



WWF

POSITION

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Smart Fishing Initiative

FISHERIES IN TRANSITION

The growing fisheries crisis has global consequences that are biological, economic and social. While the dependence on fish is high and continues to increase, about 90 per cent of our oceans are already overfished or fished to their limits. While aquaculture has the potential to provide alternative sources of seafood, irresponsible practices have resulted in the degradation of aquatic ecosystems. WWF aims to improve all fisheries and aquaculture operations to reduce relevant footprints. This includes the prevention of illegal fishing and overfishing, and the reduction of bycatch and habitat destruction. Only through joint efforts to make fisheries and the whole global seafood industry sustainably can we stop the overexploitation of the seas.

WWF's Position on Fisheries in Transition

WWF encourages any level of engagement meant to achieve measurable positive, environmental and social change in our oceans and seafood supply chain, supporting **Fisheries in Transition** to an improved state.

WWF aims to motivate and move fisheries towards sustainability by using tools like **Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs)** or **Fishery Conservation Projects (FCPs)**. WWF notes that the application of these tools is especially relevant in developing world nations where small to medium scale fisheries operate under systems of weak governance.

To support this work, WWF developed internal **guidelines**¹ defining FIPs and FCPs and showing how these can be set up.

This position paper presents these guidelines and includes specific recommendations on implementing the guidelines as well as a statement of WWF's commitment to work in a collaborative and solution-oriented manner with stakeholders and other interested parties.

Fishery Improvement Projects and Fishery Conservation Projects

- WWF defines Fishery Improvement Projects as focused initiatives with the goal of enabling a fishery to reach the necessary sustainability standards to enter full assessment by credible third party assessment schemes, namely the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). WWF considers MSC certification to be currently „best in class” of all fisheries certification schemes. WWF will continue to drive continuous improvement of the MSC system to reduce negative impacts on our oceans.
- WWF defines Fishery Conservation Projects (FCP) as approaches, which focus primarily on the improvement in the environmental performance of a fishery and which have not yet developed a strategy for improvement against full MSC standards, or MSC certification does not provide a market incentive. A Fishery Conservation Project aims to reduce certain key impacts of the key fishery on the environment, but could also include spatial management approaches that support wide-ranging improvements in the environmental performance of a fishery.
- WWF supports fisheries or other initiatives within these projects that will be conditional upon the fishery reaching certain standards and milestones within agreed timescales, with the relevant stakeholders involved.
- WWF supports and communicates about the progress in these fisheries but does not publically endorse their products until they are MSC certified.

Background

WWF has been campaigning for more than a decade to improve the sustainability of fisheries and encourage them to enter assessment for Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. To date, fisheries certified or in full assessment record annual catches of around 10 million metric tonnes of seafood. This represents over 10 percent of the annual global harvest of wild capture fisheries. Another 5 percent of the annual global harvest have been identified as potentially certifiable in a short term while 85 percent of the global harvest or their management are still in need of large-scale improvement. This led to the realisation that there is a need to support projects to improve fisheries towards MSC. More recently WWF has been promoting similar outcomes for aquaculture through its support of aquaculture operations progressing towards meeting the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) standards for responsible aquaculture.

WWF supports **Fisheries in Transition** to an improved state that have made demonstrable progress towards sustainable management, but have not yet reached sustainability. Nowhere is this more evident than in developing world fisheries: these clearly need both incentives to strive for continued improvement and a stepwise and formal process to monitor progress against milestones and stipulate the rewards mechanism. The FIT approach provides that framework.

¹ These are recommended guidelines for developing FIPs and FCPs. In parallel guidelines for Aquaculture Improvement Projects and Aquaculture Conservation Projects are currently being developed by MTT's aquaculture experts. Additional tools available for seafood work include: consumer guides, WWF fisheries assessments, MSC certification, ISSF, global platforms, etc.

Fisheries in Transition to Sustainability

Fisheries in Transition to sustainability is a term used to describe a strategy or course of action designed to reduce the environmental impacts of fisheries through direct engagement with seafood businesses and/or with the participation of other fisheries stakeholders.

Fisheries in Transition activities will comprise a range of interventions or programs of varying complexity and demanding different degrees of partner commitment in terms of resources and expected outcomes. Regardless of the level of engagement, there needs to be clear standards or benchmarks to measure progress, with clearly defined timeframes.

