



Fisheries  
Transparency  
Initiative

# TAKING STOCK

Online Transparency of Fisheries  
Management Information



UNITED  
MEXICAN  
STATES

In cooperation with:



2021 Summary Assessment Report

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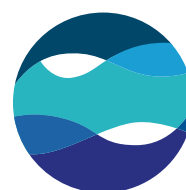
Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the information contained in this assessment. All information was believed to be correct as of December 2021. Nevertheless, the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) cannot accept responsibility for the consequences resulting from the use of this assessment or its contents by others.

Furthermore, in conducting this assessment, the FiTI did not investigate the veracity or completeness of the published information and did not make any judgement about the integrity of the information or practices disclosed.

We would like to thank all the individuals and institutions who contributed to the various stages of research and preparation of this assessment.

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) is a global multi-stakeholder initiative that strengthens transparency and collaboration in marine fisheries management.

By making fisheries management more transparent and inclusive, the FiTI promotes informed public debates on fisheries policies and supports the long-term contribution of the sector to national economies and the well-being of citizens and businesses that depend on a healthy marine environment.



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[www.fiti.global](http://www.fiti.global)

**TAKING STOCK: Online Transparency of Fisheries Management Information** assesses the level of information that Mexico's national authorities publish on government websites regarding the country's marine fisheries sector.



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**Mexico's TAKING STOCK: Online Transparency of Fisheries Management Information** assessment consists of this Summary Assessment Report, as well as an in-depth Detailed Assessment Report.

Both reports, as well as information on the methodology, can be found at:  
[www.fiti.global/taking-stock](http://www.fiti.global/taking-stock)



# SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES NEED TRANSPARENCY

For millennia, those who dedicated themselves to fishing, whether for food, income or recreation, did not need to worry about the sustainable management of this natural resource. Fish stocks replenished themselves with ease. **This is no longer the case.** The ocean is under increasing threats from myriad impacts, like climate change, pollution, and overfishing.

**Governments have the fundamental obligation to manage common resources, such as fish, on behalf of their citizens.** But this invokes a complex challenge: to ensure that fishing and fish trade contribute to income, employment, food and nutrition for millions of people, while conserving marine biodiversity for present and future generations.

**Public availability of information is critical to achieving sustainable fisheries. Yet, transparency in fisheries management has not been a priority.** Many governments do not disclose basic information on their fisheries sectors, such as laws, permits, fishing agreements, stock assessments, financial contributions, catch data and subsidies. Additionally, there are widespread concerns that companies are not consistently reporting accurate information on catches, fishing practices and payments to governments. The data that is already publicly available is too often incomplete, outdated, unverified, or not readily accessible.



*Lack of basic transparency could be seen as an underlying facilitator of all the negative aspects of the global fisheries sector – IUU fishing, fleet overcapacity, overfishing, ill-directed subsidies, corruption, poor fisheries management decisions, etc. A more transparent sector would place a spotlight on such activities whenever they occur, making it harder for perpetrators to hide behind the current veil of secrecy and requiring immediate action to be taken to correct the wrong.*

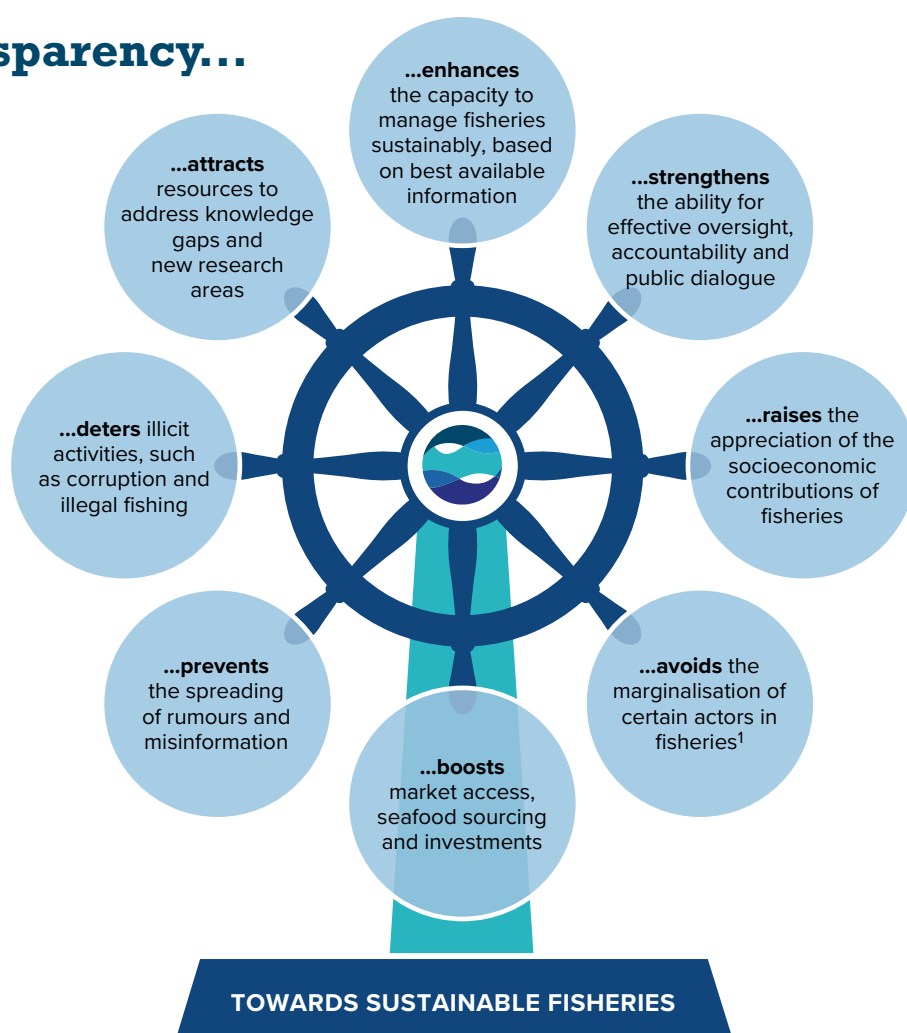
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)  
The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2010



Enhancing transparency in fisheries management appeals to all stakeholders that appreciate the enormous value of marine fisheries – whether that relates to food and nutrition security, employment, the value to national economies, or the cultural importance of fishing.

**Transparency in fisheries management yields multiple benefits, and their relevance and applicability vary depending on the national context.**

## Transparency...



Promoting these positive features of fisheries lies at the heart of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI).



Fisheries  
Transparency  
Initiative

<sup>1</sup> In particular small-scale fisheries and women.

## Transparency is not voluntary. It is a government's duty and a citizen's right!

The provision of accessible, timely and credible information on a country's marine fisheries is increasingly becoming a **legal requirement for governments**, stemming, among other things, from Freedom of Information laws. Such laws are frequently based on three key principles: *public participation*, *access to justice* and *access to information*. The last of these principles implies that the public should be able to obtain environmental information (including information about their country's fisheries sector) with only limited, explicitly defined exceptions arising from justifiable confidentiality claims and security matters.



**In Mexico**, access to information is a fundamental right embodied in the Constitution, and the General Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information<sup>2</sup> sets the regulatory framework, establishing procedures through which information held by public agencies is disclosed. This makes it highly relevant for transparency in marine fisheries. For example, Article 8 states that all information of those subjects bound by law will be public, complete, timely and accessible. Other instruments, such as the Federal Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information<sup>3</sup>, provide even more detail about the implications of transparency at the federal level.



- Since 2011, Mexico has been a member country of the **Open Government Partnership (OGP)**<sup>4</sup>, demonstrating the government's commitment to become more open to its citizens by implementing principles and practices that promote transparency and access to information, as well as civic participation, accountability and public integrity.
- Since 2017, Mexico is also an implementing country of the **Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)**<sup>5</sup>, which is recognised as the global standard for good governance of oil, gas and mineral resources.
- As of today (June 2022), the government of Mexico has not committed to join the **Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)**, despite the importance of its marine fisheries sector.



The importance of public access to government information is also emphasised in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Target 16.10 of the SDGs calls on all states to adopt legislation or policies guaranteeing the right to information, which is essential not only for the achievement of Goal 16, but is an enabler to achieving other SDGs.

<sup>2</sup> Published on 4 May 2015 and last amended on 20 May 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Published on 9 May 2016 and last amended on 20 May 2021.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/mexico/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://eiti.org/countries/mexico>












## ABOUT THIS ASSESSMENT

This is the first time that Mexico has been assessed regarding the online transparency of its marine fisheries sector.

This TAKING STOCK assessment covers 12 thematic areas of fisheries management, as defined by the FiTI Standard.<sup>6</sup>

The **FiTI Standard** is the only internationally recognised framework that defines what information on fisheries management should be published online by national authorities. The FiTI Standard was developed over two years in a global multi-stakeholder endeavour. Its objective is to contribute to the sustainability of marine fisheries by increasing the accessibility and credibility of national fisheries management information.

- |    |   |   |     |  |                                    |
|----|---|---|-----|--|------------------------------------|
| #1 |    | Fisheries Laws, Regulations and Official Policy Documents | #7  |    | Post-Harvest Sector and Fish Trade |
| #2 |   | Fisheries Tenure Arrangements                             | #8  |   | Fisheries Law Enforcement          |
| #3 |  | Foreign Fishing Access Agreements                         | #9  |  | Labour Standards                   |
| #4 |  | The State of the Fisheries Resources                      | #10 |  | Fisheries Subsidies                |
| #5 |  | Large-Scale Fisheries                                     | #11 |  | Official Development Assistance    |
| #6 |  | Small-Scale Fisheries                                     | #12 |  | Beneficial Ownership               |

For this assessment, these 12 thematic areas have been broken down into a total of **38 transparency elements**.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.fiti.global/fiti-standard>

<sup>7</sup> An overview of these 38 transparency elements can be found in the section [‘Key findings’](#).

This assessment evaluates whether basic information on Mexico's marine fisheries sector is **freely available** on government websites, whether it is **up to date** and whether it is **easy to find**.<sup>8</sup>



**Additionally, this assessment:**

- Considers whether information is published in a way that renders it easy to **(re)use**, e.g. to download, search and filter;
- Documents instances of '**good transparency practices**', where published information allows non-experts to draw reliable conclusions;<sup>9</sup> and
- Proposes practical **recommendations** to improve online transparency around Mexico's marine fisheries sector.



This assessment is intended to support national authorities in Mexico to improve transparency in fisheries management and to stimulate interest in fisheries among a wide range of stakeholders.

It also establishes a comprehensive benchmark for evaluating progress over time.



<sup>8</sup> For more information about the assessment's methodology, please refer to <https://www.fiti.global/taking-stock/methodology>.

<sup>9</sup> For example, national authorities may utilise innovative techniques to help visualise information, such as online information systems or fact sheets.





*Public disclosure of information cannot be directly equated with actual progress towards sustainable fisheries management.*

**A lack of transparency in fisheries management is not always a deliberate state of affairs.** Governments with poor levels of transparency are often viewed negatively, as if driven by the desire to hide information from public scrutiny. However, what may be perceived as opacity or secretive practices is often the result of other factors, such as the complexity of the fisheries sector, a lack of technology, expertise and staff, or legal concerns. Some government ministries or national agencies, particularly those that are underfunded, may not prioritise transparency. Unfortunately, these arguments can also be used as a convenient excuse to avoid scrutiny.

A low level of transparency in this TAKING STOCK assessment may not be a sign of wrongdoing, but rather highlights an opportunity for national authorities to enhance disclosure to stakeholders. Likewise, a high level illustrates strong disclosure systems, but this may not reflect operational success regarding the sustainable management of marine fisheries.

Transparency should also not be misinterpreted as a direct indicator for ethical behaviour, such as honesty and integrity.

**This assessment is therefore not an end in itself.** Instead, it takes stock of current disclosure practices against an internationally recognised transparency framework – the FiTI Standard – with a view to starting a conversation with all relevant stakeholders in Mexico's marine fisheries sector.

The ambition is that this and future **TAKING STOCK** assessments will contribute to making government transparency the global norm in fisheries management.

# CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION ON MARINE FISHERIES IN MEXICO



**Length of coastline:<sup>10</sup>**  
11,122 km

**Exclusive fishing zone:**  
3,149,920 km<sup>2</sup>

**Marine Protected Area:<sup>11</sup>**  
694,586 km<sup>2</sup> | 22.05%



## Recent developments relevant to Mexico's marine fisheries sector



Within the framework of its fourth Open Government National Action Plan, the Mexican government has set up a monitoring group on fisheries transparency.



Mexico is part of the High-Level Panel for Sustainable Ocean Economy, a collaborative initiative which is committed to developing and supporting solutions for the health and wealth of the ocean through policy, governance, technology and finance.



As of February 2022, the US has banned access to Mexican fishing vessels off its coast in the Gulf of Mexico, due to problems related to illegal fishing.

<sup>10</sup> Excluding islands.

<sup>11</sup> Under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14.5, countries (including Mexico) committed to conserve at least 10 per cent of their coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.

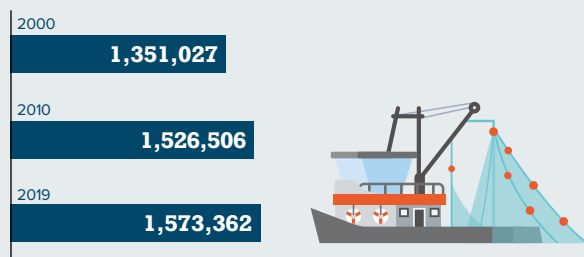


**MEXICO**

Mexico's marine fisheries sector plays a pivotal role in fulfilling the economic, employment, food security, and nutrition needs of its citizens.<sup>12</sup>

## Capture fisheries production

(tonnes, live weight)

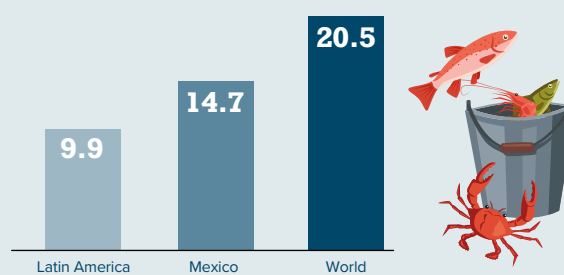


Mexico is the 14th largest fishing nation in the world (based on capture volume).

Source: FAO Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics 2019 (published in 2021)

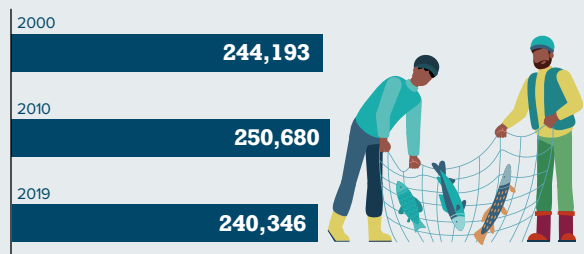
## Fish available for consumption

kg/per capita



Source: FAO State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022, FAO GLOBEFISH Market Profile – Mexico 2018

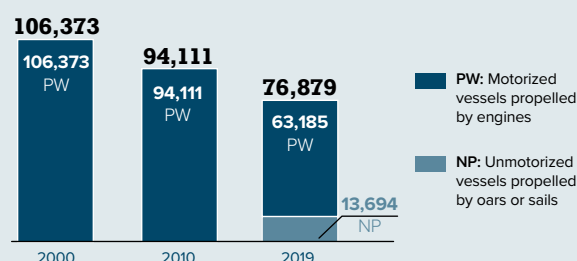
## Number of fishers



Source: FAO Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics 2019 (published in 2021)

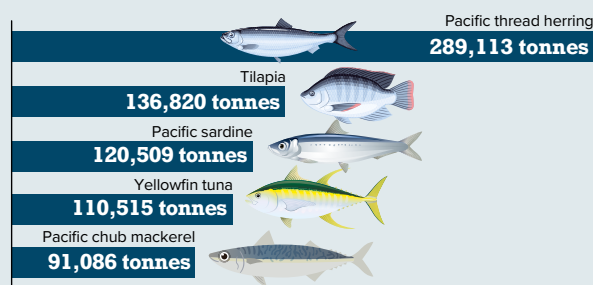
## Number of fishing vessels

(estimates)



Source: FAO Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics 2019 (published in 2021)

## Top 5 species



Source: FAO Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics 2019 (published in 2021)

## Export of fish and fish products

Mexico is the **7th largest exporter** of fishery commodities in the Americas, after Chile, Canada, Ecuador, the United States of America, Peru and Argentina.



Source: FAO Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics 2019 (published in 2021)


<sup>12</sup> This information reflects international statistics (e.g. from the United Nations FAO), which in some cases may differ from national statistics. In addition, this report does not state the contribution of the Mexican fisheries sector to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Although this is a common way of expressing the economic value of fisheries, GDP is not sufficient for fully representing the overall social, economic and environmental costs and benefits of the sector.



# KEY FINDINGS

## PUBLIC ACCESS TO FISHERIES INFORMATION

**!** This assessment shows that Mexico's national authorities consider collating and publishing information online on the marine fisheries sector as an essential aspect of fisheries management.

  
**MEXICO**

For **18 out of 37** applicable transparency elements, Mexico's national authorities publish information online ('Public Access'), although with varying quality.

For **15** transparency elements there is no information published.

For **4** transparency element no information has yet been produced by Mexico's national authorities.

### Not produced

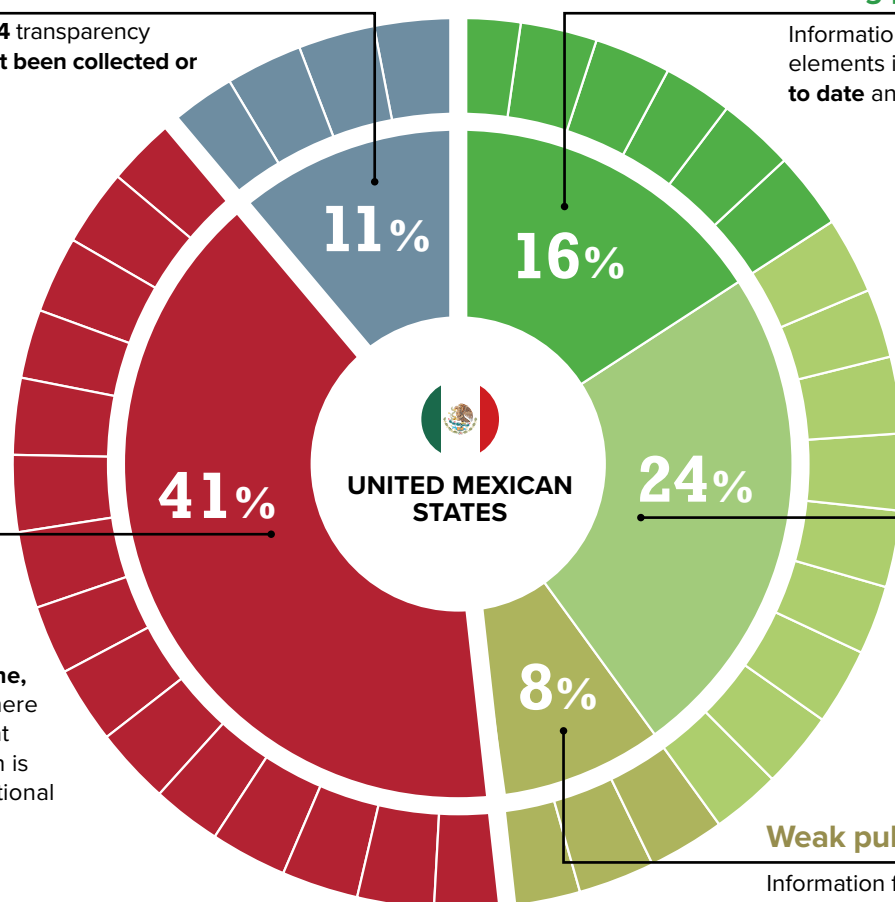
Information for **4** transparency element has **not been collected or compiled yet**.

### Strong public access

Information for **6** transparency elements is **available online, up to date and easy to find**.










### No public access

For **15** transparency elements, **no information** is published **online**, even though there is evidence that this information is available to national authorities.



● 1 of the 38 transparency elements is considered as **not applicable** to Mexico's marine fisheries sector (see [Annex](#)).












## Detailed overview







			  			
Thematic area	ID	Transparency element	AVAILABLE ONLINE?	UP TO DATE?	EASY TO FIND?	
<b>#1</b>  Fisheries Laws, Regulations and Official Policy Documents	1-A	Laws on marine fisheries	✓	✓	✓	Strong public access
	1-B	Fisheries policy documents	✓	✓	✓	Strong public access
	1-C	Fisheries management plans	✓	✓	✓	Moderate public access
<b>#2</b>  Fisheries Tenure Arrangements	2-A	Commercial fishing (large-scale and small-scale)	✓	✓	✓	Strong public access
	2-B	Coastal subsistence fishing	✓	✓	✓	Strong public access
	2-C	Scientific and exploratory fishing	✓	✓	✓	Moderate public access
	2-D	Sport fishing	✓	✓	✓	Strong public access
<b>#3</b>  Foreign Fishing Access Agreements	3-A	Foreign-flagged vessels fishing in Mexican waters	✗	—	—	No public access
	3-B	Mexican-flagged vessels fishing in foreign waters	—	—	—	Not applicable
<b>#4</b>  The State of the Fisheries Resources	4-A	National reports on the state of marine fish populations	✓	✗	✓	Moderate public access
	4-B	Scientific stock assessments	✓	✗	✓	Moderate public access
<b>#5</b>  Large-Scale Fisheries	5-A	Vessels	✓	✗	✓	Moderate public access
	5-B	Payments	✗	—	—	No public access
	5-C	Catches within Mexican waters	✗	—	—	No public access
	5-D	Catches outside Mexican waters	✗	—	—	No public access
	5-E	Landings in Mexican ports	✗	—	—	No public access
	5-F	Transshipments and landings in foreign ports	✗	—	—	No public access
	5-G	Discards	—	—	—	Not produced
	5-H	Fishing effort	✓	✗	✗	Weak public access

✓ To a full extent   
 ✓ To a large extent   
 ✓ To a limited extent   
 ✗ No   
 — Not produced   
 — Not applicable



## Detailed overview

			  			
Thematic area	ID	Transparency element	AVAILABLE ONLINE?	UP TO DATE?	EASY TO FIND?	
 <b>Small-Scale Fisheries</b>	6-A	Vessels	✓	✓	✓	Moderate public access
	6-B	Licenses	✓	✗	✓	Weak public access
	6-C	Fishers	✗	—	—	No public access
	6-D	Payments	✗	—	—	No public access
	6-E	Catches	✗	—	—	No public access
	6-F	Discards	✓	—	—	Not produced
 <b>Post-Harvest Sector and Fish Trade</b>	7-A	Imports	✓	✓	✗	Moderate public access
	7-B	Exports	✓	✓	✗	Moderate public access
	7-C	Employment in commercial fisheries	✗	—	—	No public access
	7-D	Employment in informal fisheries	✗	—	—	No public access
 <b>Fisheries Law Enforcement</b>	8-A	Enforcement of laws	✓	✓	✗	Weak public access
	8-B	Sanctions for major offences	✗	—	—	No public access
 <b>Labour Standards</b>	9-A	Enforcement of labour standards	✗	—	—	No public access
	9-B	Sanctions for labour standard offences	✗	—	—	No public access
 <b>Fisheries Subsidies</b>	10-A	Government financial transfers or subsidies	✓	✓	✗	Moderate public access
 <b>Official Development Assistance</b>	11-A	Public sector development projects	✗	—	—	No public access
 <b>Beneficial Ownership</b>	12-A	Legal basis for beneficial ownership transparency	✓	✓	✓	Strong public access
	12-B	Beneficial ownership registry	✓	—	—	Not produced
	12-C	Beneficial ownership disclosure in fisheries	✓	—	—	Not produced

 To a full extent
  To a large extent
  To a limited extent
  No
  Not produced
  Not applicable





## GIVING MEANING TO TRANSPARENCY: NOTABLE EXAMPLES



The value of this TAKING STOCK assessment does not only lie in understanding what information on a country's marine fisheries is available online, and where gaps exist. Fundamentally, and in very simple terms, **public access to fisheries information is important to help answer critical questions about the sustainability of the sector.**

### Examples

Who manages our fisheries?

How much does my country earn from our fisheries resources?

How is my country dealing with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing?

Are our fisheries being sustainably managed?

Who catches our fish?

What is the contribution of marine fisheries to our national food security?

What is the value of fisheries to our national economy?

How well is the government protecting the rights of people working in the fisheries sector?



**Government**

**Fishers**  
(Industrial and artisanal)

**Media**

**Parliamentarians**

**Civil Society Organisations**

**Academia**

Given the complexity of fisheries management, answering such questions is not always a straightforward task. However, by increasing public access to fisheries information, governments provide their citizens and business partners the necessary means to engage in informed public debates.

Mexico's national authorities proactively disclose certain fisheries information that supports public understanding and appreciation of the sector and helps to answer important questions. Notable examples include:

✓	<b>How is the fishing sector in Mexico regulated?</b>	Laws and regulations relevant to the fisheries sector are published on the CONAPESCA website and also in the Official Gazette of the Federation, including fisheries management plans. Fisheries management plans are also published by INAPESCA, in which the specific regulations of the main species are detailed.
✓	<b>Who is fishing in Mexico's waters?</b>	There is a national registry of fishing and aquaculture, which has detailed information on the vessels authorized to fish in Mexican waters, including details about the species they can catch and the locations in which they can operate.
✓	<b>How much fish is caught in Mexico's waters?</b>	Detailed and frequent reports on catches are available in the statistical yearbook and on the open data portal.
✓	<b>How healthy are Mexico's fish stocks?</b>	Through the so-called 'Red Book', it is possible to know the status of the populations of the most important fisheries.
✓	<b>How many subsidies are given to Mexico's fishing sector?</b>	Detailed information is published online about the types of subsidies granted to the fishing sector in Mexico, both for fuel and support for the well-being of fishers through the BIENPESCA program.

This assessment identified only few transparency elements, relevant for Mexico's marine fisheries, for which no information has yet been produced (e.g. collected or compiled) by national authorities. Notable examples include:<sup>13</sup>

✗	<b>Who benefits from fishing in Mexican waters?</b>	There is no evidence that national fisheries authorities provide or are in the process of providing rules and procedures for incorporating beneficial ownership into filings for the fisheries sector, nor that the Mexican government has compiled beneficial ownership in a centralised registry.
✗	<b>How much fish has been caught, but discarded afterwards?</b>	It has not been possible to find information on the total amounts of annual discards, despite the fact that there is evidence that discards by large-scale as well as small-scale vessels do occur.

<sup>13</sup> Countries that implement the FiTI follow its core principle of 'progressive improvement', which states that countries are not expected to have complete data for every transparency requirement from the beginning. Instead, public authorities must disclose the information they have, and where important gaps exist, demonstrate improvements over time.



**Mexico's national authorities do not currently publish information on several key areas of sustainable fisheries management online, even though there is evidence that this information is available. Notable examples include:<sup>14</sup>**

✗	<b>How much does Mexico earn from its fisheries resources?</b>	No information was found online regarding the actual revenues generated by the government from allowing fishing activities (both national and foreign).
✗	<b>How much fish do different segments of the Mexican fishing fleet catch?</b>	Although it has been possible to find detailed information on catches and landings, this is not disaggregated by type of fleet.
✗	<b>Who is working in Mexico's post-harvest fisheries sector?</b>	While employment data is available online from official labor surveys, the data is published in an aggregated form (various economic activities), failing to clearly indicate employment information from fisheries.
✗	<b>Who is violating laws and regulations in Mexico's fisheries sector?</b>	Despite the fact that there are a series of activities typified as infractions, sanctions and responsibilities, it has not been possible to find a record of those people or companies that violate laws and regulations of the fishing sector. In the same way, it has not been possible to find a record of sanctions, but of a labor nature.



<sup>14</sup> It is possible this information is published by national authorities online, but this assessment was unable to locate it, mainly due to the challenges of searching through government websites.

# A DEEP DIVE INTO PUBLIC ACCESS TO FISHERIES INFORMATION



**MEXICO**



Additional important insights can be gained by understanding whether the published information ('Public access') meets basic information requirements, is up to date and easy to find.



**AVAILABLE  
ONLINE?**



**UP TO DATE?**



**EASY TO FIND?**



## AVAILABLE ONLINE?

AVAILABLE  
ONLINE?



**Mexico's national authorities publish information online for 18 transparency elements (i.e 'Public access').<sup>15</sup> Of those elements, almost three-quarter (72%) fully meet the information requirements of the FiTI Standard.<sup>16</sup>**

A DEEP DIVE INTO  
PUBLIC ACCESS TO  
FISHERIES INFORMATION



*Is information in accordance with the FiTI Standard available online?*



The Mexican authorities proactively publish online extensive amounts of important information. For example, an Open Data Portal is constantly updated, including information on fishery production or the national fishery and aquaculture registry. There are also other portals with detailed information on imports and exports.

Likewise, CONAPESCA as well as Mexico's Official Gazette publish information online on the regulations that apply to the fishing sector. Additionally, there are also policy documents published which detail the vision of Mexico's government regarding the country's fishing sector. Furthermore, INAPESCA publishes specific fisheries management in its portal. Finally, INAPESCA also communicates the state of the main fisheries through the publication of the 'libro rojo' ('Red Book').

However, it should be noted that there is information that is not currently available. Regarding the vessels, no information could be found about payments, discards, and transshipments. The information on fishing catches and landings are aggregated for all types of fleet, so the individual performance of larger and smaller vessels cannot be known. In the same way, it has not been possible to find figures in relation to the number of fishers and post-harvest workers.

<sup>15</sup> From a total of 38 transparency elements, this assessment considers only one as being 'Not applicable' to Mexico's marine fisheries sector, whereas four elements are considered as 'Not produced' (meaning the government has not collected or compiled the information requested under this element).

<sup>16</sup> Or it has been found that the published information is incomplete.

## UP TO DATE?

### UP TO DATE?

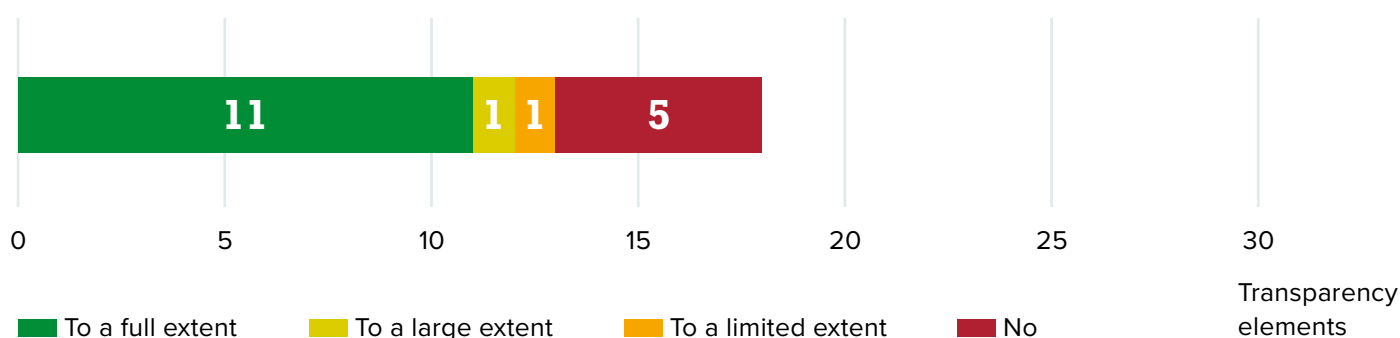


**Information published online is considered to be fully up to date for 11 of the 18 transparency elements (or 61%).**



Fish is a renewable resource that can, if sustainably managed, remain accessible and beneficial for generations. Those making decisions affecting fisheries must be able to have quick and easy access to the latest available data. The importance of up-to-date information takes on an even greater dimension when it comes to time-sensitive issues such as the production of catch data or scientific stock assessments.

*Is the published information provided in a timely, up-to-date manner?*



Mexico's national authorities demonstrate a genuine interest in sharing timely information with the public. For example, the Online Tariff Information System (SIAMI) publishes information on fisheries imports and exports on a regular basis. Also, given that all legal instruments must be published online in the Mexican Official Gazette to enter into force, it can be assumed that national laws and policy documents relating to the country's marine fisheries sector are up-to-date.

However, a key area lacking up-to-date information is the state of the populations of fishing (as presented in the 'Red Book'), for which no new edition has been published in recent years. Similar, the information published on vessels, fishing licenses and fishing effort is seen as outdated, as the last information was provided in 2018.



## EASY TO FIND?

### EASY TO FIND?

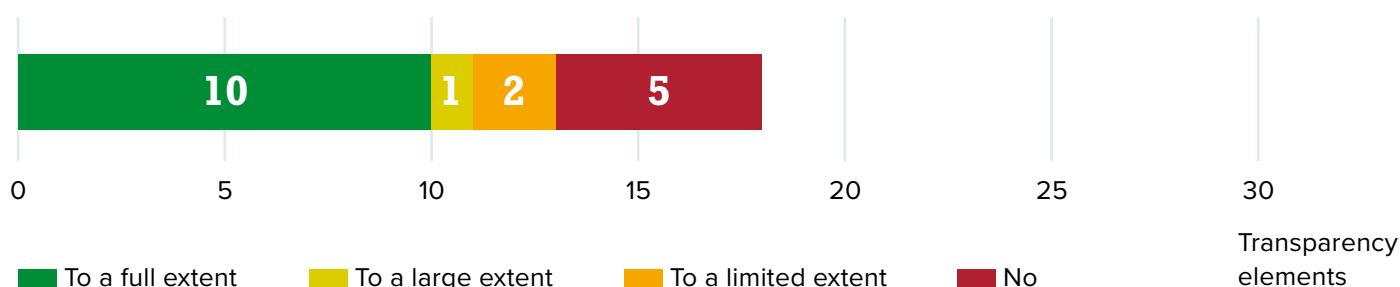


**Information published online by Mexico's government is somewhat easy to locate, as information for 10 out of 18 transparency elements (or 56%) can be easily found by a layperson.<sup>17</sup>**



Governments have the responsibility to manage fisheries on behalf of their citizens – and inform them about the current status, opportunities and challenges facing the sector. In the digital age, websites remain one of the most popular mediums to convey such information. However, websites are passive communications channels, and stakeholders have to purposely visit the site, search for the desired content and navigate to find information. If this is difficult or time consuming, stakeholders may lose interest, leaving potentially important information unread and underutilised.

*Is the published information easy to find on a government website from a non-expert point of view?*



The government of Mexico is committed to transparency and open government, a position communicated via multiple policy documents and pieces of legislation. As part of this effort, a centralised government portal ([www.gob.mx](http://www.gob.mx)) was launched. Several institutional websites of ministries and other public agencies have since then migrated to this centralised single platform, which is a noteworthy effort. Over half of the information was easily found using the central portal's own search engine. However, certain information is difficult to find, such as data on small-scale vessels and licenses. While this data is published on the CONAPESCA website (and this website in itself is easy to find), the data that is published is not clearly systematised in the database, requiring further processing in order to find the relevant information.

<sup>17</sup> This assessment analysed how easy or difficult it is for a layperson to find information about Mexico's marine fisheries sector, instead of stakeholders with a background in fisheries and therefore holding a unique advantage in their capacity to locate the information.

- » Furthermore, in several cases information was found on multiple platforms, making it difficult to understand which is the leading source of information. While it is acknowledged that this could be caused due to the migration of government websites into the new centralised portal, it may still cause confusion among non-experts.
- » Also, the National Transparency Platform is a valuable source of information, but at the same time it was found as difficult to navigate. It is almost necessary to know first-hand what you are looking for in order to find it, and in many cases the information is in digital formats at such a granular level that it is not possible to analyze them without first systematizing a lot of data. This was observed in the case of fishing permits, which are found in scanned official documents.
- » Detailed economic data (e.g. imports/exports) is available on a specific platform that must be downloaded, which can be complicated for the layperson. However, more general information can be found in the statistical yearbook.



## ‘GOOD TRANSPARENCY PRACTICES’



Notably, Mexico’s national authorities publish certain information on the country’s fisheries sector in a way the FiTI considers as **‘good transparency practice’**.

Commonly, transparency for sustainable fisheries management is defined narrowly as the act of publishing complete, timely and easy-to-find information. However, it is equally important to publish information in a way that allows non-experts to understand and draw conclusions from it. There are several positive examples in Mexico:



### Highlights:

- A copy of each granted fishing permit is published on the National Transparency Portal, providing granular level of information.
- INAPESCA leads the RNIIPA, an inclusive research network of several actors (including research centers, universities, other institutions in the field of fisheries research) to strengthen scientific research.
- The vessel registry is provided with detailed information, such as licenses, owners, targeted species, ports and areas of operation.
- The ‘Atlas Agroalimentario’ presents commercial fisheries information, such as imports and exports in a simple and didactic way.
- The Ministry of Finance and Public Credit makes available detailed information on transfers through the PPEF, which can be downloaded in a spreadsheet for analysis. Likewise, infographics are made available that explain in a simpler way some key elements of the PPEF.



Finally, this assessment indicates that Mexico’s national authorities offer several features to ensure that published information can be freely used (e.g. via search and filter functions), re-used and redistributed by anyone.

For example, the vessel registry or the fishery production statistics can be downloaded in spreadsheet formats for further analysis.

Similar functions exist, among others, for catch and trade information.

It is highlighted that data made available through the open data platform is published under the ‘Libre Uso MX’<sup>18</sup> license, which is compatible with Creative Commons 4.0.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> <https://datos.gob.mx/libreusomx>

<sup>19</sup> Licenses should be published and linked to open data to ensure users can easily find and understand the conditions of data access and reuse. For more information, please refer to: <https://opendatacommons.org/licenses/>.





# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL AUTHORITIES OF MEXICO

Mexico's national authorities provide substantial information on the marine fisheries sector. It is clear that the government has a genuine interest in sharing important information with the public.

Nevertheless, there are several ways in which transparency in Mexico's fisheries can be strengthened:

## 1. Make currently unpublished information publicly available

There are several aspects of fisheries management where government information is currently not being published. Doing so would raise levels of transparency and trust in national fisheries authorities. This includes e.g.:

- Information on catches disaggregated by fleet segment, since they have only been found in aggregate;
- Information related to transshipments;
- Information about the jobs generated in the post-capture sector;
- Information about foreign vessels and existing agreements;
- Details about official development aid projects.

## 2. Address information gaps

Although Mexico's national authorities collate substantial information on fisheries, there are important aspects of the fisheries sector where government information is absent, likely due to insufficient research or resources allocated for data collection. Gaps in information exist on issues such as:

- Updated information on the status of fisheries resources;
- Discards from various large-scale and small-scale fisheries;
- Disaggregated employment information, in particular gender information;<sup>20</sup>
- Beneficial ownership information related to fisheries.

<sup>20</sup>For example, the existing national surveys on the artisanal fisheries sector provide good baseline information, but such surveys need to be undertaken at more regular intervals and include further gendered analysis.



### 3. Ensure that information can be easily found in different sources

Information on the fishing sector has been found in different sources, but it is mainly found in: (i) the Official Gazette of the Federation, (ii) the portals (or 'landing pages' of public institutions), (iii) the central government portal, (iv) the National Transparency Platform and (v) the open data portal. In some cases, certain information has been found in multiple of these media and with different levels of detail and granularity.

This situation causes the information to be scattered on several websites, which in some cases means a duplication of efforts by public institutions to upload the same information several times; and it can also create confusion for users to find information online quickly and easily. In this sense, among the actions proposed to achieve this recommendation, the following stand out:

- Categorize available information through a system that orders it chronologically and by subject;
- Prepare a catalog of current laws, regulations, decrees and ministerial agreements;
- Systematize the information from the National Transparency Platform, for example, regarding fishing permits, so that individualized information can be accessed, but also a systematized database of the documents content;
- Include the information related to imports and exports, instead of restricting its access through a specialized program that requires it to download;
- Centralize and link information that is duplicated in different sources, such as catches and landings of hydrobiological products.

### 4. Share fisheries information with the general public

Fisheries data must serve multiple purposes. This ranges from very detailed, granular data sets (e.g. for statistical analysis) to visualisations of high-level aggregated information (e.g. to obtain a general overview of the health of Mexico's marine fish stocks).

In this sense, it is suggested that the technical contents that are usually contained in detailed reports or databases can be systematized and presented in the form of infographics, or interactive databases that facilitate their understanding and interpretation. For this, it is proposed that technological platforms can be used on their websites and the social networks of institutions that can have a wide reach with citizens. For example, it is argued that:

- Data of different kinds (catch, number of vessels, fishermen, imports, exports, etc.) are systematized and presented in informative dashboards that facilitate their interpretation and allow easy conclusions to be drawn about the sector;
- The information related to the regulations or the mechanisms of access to the fishery is presented in simple formats with easy to understand language such as information notes (or synthesis documents).

Strengthening transparency of Mexico's marine fisheries sector by, inter alia, reviewing and prioritising these recommendations, should be based on ongoing discussions with stakeholders, such as fishers, fishing companies, civil society and academia. This may further help to identify other important information gaps on national priorities, which have not been covered under this assessment (such as the impacts of climate change or the interactions between fisheries and other sectors in the blue economy).

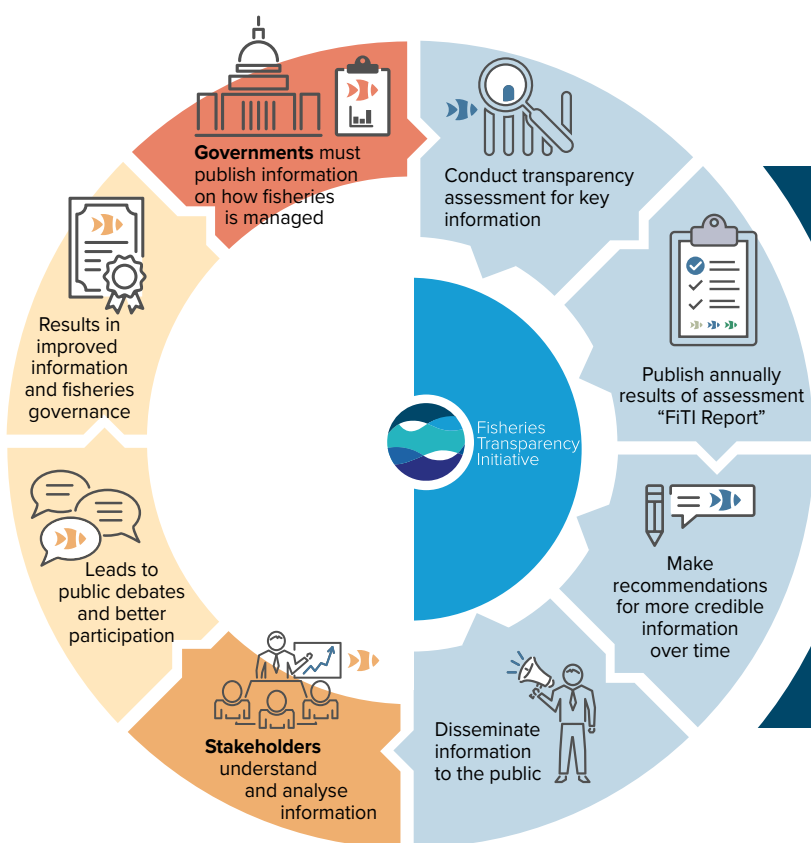
# TRANSPARENCY NEEDS TRUST

Public access to information on how Mexico's marine fisheries sector is being exploited is fundamental for good governance. This TAKING STOCK assessment provides a sound starting point for national authorities in Mexico to enhance and maintain high levels of transparency in marine fisheries management. But it does not tell the whole story: challenges still exist that are unlikely to be overcome by a single actor working alone. Such challenges involve determining whether information that is not published online simply does not exist, or whether information that is disclosed is perceived as credible by stakeholders. Addressing such challenges requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

**Therefore, a collective effort is needed from all relevant stakeholders to incorporate a variety of perspectives and enhance transparency and trust over time.**

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) provides such a unique combination of transparency and participation. The FiTI is implemented in countries through National Multi-Stakeholder Groups, consisting of representatives from government, business and organised civil society. These groups work collectively to:

- » assess the information in the public domain against the FiTI Standard;
- » make recommendations on how to prioritise the closure of information gaps; and
- » provide suggestions on how information published by national authorities can be strengthened to further raise levels of openness and public access to information.



*Engaging in the FiTI appeals to all stakeholders who appreciate the enormous value of marine fisheries, whether in terms of food and nutrition security, biodiversity, employment, the value to national economies, or the cultural importance of fishing.*

**#JoinFiTI**



## ANNEX: ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

This TAKING STOCK assessment evaluates the disclosure practices of Mexico's national authorities across 12 thematic areas of **marine fisheries management**,<sup>21</sup> as defined by the FiTI Standard.

In order to avoid ambiguities during the assessment, these 12 thematic areas have been further broken down into **38 transparency elements**. For example, thematic area #1 'Fisheries Laws, Regulations and Official Policy Documents' is broken down into three transparency elements.

The assessment is focused entirely on the availability of information<sup>22</sup> provided by Mexico's national authorities through their own websites and online publications.

Within the scope of this assessment, three different entry points have been utilised to evaluate whether information on Mexico's marine fisheries sector is published online by national authorities:<sup>23</sup>

- Through the central government portal ([www.gob.mx](http://www.gob.mx));
- By directly accessing websites of national authorities<sup>24</sup>;
- By utilising external search engines, such as Google.

The assessment was conducted as a **desktop study** without relying on initial input or contributions from national authorities.

The assessment was conducted over a period of 11 months (April 2021 – March 2022). The process was officially launched on 5 April 2021 when Mexico's National Commission for Aquaculture and Fisheries of the Agriculture and Rural Development Secretariat was informed about the upcoming assessment, its key parameters and benefits.

**The Secretariat of Foreign Affairs was invited to comment on the initial results of the research prior to the publication of this report. The deadline for this review was 1 – 31 March 2022.**

**We would like to thank the government for taking the opportunity to provide comments. The Secretariat of Foreign Affairs shared the information submitted to the relevant federal agencies and on April 12, input was received from the Federal Attorney General's Office for Environmental Protection ('Procuraduría Federal de Protección del Medio Ambiente'). This feedback was reviewed and changes were incorporated, where necessary.**

The overall assessment process was conducted under the supervision and responsibility of the FiTI International Secretariat, with significant input from researchers and reviewers.

This report, the first for Mexico, does not only seek to provide an overview of what the government publishes regarding a number of key areas of its marine fisheries sector. It also intends to provide a sound basis of information to spark interest among various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

The assessment does **not** try to capture and display the actual underlying information behind each transparency element (e.g. number of vessels), nor does it undertake an independent verification of whether information disclosed online by national authorities is complete or correct. Nevertheless, if compelling evidence of unreliable or contradicting information has been found, it is noted in the Detailed Assessment Report.

21 Information on inland fisheries and aquaculture does not form part of this assessment.

22 Kindly note that in the context of this research, the terms '**data**' and '**information**' are used interchangeably. It is acknowledged that while closely intertwined, they differ in meaning and usage (e.g. data is the raw fact, which should be processed to gain information). However, this difference is not of major relevance for this assessment.

23 Information is only considered available online if it is proactively published on a government website and is available without access restrictions (e.g. the need to register online, request the data from a civil servant via email or pay a fee).

24 Either embedded within the central government portal, or as a 'standalone' website.

As part of this TAKING STOCK assessment, only one transparency requirement is considered as not applicable for Mexico’s marine fisheries:

—	<b>Foreign fishing access agreements</b>	No evidence was found that Mexico has recently signed bilateral fishing access agreements with foreign parties, allowing Mexican-flagged vessels to fish in third-country waters.
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## TAKING STOCK

Online Transparency of Fisheries  
Management Information



2021

Summary Assessment Report  
United Mexican States

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