements and strengthen the compliance of the Maldivian fisheries sector with the European Union's Regulation to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (EU IUU Regulation).
- Stock estimates for neritic tunas not available.
- Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) oversees policy-making, licensing, regulation enforcement, monitoring, and conservation.
- Maldives Marine Research Institute (MMRI) conducts scientific research, data collection, stock assessments, and tagging studies.
- Ministry of Environment (MoE) focuses on environmental protection, habitat conservation, and climate impact studies. Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) oversees policy-making, licensing, regulation enforcement, monitoring, and conservation.
- Ministry of Economic Development (MoED) handles economic planning, market development, and trade regulations.
- Ministry of Tourism (MoT) plays a role in resolving conflicts between fisheries and tourism and promoting eco-tourism initiatives.
- Maldives Fisheries Enforcement Unit (MFEU)- enforces fisheries laws, work to prevent IUU, surveillance and inspection of fishing activities.
- Marine Conservation Society (MCS) is responsible for export monitoring, trade compliance, and catch certification.
- Maldives Customs Service (MCS) ensures export certification compliance and conducts dockside inspections to prevent illegal shipments.
- Maldives Food and Drug Authority (MFDA) ensures food safety, hygiene standards, and processing facility inspections.
- Maldives National Defence Force - Coast Guard (MNDF-CG) is responsible for marine surveillance and protected area enforcement.
- Maldives Police Service (MPS) handles investigations, law enforcement, and prosecution of violations.
- At the local level, the Local Government Authority (LGA) and Island Councils monitor fisheries, report illegal activities, and engage communities in conservation.
- Regional and international cooperation is supported by organizations like the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), providing technical support and policy recommendations.

- Export monitoring and licensing systems offer moderate enforcement. However, the enforcement of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and seasonal closures is inconsistent.
- Engaging in fishing activities without the requisite license can result in fines ranging from MVR 100,000 to MVR 1,000,000, with the possibility of confiscation of the vessel and any gains from the illegal activity. Fishing in MPA imposes USD 26,000. Illegal fishing using prohibited gear types can lead to fines from MVR 500,000 to MVR 8 million.

## 6. Closing remarks

**Dr. E. Vivekanandan**, Senior Scientific Consultant, BOBP-IGO, presented the outcomes of the workshop and outlined the next steps of the project. He emphasized that the workshop generated valuable new insights from diverse stakeholders, which will add significant value to the FMInv.

## 7. Outcomes from the workshop and Next Steps

On 09 February 2026, a wrap-up meeting among the team from FAO, BOBP-IGO and facilitators was held to assess the conduct and outcomes of the workshop, and the next steps to be taken. It was unanimously opined that the workshop achieved its objectives. All the participants participated enthusiastically in the discussions and were willing to share their knowledge. Good acquaintance with the facilitators with many participants helped win the trust in the workshop. It was opined that pre-workshop briefing on the workshop structure and expectations from the participants would have further strengthened the discussions.

### Outcomes from the workshop

- Grassroot-level challenges in implementing management plans and measures for the respective fishery and identify mutually agreed solutions for their effective implementation among different stakeholders were documented.
- Conversations among various stakeholders including fishery managers, researchers, fishers, and NGOs to raise awareness about the importance of management plans and measures for sustainable fisheries management were facilitated.

### Next steps

- The FMInv survey data in Excel sheets will be revised by the BOBP-IGO based on the updated information received from the participants in the workshop.
- The revised survey data will be sent for validation to the Facilitators and resource persons and submitted to the FAO.
- A comprehensive information sheet/template will be prepared by the BOBP-IGO and circulated to State Fisheries Departments to capture current management practices, challenges, and relevant data.



## National Workshop on Fisheries Management Inventory (FMInv)

08-09 February 2026

### Session I (Fisheries Managers & Researchers)

08 February 2026

Time	Agenda
09:00-09:30	Inaugural Programme
09.30-09.45	Introduction of participants
09:45-10:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of the FMInv project and tool</li> <li>• Overview of the FMInv Workshop</li> </ul>
10:15-11:00	National fisheries policies & legislations - Presentation by DoF, Maldives
11:00-11:20	<b>Morning tea</b>
11:20-13:00	Breakout group discussion on implementation of management plans & management measures
13:00-14:00	<b>Lunch</b>
14:00-15:30	Breakout group discussion on implementation of management plans & management measures (continued)
15:30-15:50	<b>Afternoon tea</b>
15:50-17:00	Plenary session
17:00	Close for the day

## **Session II (Fishery Managers, Fishers & Researchers)**

**09 February 2026**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
<b>09:00-09:30</b>	Inaugural Programme
<b>09.30-09.45</b>	Introduction of participants
<b>09:45-10:00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overview of the FMInv project and tool</li><li>• Overview of the FMInv workshop</li></ul>
<b>10:00-10:30</b>	National fisheries policies & legislations - Presentation by DoF, Maldives
<b>10:30-11:00</b>	Breakout group discussion on implementation of management plans & management measures
<b>11:00-11:20</b>	<b>Morning tea</b>
<b>11:20-13:00</b>	Breakout group discussion on implementation of management plans & management measures (continued)
<b>13:00-14:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>14:00-15:30</b>	Breakout group discussion on implementation of management plans & management measures (continued)
<b>15:30-15:50</b>	<b>Afternoon tea</b>
<b>15:50-17:00</b>	Plenary session & close for the day





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