

# Enhancing social licence in farmed small-scale shrimp

Dave Little



Photo Tung Hoan

# This talk will

- Characterise ‘small-scale shrimp farming’
- Introduce a broadened definition of social licence
- Consider how social licence and assurance of ‘qualities’ of small-scale shrimp farming align with improved governance

# White-leg

# Black tiger

Small-scale

Potential nutrient source and polluter

Carbon efficient food

External feed dependent

Commodity food

Cost-efficient quality assurance

Hatchery – dependence- genetic improvement

Intensive monoculture

‘Closed’

Quality assurance dependent on intermediaries

Dependence on wild genetic stock

Extensive polyculture

Reliance on natural feed

Diversified source of local nutrition

‘Open’

Elite food

Potential nutrient and carbon sink

Potential nature-based asset

Large-scale

# Rural aquaculture..to 'modern' definitions of small-scale

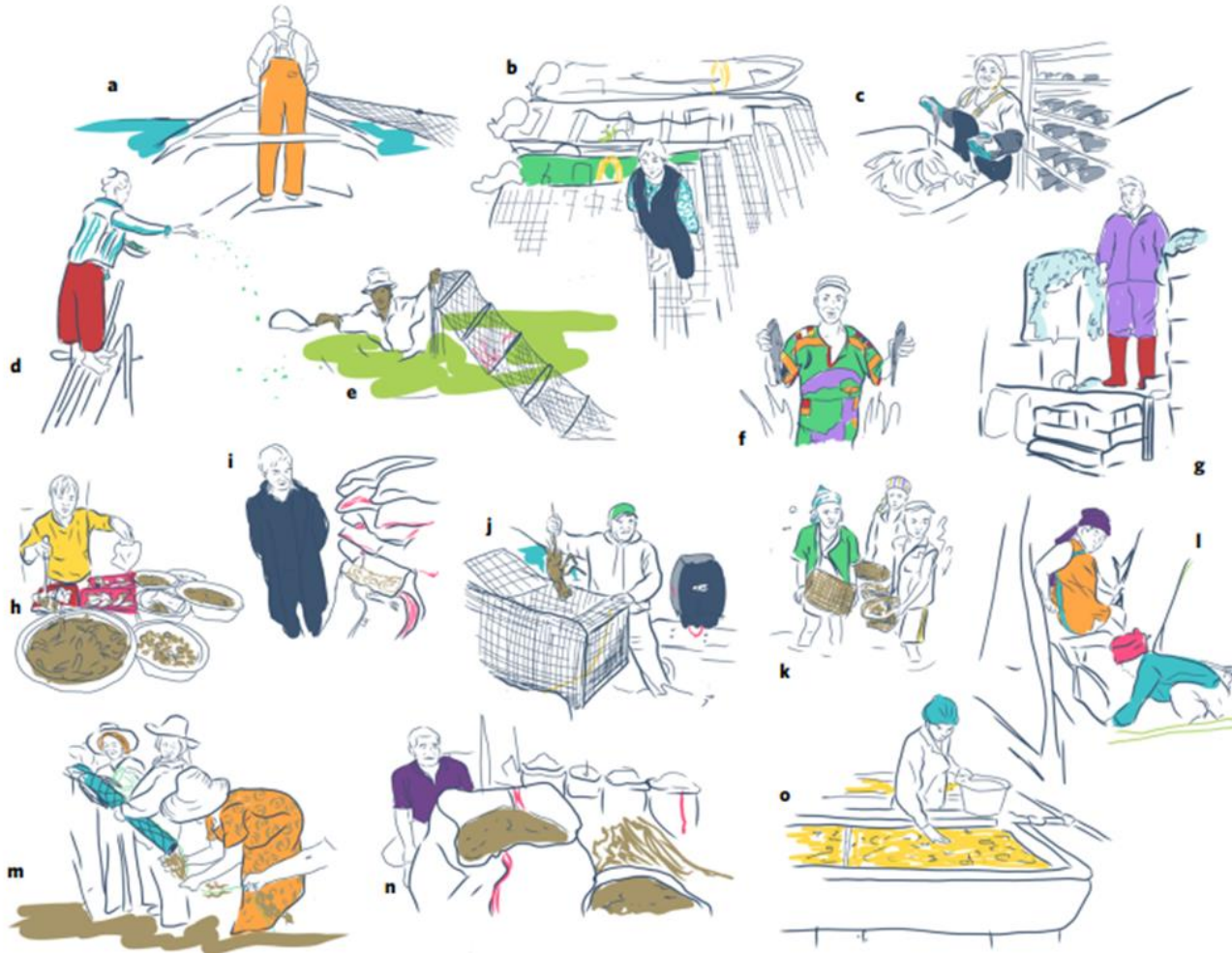
- Traditional dichotomy of 'rural and agricultural' and 'urban and industrial' has long changed
- Industrial, formulated diets and other inputs now widely available in many rural contexts
- The view that aquaculture to overcome rural poverty through small-scale production to directly support household nutrition long eclipsed
- High value and strong market connectivity of shrimp compared to much small-scale finfish production