Key elements of Fisheries in Transition are:

- They can encompass various types of continuous improvement programmes from single issue improvement efforts (such as a circle-hook exchange programme) to comprehensive projects like Fishery Improvement Projects with the end-goal of MSC certification. We encourage fisheries as strongly as possible to pursue certification, but we recognize that for some small scale fisheries in developing countries, that only supply local and domestic markets, MSC certification might not be a relevant market incentive. In this case, the definition FIP might be used as long as the fishery is making progress according to the workplan in order to reach a level consistent with the MSC standard within the agreed timeframe (max. 5 years).
- Market or stakeholder forces will play a critical role in motivating improvements in capture fisheries.
- They can be implemented at local, national, regional or international scales and involve one or more WWF national or programme offices, or other credible environmental NGO partners.
- They can embrace spatial management frameworks such as multiple use marine protected areas that incorporate management restrictions.
- They can be initiated at any point along the supply or value chain. In case where market forces and mechanisms are involved there must be well-defined WWF communications and marketing rules in place as well as clear links to buyers (retailers, distributors etc.) in end markets. This will require the explicit involvement of the WWF national or programme offices in the relevant destination market to support the improvement effort through buyer engagement.

Seafood buyers (retailers, suppliers, processors etc.) will play an essential role in the progress and success of Fisheries in Transition activities, by either engaging their supply chain to continue sourcing from an improvement project or engage their supply chain and cease buying from that source until improvements are made. The decision to engage with the supply chain in an improvement project or stop buying until improvements are made rests with the buyer and will depend on the specific requirements of the company's sustainable seafood policy. Buyer commitments must be time-bound: it is expected, that after a certain period of time, the seafood they source will be environmentally sustainable. For this reason, the transition period must be well defined and agreed upon by the stakeholders involved in the project.

In their process to achieve sustainability, Fisheries in Transition can move towards improvement by using tools like **Fishery Improvement Projects** or **Fishery Conservation Projects**, which comprise the activities to be implemented and set out to reach the goal of the project.

Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs)

A Fishery Improvement Project is a multi-stakeholder effort to improve a fishery. These projects are unique because they utilise the power of the private sector and markets to incentivise positive changes toward sustainability in the fishery. Participants may vary depending on the nature of the fishery and the improvement project and may include stakeholders such as fishers/producers, non-governmental organizations, fishery managers, governments and members of the fishery supply chain.

The fundamental goal of a FIP is to reach a status where it is ready to enter and pass full MSC assessment and get MSC certified. We encourage fisheries as strongly as possible to pursue certification, but we recognize that for some of the

small scale fisheries in developing countries that only supply local and domestic markets, MSC certification might not be a relevant market incentive. In this case, the definition FIP might be used as long as the fishery is making progress according to the workplan in order to reach a level consistent with the MSC standard within the agreed timeframe (max. 5 years).

Fishery Improvement Projects must have the following **characteristics**:

- Draw upon market forces, which might include suppliers, retailers, traders, food service, fishing industry, seafood consumers or other relevant forces to motivate ongoing fishery improvements.
- A work plan with measurable indicators and milestones along a defined timeline and an associated budget.
- Explicit willingness from participants to make improvements (e.g. signed memorandum of understanding, correspondence/contract between parties stating a commitment, letter of support or intent, etc.).
- Willingness from participants to make investments required to achieve improvements as outlined in the work plan, including clear roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders.
- An independent system for tracking progress (e.g. a progress plan with independent measurable indicators and periodic third party verification).
- A pre-defined maximum timespan: 5 years to start MSC full assessment. Exceptions due to special external circumstances: as long as significant progress is made and the FIP is highly likely to enter MSC assessment, the pre-defined period of 5 years could be extended after consultations with all project partners, including WWF International.
- Annual review of progress and transparency of the review-results (publication).
- Where practicable agree to participate in performance benchmarking undertaken by an approved independent body to report on progress against MSC Standards, once a benchmarking tool is adopted.
- A formal process for terminating participation in or support for the programme.
- Clearly defined guidelines and agreements on scope and depth of communications.

Fishery Conservation Projects (FCPs)

A fishery conservation project (FCP) is a project where the outcomes are primarily related to the improvement of the environmental performance of the fishery. FCPs can range from specific interventions that aim for the reduction of certain key impacts to the target stock or environment of the fishery to more comprehensive approaches such as multiple use marine protected areas (MPA) that incorporate management restrictions such as access and output controls, no-take or fisheries recovery zones.

The FCP objectives may be primarily catch-related, relate to specific target stock outcomes or bycatch of non-target species and broader environmental impacts of the fishery. Equally, the project focus may be on improving environmental performance through information management and monitoring. While there is no requirement for an explicit link to third-party certification, the project activities would in all likelihood support some aspects of credible certification schemes such as the MSC standards. Such fishery conservation projects may utilize market support even though they may not commit to MSC certification within a specific timeline.

Fishery Conservation Projects must have as a minimum the following **characteristics**:

- Explicit willingness from participants to make improvements (e.g. signed Memorandum of Understanding, stating a commitment, formal agreement, letter of support or intent, etc.)
- A work plan with measurable indicators and milestones along a defined timeline and an associated budget.
- Willingness from participants to co-invest in improvements as outlined in the work plan.
- An independent system for tracking progress against the measurable indicators contained in the work plan and an annual progress review, the result of which will be made publicly available.
- A formal process for terminating participation in, or support to the project.

- Guidelines and agreements on scope and depth of communications.

It is recommended that as part of the commitment to an FCP, participants agree in principle to entering a FIP within a defined time period to be agreed at the outset of the FCP.

Recommendations

WWF-Support for Improvement Projects

WWF promotes **Fishery Improvement Projects** and **Fishery Conservation Projects** designed to lead to responsible and ecologically sustainable fisheries. Hence it is important to establish guidelines as to the kind of improvement of projects and activities that can be supported and are eligible for recognition, including guidelines for communicating about each of these projects and activities to seafood buyers or consumers.

These guidelines must ensure that improvement projects may only receive continuous recognition in the marketplace when they are making measurable, independently audited progress towards improved environmental sustainability. This should be measured against the milestones, indicators and timeframes contained in the improvement project work plan to make sure that the fishery is moving towards an expected level of performance, which for FIPs will be consistent with the MSC standards.

It is vital that these projects are formally linked to a credible third-party certification scheme. Active stakeholder participation by governments, supply chain companies, at a minimum, local processors and exporters is crucial for the success of these projects.

Guidelines for public and market recognition for FIPs

To be considered as moving toward sustainability, FIPs must follow a well-defined process pattern with three specific steps/stages:

Step one: Scoping

FIPs must have a **scoping document** completed by an independent third-party auditor who has experience with applying the MSC Fishery Assessment Standards.

For a detailed description of **step one, scoping**, see [Annex 1, Recommended Guidelines for Developing FIPs](#) on page 8.

Step two: Work plan development

FIPs must have an achievable **work plan** developed through a participatory process, specifically designed to address deficiencies in the fishery to achieve a level of performance consistent with a pass of the MSC standard in a 5 year timescale at maximum. Exceptions due to special external circumstances: As long as significant progress is made and the FIP is highly likely to enter MSC assessment, the pre-defined period of 5 years could be extended after consultations with all project partners, including WWF International. This must be made publicly available.

Step three: Implementation FIPs must make progress according to the indicators and timelines in the work plan must employ an independent **system for tracking** and reporting progress against the indicators contained in the work plan and must achieve milestones such as policy changes, improvements in fishing practices, reduced habitat impacts or stock improvements. The fishery in a FIP commits to use the Automatic Identification System (AIS) on all vessels to enable transparent operations.

WWF recommendations for seafood buyers and companies:

During the three stages of the FIP process WWF can provide different degrees of support and activities for the FIPs like presenting options to seafood buyers and companies to make strategic procurement decisions:

- In **steps one and two**, seafood companies may continue to source from a fishery where an improvement project is in development to incentivize progress or may choose to discontinue purchasing until improvements are made. We will not recommend that companies that have not previously sourced from this FIP shift their purchasing to the fishery developing the improvement project at this stage.
- In **step three**, when fisheries actually are making progress according to the work plan, companies may continue to source from the fishery in the improvement project, shift their sourcing to the fishery in the improvement project, or discontinue purchasing until further improvements are made.
- **At any stage**, WWF recommends that seafood companies, that discontinue sourcing, convey, in writing, the problem areas in the fishery that need to be addressed for sourcing to resume.

Other WWF/NGO's support for the FIPs may include:

- Communicating as appropriate with relevant seafood buyers that a FIP is in development and present options for them to engage their supply chain. (During all three stages);
- Providing options for seafood buyers to communicate about the FIP to consumers if they are procuring from that FIP. (During stage three only and not connected to any marketed product; communications should focus on the fishery's operation's progress towards sustainability);
- Profiling the FIP in NGO communications that provide an opportunity to tell the story of the FIP (Following the completion of stage two and during stage three and not connected to any marketed product; communications should focus on the fishery's progress towards sustainability);
- While WWF will support the efforts of the fisheries during all stages of the process, public WWF endorsement of products will be made only for MSC-certified products; there will be no WWF or market recognition if a longer timespan than 5 years is needed for improvement or if a fishery in a FIP fails to deliver the milestones in the work plan. Exceptions due to special external circumstances: as long as significant progress is made and the FIP is highly likely to enter MSC assessment, the pre-defined period of 5 years could be extended after consultations with all project partners, including WWF International.

Guidelines for public and eventually specific market recognition for FCPs

WWF recognizes the important work being done for conservation purposes in the Fishery Conservation Projects, but FCPs will not get market endorsement as a responsible fishery until they transition to a FIP, within an agreed timeframe.

To be considered a FCP the project must have met minimum **characteristics** (see above).

WWF support for the FCP will be limited to:

- Profiling the FCP in NGO communications that provide an opportunity to tell the story of the FCP from the perspective of the partnership with WWF and/or fishing communities only (not connected to any product, buyer relationship or market).
- WWF will communicate publicly about the progress the fishery has made in comparison to other fisheries that did not undergo change. This will highlight and emphasize the efforts of the fishery to move towards sustainability.

WWF's commitment

WWF aims to safeguard marine wildlife, the marine ecosystems and livelihoods by working with small-scale fisheries, the fishing industries, with governments and local communities to ensure that fisheries are conducted in an ecologically sustainable manner. Consequently WWF will:

- Support Fisheries in Transition to reach an improved state and to reduce their footprint.
- Assist fisheries to improve performance and reach sustainability, including through specific Fishery Improvement Projects and marine parks or marine managed areas.
- Offer different support and various activities for FIPs during the three stages of the process towards certification.

- Urge fish traders, processors, retailers and consumers to stimulate transparency in fisheries through their purchasing decisions by selectively buying seafood products that have been certified against MSC standards and encourage support of fisheries in FIPs.
- WWF will communicate publicly about the progress of fisheries in FIPs in comparison to other fisheries that did not undergo change. This will highlight and emphasize the efforts of the fishery to move towards sustainability.
- Work with financial institutions encouraging them to support fisheries in FIPs to reach their goal of certification.
- Public WWF endorsement of products will be made only for MSC-certified products.

Appendix I

Recommended Guidelines for Developing FIPs

STEP ONE – Scoping

During the scoping phase, fishery performance is reviewed against the MSC standard and any other potential areas of concern in the fishery that have been identified. The scoping phase includes:

1. **A stake holder mapping and engagement process.** Identify key parties in the process. Consider who will play an essential role in making improvements in the fishery including government representatives, industry (fishers, processors, exporters, etc.), environmental NGOs and the scientific community.
2. **An MSC pre-assessment independent review of conformance.** An MSC pre-assessment review of conformance to determine where the fishery falls short of the MSC standards is conducted by MSC technical consultants. <http://www.msc.org/get-certified/fisheries/technical-assistance/consultants>.
3. This assessment should be completed - if available - by an entity accredited by Accreditation Services International (ASI) to apply the MSC scheme as appropriate'. <http://www.accreditation-services.com/archives/standards/msc>.
4. **A scoping document/whitepaper.** Develop a synthesis of the assessment and potential strategies the fishery could implement to reach sustainability. It is recommended that this is carried out by MSC technical consultants.

STEP TWO – Workplan Development

Based on the pre-assessment improved performance goals (IPGs) and conditions are defined. A scoping document and a time-bound workplan are developed that identify the activities needed to address the conditions. The workplans must include:

1. **Definition of Improved Performance Goals (IPGs),** which must be achieved within at least 5 years. Exceptions due to special external circumstances: As long as significant progress is made and the FIP is highly likely to enter MSC assessment, the pre-defined period of 5 years could be extended after consultations with all project partners, including WWF International.
2. **Metrics and key performance indicators:** An estimate of the timeframe needed to complete each activity associated with an IPG (e.g., < six months, six to 12 months, 12 months+). In addition

yearly milestones² against the IPGs need to be defined to enable the project progress to be independently verified.

3. **Responsible parties:** Organizations/people responsible for completing each activity.
4. **Project delivery structure:** Define an FIP project structure and organisation appropriate to the scale and complexity of the project.
5. **Associated budget:** Costs and funding opportunities for each activity as appropriate. There are generally two sets of costs: (1) **process costs** (e.g. costs associated with developing the scoping document and the workplan, holding stakeholder meetings, and (2) **implementation costs** (e.g. costs for the fishery to make changes)

STEP THREE – Initiation and Tracking Progress

1. **Initiation.** It is strongly recommended to start the step three process only once steps 1 & 2 have been completed and an initial independent capacity audit is completed³, if appropriate. This audit will examine the likelihood of achieving the FIP workplan as well as the likelihood of achieving MSC certification after the implementation of the FIP workplan. It is recommended to be completed by an entity with expertise in applying the MSC standard (ideally an entity accredited by ASI to apply the MSC scheme). A project involving **industrial fisheries** will only be considered a FIP once the capacity audit report, PA, and workplan are made public. In the case of **small scale fisheries**, a project will be considered a FIP once the workplan has been finalized and published.
2. **Tracking and reporting on progress.** Progress should be reported publicly every three to six months according to the objectives and timeline outlined in the workplan. Additional reporting may occur if significant milestones are met in the interim. The fishery in a FIP commits to use AIS on all their vessels to enable transparent operations.
3. **Reviews** shall take place **at least annually**. This review shall be completed by an independent entity with expertise in applying the MSC standard (ideally accredited by ASI to apply the MSC Scheme like a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)). During an on-site surveillance review the Auditor shall actively seek the views of the client and stakeholders as well as independent evidence about:
 - a) The fishery (Unit of FIP, stock status, ecosystem impacts including non target species, habitats and cumulative impacts as well as the robustness of the fisheries management system).
 - b) Its performance in relation to any relevant IPGs.
 - c) Issues relevant to the MSC standards.
4. As part of the first annual review, an audit of compliance should be completed by an entity with expertise in applying the MSC standard (ideally an entity accredited by ASI to apply the MSC scheme) that examines the likelihood of achieving the conditions. Subsequent compliance reviews should be conducted annually.
5. **Verification of progress:** critical to surveillance is the documenting of conformity with, and progress and performance against, certification IPGs.
 - a) If progress against the measurable outcomes, expected results or milestones specified when setting the IPG is judged to be behind the agreed targets, the Auditor shall specify the remedial

¹ These milestones must be measurable improvements and outcomes (using quantitative metrics) expected each year.

³ This will focus on an audit of evidence to show that capacity, funding and/or resources are, or will be, in place to address conditions as defined in the work plan.

action, and any revised milestones, that are required to bring process back on track at the next surveillance review to achieve the original IPG (or milestone) by the original deadline.

- b) In the event that the Auditor determines that progress against **key** IPGs is inadequate and/or a key IPG is not back 'on target' within mutually agreed timeframes of no more than 12 months of falling 'behind target', the FIP shall be suspended / paused (no further recognition and listing as FIP by WWF, or withdrawn (no further support by and cooperation with WWF on this project).

There are two options:

- Suspension/Deferral: The FIP status of the fishery is suspended for a maximum of one year until the fishery 'is back on track' relative to agreed IPGs. Failure to do this will result in withdrawal.
- Withdrawal: Drop out and withdraw FIP status indefinitely.

Reports outlining the reasons for suspension or withdrawal should be made publically available.

COMPLETION

Acknowledgment of the FIP: The project shall last for a maximum of 5 years from the date the initiation phase (2.3.1) was made public and should enter the MSC assessment process within the project period⁴. We encourage fisheries as strongly as possible to pursue certification, but we recognize, that for some small-scale fisheries in developing countries that only supply local and domestic markets MSC certification might not be a relevant market incentive. In this case, the definition FIP might be used as long as the fishery is making progress according to the workplan in order to reach a level consistent with the MSC standard within the agreed timeframe (max. 5 years).

Appendix II

Market recognition and Communication Guidelines for FIPs and FCPs

The two types of projects FIPs and FCPs ought to be recognized differently in the market place, given their different goals and impacts and commitment to MSC.

WWF will support fisheries engaged in FIPs and FCPs but public WWF-endorsement of **products** will be made only for MSC -certified products (no use of WWF- logo on products or by companies).

As FIP and FCP projects involve private sector partners, national WWF offices will need to follow WWF's corporate engagement guidelines.

Communication activities for these projects must be agreed on a case by case basis with the relevant national offices, taking into account WWF's general communication guidelines.

⁴ Our goal with this work (FIPs) is to collaborate with fisheries to improve their performance against a credible standard (the MSC). WWF expects to see these fisheries get MSC certified so that there is 3rd party verification of the sustainability status of the fishery, and they can receive the benefits of the eco-label, market recognition, etc.

Market Recognition Guidelines	FIP	FCP	MSC certified
Fishery recommended to <u>local</u> markets to source	<p>No</p> <p>Exceptions in agreement with SFI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if fishery in developing countries supplies only local or domestic markets - if buyer already sources from the fishery - if fishery is demonstrating improvement in step 3 	<p>No</p> <p>Exceptions in agreement with SFI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if fishery in developing countries supplies only local or domestic markets - if buyer already sources from the fishery - if fishery is demonstrating substantial improvement 	Yes
Fishery recommended to <u>global</u> markets to source	<p>No</p> <p>Exception in agreement with SFI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if buyer already sources from the fishery - if FIP already proved progress in step 3 according to agreed timeline, milestones and indicators and is near meeting MSC standards for accreditation (near = within a maximum timespan of 2 years) 	No	Yes
Fishery featured as "towards sustainability" at public events (short timeframe)	<p>No</p> <p>Exception in agreement with SFI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if FIP already proved progress in step 3 according to agreed timeline, milestones and indicators and is near meeting MSC standards for accreditation. (near = within a maximum timespan of 2 years) 	No	Yes: featured as „sustainable product“
Business to business (B2B) support of associated products. (B2B includes WWF cooperation with seafood businesses)	<p>Yes</p> <p>B2B only if FIP already proved progress according to agreed timeline, milestones and indicators and is near meeting MSC standards for accreditation. (near = within a maximum timespan of 2 years)</p>	No	Yes

Communication Guidelines	FIP	FCP	MSC certified
Internal WWF communications on the fishery	Yes <u>Activity:</u> Stories about FIP performance & progress in internal newsletters, annual activity reports, discussions, meetings	Yes <u>Activity:</u> Stories about FCP progress in internal newsletters, discussions, meetings	Yes
External WWF communications on the fishery	Yes <u>Activity:</u> Stories about FIP in public newsletters, magazines, leaflets, brochures, position papers, press releases, interviews, public statements regarding progress & achievements of the fisheries in cooperation with WWF	Yes Press work/ publications to support and show improvements	Yes
Listed on WWF website(s) as a FIP or FCP	Yes SFI plans to provide a specific website for FIP. This will increase market access to fisheries in FIPs because processors, retailers and food companies will preferably source from a low risk fishery in a FIP	Yes But no specific SFI website will be provided	Yes Listed as MSC certified
Listed on WWF consumer guides as recommended product	No	No	Yes

Our Smart Fishing Vision and Goals:

Vision: The world's oceans are healthy, well-managed and full of life, providing valuable resources for the welfare of humanity.

2020 Goals: The responsible management and trade of four key fishery populations results in recovering and resilient marine eco-systems, improved livelihoods for coastal communities and strengthened food security for the Planet.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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