

Strengthening Bocas del Toro's Fisheries Value Chain

Strengthening the Bocas del Toro fisheries value chain means more

Income for Fishers and more Fresh, Local Seafood

for communities and tourists.



The issue.

Lobster and reef fish stocks under pressure; weak organisation and poor access to ice reduce quality and prices.



The fix.

Improve access to ice and basic landing-site upgrades, and promote safer, more selective fishing through training and product diversification.



Why it matters.

Protects stocks, improves product quality and prices, and makes livelihoods safer and more stable.

Harvest



The issue.

Minimal value-added processing; limited cold storage and hygiene processes.



The fix.

Invest in small processing hubs, provide HACCP/food-safety and processing training and support.



Why it matters.

Increases value per product landed, creates better local jobs and opens doors to higher-value tourism markets.

Processing



The issue.

Trade dominated by informal intermediaries, weak bargaining power for fishers, inadequate cold chain storage and traceability.



The fix.

Establish community centres to consolidate catch with cold chain storage and basic processing.



Why it matters.

Keeps more value in Bocas communities, stabilises prices, and makes it possible to reach premium buyers that require reliability and traceability.

Wholesale/Distribution



The issue.

Highly informal beach and street vending; variable hygiene and cold chain storage; narrow product range.



The fix.

Upgrade key retail points with shade and cold display; train vendors in safe handling and branding around 'buy local'.



Why it matters.

Build consumer trust, boosts sales, and channels tourism spending back into local communities.

Retail

Optimisation & Opportunities

Bocas del Toro can earn more from its fisheries by using what it has better and by growing new, climate smart seafood and ocean jobs.

Optimising what we have.

New Opportunities.



Improve quality from sea to plate

Invest in community owned and operated solar-powered cold storage infrastructure so seafood stays fresh longer and earns better prices.



Boost boat safety and food safety skills

Offer boat safety training and food safety training on handling and packaging so products can reach different markets.



Strengthen fisher groups and co-ops

Support fisher organisations to encourage them to sell together, share ice and storage, and reach better-paying buyers.



Link fisheries to tourism experience

Work with local Indigenous groups to offer cultural tours and experiences that revolve around the local fishery.



Create value-added seafood products

Develop simple value-added products like fillets, ceviche kits, smoked, and ready-to-eat meals for tourism and community markets.



Grow seaweed and shellfish aquaculture.

Storytelling gives businesses the opportunity to stand out against competitors by connecting with their audience. Stories allow them to leave lasting impressions.

Strategic Roadmap

A plan to make Bocas del Toro's fisheries value chain safer, fairer, and more profitable for coastal communities.



Stronger Institutions and Teamwork

- Create a small regional ARAP team that helps fishers and co-ops with business and paperwork.
- Form working groups with ARAP, Health, Environment and Indigenous leaders to plan together.
- Help fishers form and run co-ops with basic training
- Improve simple data systems



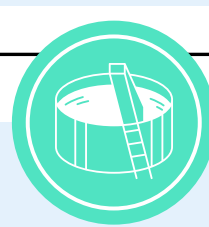
Better Cold Chain and Basic Infrastructure

- Upgrade landing sites with shade structures, tables, and clean water.
- Add affordable solar-powered ice and off-grid cold storage in key communities so seafood stays fresher longer.
- Use small, portable coolers and shared cold storage that fishers and restaurants can use.



New and Improved Seafood Products

- Support small processing hubs to make fillets, smoked fish, ceviche kits and ready-to-eat meals for local markets
- Train people in clean handling, food safety, packaging and simple branding.
- Use Indigenous recipes and labels to create unique 'local and fair' products.



Climate Smart Aquaculture & New Livelihoods

- Support seaweed and shellfish aquaculture that fit local culture.
- Link aquaculture and fisheries to tourism experience that are Indigenous-led.
- Promote non-fishing ocean jobs like guided trips, tours, and culture-based visits.



Fair Rules, Safer Food, and Strong Rights

- Make licences and permits simpler and more local so small fishers and processors can comply.
- Strengthen SPS checks with mobile inspections and HACCP training
- Co-develop works with Indigenous authorities to tackle important issues ensuring the protection of Indigenous Rights.



Skills, Youth, and Access to Money

- Offer training on co-op management, business basics, safety and climate-smart practices.
- Provide affordable financing options.
- Target support to Indigenous, women, and youth-led enterprises in fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism.