

# Sharing data key in fight against illegal fishing

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Sharing data may be a vital element in ending illegal fishing—a crime currently robbing nations of approximately \$23 billion annually while also undermining legal fisheries management and industry practices. A

perpetrator of human trafficking, smuggling, human rights violations and environmental degradation, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing poses a serious threat to the economies, environment and security of nations. A new paper examines how data sharing between countries committed to Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14), which entails ending IUU fishing by 2020, can be successfully implemented globally.

"The paper is really about creating a pathway to better implement the UN Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) globally. This work is all about making fisheries more sustainable, marine ecosystems more resilient, and coastal nation economies healthier," said Annie Brett, André Hoffman Fellow at the Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions and World Economic Forum Center for the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Central to accomplishing SDG 14, the agreement aims to eliminate IUU fishing by denying culpable fishing vessels from using ports and landing catches. In turn, the agreement reduces the incentive for IUU vessels to operate and prevents their catches from reaching national and international markets. As of March 2019, 59 port nations support and signed the agreement, however successful implementation also depends on near real-time communication and data sharing.

To inform their report, Brett and her colleagues examined early PSMA success in tuna fisheries of both the Indian Ocean and Northeast Atlantic. The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission adopted systems in full compliance with PSMA, providing working examples of overcoming barriers to combat IUU. Using these as [case studies](#), and consulting with fisheries experts, Brett identified three main ingredients necessary to achieving successful PSMA implementation and moving nations closer to achieving SDG 14: cross-jurisdictional cooperation; data platforms and exchange mechanisms; and resources and funding.

"An essential piece of PSMA efficacy centers around countries sharing their near real-time data with one another, in order to ensure that IUU vessels are first identified and then quickly prevented from offloading their fish in ports," Brett said.

For example, the Regional Fisheries Management Organization or the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation represent existing pathways for data exchange. The study also suggests coupling regional cooperation with national action plans to ensure interagency cooperation and communication, as fisheries intersect with many regulatory agencies such as environment, trade, foreign affairs and law enforcement.

Sharing data between regions and nations cannot be accomplished without developed technology platforms supporting the exchange. While similar information is often collected at port inspections, the researchers found that implementing standardized data collection aligned with PSMA requirements could increase efficiency and ensure regulation. The team suggests the first step in achieving this goal lies in mapping current port inspection and data transfer procedures with PSMA requirements. The researchers also note that designing and implementing data collection requires funding, which may be challenging particularly in developing countries. However, regional coordination of resources may be critical in ensuring investments are effective.

Taking these three components into account, the study suggests a path toward coordinated implementation of PSMA, especially with a focus on effective fisheries data sharing, to provide a critical step toward ending IUU by 2020.

**More information:** For more information, see [oceansolutions.stanford.edu/ke ... bing-illegal-fishing](https://oceansolutions.stanford.edu/ke...bing-illegal-fishing)

Provided by Stanford University

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