

News Release

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Sustainable fishing and ocean conservation receives close to \$1 million funding boost from sustainable seafood ecolabel, including a grant awarded to a PhD student from Kerala, India

A student of the School of Industrial Fisheries, Cochin University of Science and Technology, Saranya A Sankar, receives MSC Student Research Grant to help safeguard the future of India's shrimp and squid fisheries

Satellite tagging stingrays, developing deep-sea cameras, innovative DNA methods to age blue swimming crabs, and developing management frameworks using management strategy evaluation (MSE) tools are among the 22 projects and fisheries to have been awarded funding by the internationally recognised sustainable seafood certification and ecolabelling program, the [Marine Stewardship Council](#) (MSC) announced today.

Now in its third year, the MSC's [Ocean Stewardship Fund \(OSF\)](#) redirects 5% of its annual royalties from the sales of MSC certified sustainable seafood to accelerate the sustainability of fisheries globally. The fund is also expanding in scope and reach this year, as it opens up to third-party donations from funders.

Amid global concerns about the depletion of ocean biodiversity, this year's grants focus in part, on driving improvements that better protect endangered, threatened, or protected species or vulnerable marine ecosystems.

A total of US\$936,000 in the form of 22 grants ranging from \$6,500 to \$68,000 each, are awarded to fisheries, scientists, NGOs and students from 12 countries to aid international efforts in marine conservation and sustainable fishing. At least half of the grants (\$459,000) are supporting fisheries in developing economies that are transitioning to sustainable practices, including Indonesia, Mexico and India.

In India, PhD student Saranya A Sankar of [Cochin University of Science and Technology](#) and the [Sustainable Seafood Network of India](#) (SSNI), has been awarded an MSC's OSF [Student Research Grant](#) of \$6,500 to support the [India Kerala Shrimp and Cephalopod trawl fishery](#) improvement project (FIP), to progress towards achieving MSC certification by 2024.

The Kerala trawl fishery is in a comprehensive FIP and targets shrimp and cephalopod. The fishery contributes significantly to the marine fisheries sector of India, in terms of production, assets and livelihoods. A combination of high fuel prices, an overdependence on bycatch for sustenance and failure to modernise and adopt sustainable fishing practices means there is an urgent need to properly manage these fisheries.

To do this, Saranya will be developing a framework that uses management strategy evaluation (MSE) tools to help manage the stock sustainably. The study will collect information through a survey with the fishery managers, fishers and researchers, which will be used to develop a MSE framework. This will help prioritise which management objectives are most effective in mitigating any changes from variable environmental conditions. It will help ensure a sustainable future for the fishery.

The project outcomes will also have beneficial applications for the [Kerala deep-water shrimp fishery](#), which was awarded £44,310 in 2021 from the MSC [Transition Assistance Fund](#).

Saranya A Sankar, PhD student of Cochin University of Science and Technology said: *“MSC stands for protecting the future of oceanic resources. MSC encourages everyone to move towards sustainable use of fish stocks without exploiting it. MSC brings people, technology, science and policy together for the conservation of ocean. I believe the MSC works in India will help to achieve fisheries sustainability soon and I am very excited to be a part of this journey.”*

Rupert Howes, Chief Executive of the Marine Stewardship Council said: *“Congratulations to all of the Ocean Stewardship Fund awardees this year. Our focus on marine biodiversity will help push forward scientific understanding of how improvements can be made in fishing practices to minimise ecosystem impacts. Without doubt, our collective efforts can help to ensure our oceans remain productive and resilient in the face of the growing pressures and demands placed on them but much more needs to be done and urgently if we are to deliver the UN Strategic Development Goals by 2030.”*

The MSC Student Research Grant support postgraduate students around the world who are studying fisheries science, with an award of up to \$6,500 per postgraduate student project. Projects must have the objective of studying some aspect of environmental improvement, performance or best practice in relation to a specific fishery and the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#).

Since the establishment of the Ocean Stewardship Fund in 2019, the fund has issued 64 grants to a total sum of USD\$2.8 million.

Ends

Notes to Editors

- [Discover the 22 Ocean Stewardship Funded grants being awarded this year.](#)
- Images of PhD student, Saranya a Sankar, visiting the Kerala Shrimp and Cephalopod trawl fishery. Credit SSNI.

As of 31 March 2021, 446 fisheries were certified to the MSC programme, including 25 suspended. Another 70 were in assessment to the MSC Fisheries Standard.

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an international non-profit organisation which sets globally recognised, science-based standards for sustainable fishing and the seafood supply chain. The MSC ecolabel and certification program recognises and rewards sustainable fishing practices and is helping create a more sustainable seafood market. It is the only wild-capture fisheries certification and ecolabelling program that meets best practice requirements set by both the [United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization \(UNFAO\)](#) and [ISEAL](#), the global membership association for sustainability standards. For more information visit [msc.org](https://www.msc.org)