

Open Learning Forum

Reducing Illegal Fishing and Slavery in the Tuna Industry

Executive Summary written by GBBC

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a [significant issue](#) for marine ecosystems and is especially prevalent in developing countries with poor monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) regimes. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), IUU fishing “represents up to 26 million [metric tons] caught annually, valued at USD 10 to USD 23 billion.” Local and small-scale fisheries are especially vulnerable to the effects of IUU fishing, which can cause the collapse of entire fisheries. The FAO states that IUU fishing “threatens livelihoods, exacerbates poverty, and augments food insecurity.”

To combat IUU fishing, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), ConsenSys, TraSeable, and tuna fishing company Sea Quest Fiji Ltd., collaborated to bring blockchain to the tuna fishing industry. Traditionally, tuna have been tracked with paper records or not at all. Now, using a combination of radio-frequency identification (RFID), QR codes, and blockchain technology, fishermen will be able to register their catches in real time, creating a record of the fish from “bait to plate.” Consumer will be able to scan a QR code, which will provide details on “where and when the fish was caught, by which vessel, and fishing method. Consumers will have certainty that they’re buying legally-caught, sustainable tuna with no slave labor or oppressive conditions involved.”

As of WWF’s press release, the collaborators are searching for a retailer to partner on the project. While there may be significant implementation costs associated with providing fishermen the appropriate technology to register their catches, it is likely that some consumers will be willing to pay a premium for ethically caught fish. Blockchain technology is enabling a revolution in supply chain transparency that allows consumers to make informed choices about the products they buy, and it may not be long before consumers are demanding that products contain sourcing information.