# Changing focus on producers to value chain and community benefit

- A shift in emphasis to ‘small-scale actors’ that derive benefits from aquaculture production Stakeholders-
  - People located in communities where aquaculture value chain activities occur; sourcing/processing/trading of inputs or products
  - Impacted by any change in the value chain



# Small-scale actors- Producers, traders, processors



Short et al, 2021 Harnessing the diversity of small-scale actors is key to the future of aquatic food systems

**BE THE DIFFERENCE**

# Pond gleaners in Manila Bay-small-scale actors in large scale production



Photo Lionel Dabbadie



# Small-scale intensive shrimp





# Positioning 'social licence to operate'

- Origins in mining, forestry, energy sectors in which the benefits of a 'dirty' but profitable activity are made explicit to local communities-how disbenefits can be mitigated
- Conventionally focused on the location of resource extraction
- So far limited to cage farming of salmonids-supporting and contesting access to space and use of space around temperate coastlines, increasingly by large corporate businesses

# Lessons from salmon farming-establishing social licence to operate

- Depends on messaging and perceptions of benefits, sustainability, and procedural fairness; specific context and trust among broad range of actors-local and central government, foreign operators/investors
- Should focus on a broader range of factors than only benefits for jobs and economy and environmental sustainability

Alexander, 2022

# But small-scale shrimp is different.....

- Economic value of shrimp means its often critical for supporting large numbers of relatively poor people- both as producers and non-producers
- Farming in widely distributed, isolated locations with highly variable governance
- Based on connectivity upstream and downstream through global supply chains



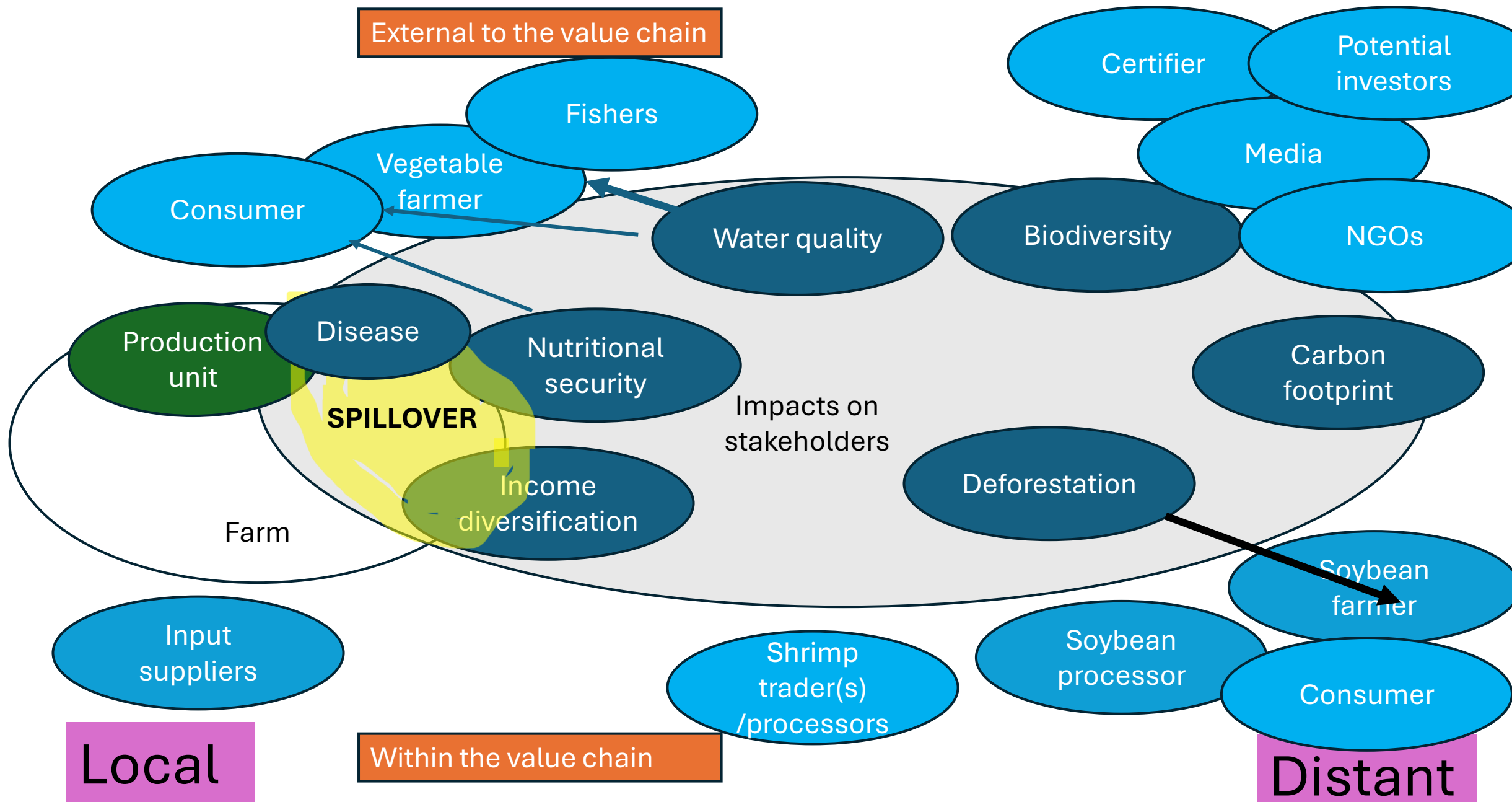
# LOCAL .....and GLOBAL

News 09 Jun 2025 by Robert Outram

- So BOTH sustained local and global social licence
- Need better-off consumer perceptions towards shr
- Connecting and community variability of small-scale supply chains and distar



Mr Prawn protest at Iceland store (photo: Georgina Ellen, Anna Travinskaia)



# Trade offs

- Local social licence needs consistent benefits to both producers and communities
- Stories of poor social licence related to a range of factors e.g. salination of soil, land grabbing, loss of fishing and biodiversity has been amplified from production communities to consumers
- Are examples of such negative environmental, social and economic outcomes representative? Can they be corrected?
- Can positive impacts on livelihoods (income, nutrition) mitigate the negative ?



# Negative impacts on local stakeholders

## Focus on Bangladeshi shrimp sector

- Long-standing critique of shrimp farming-on human, social and environmental grounds
- The 2012 Swedish Society for Nature Conservation film
- Chemical use, adulteration, social exclusion and violence
- Message to European consumers to NOT eat shrimp

## Murky waters



# Human rights and labour abuses

## Risks both upstream and downstream of farming

- Bangladesh-EJF focus on poor human rights and labour particularly in the processing sector
- Thailand-the Guardian expose (2015) of slavery and coerced labour in fishery supplying shrimp farms and in post-harvest processing

## Impossibly cheap

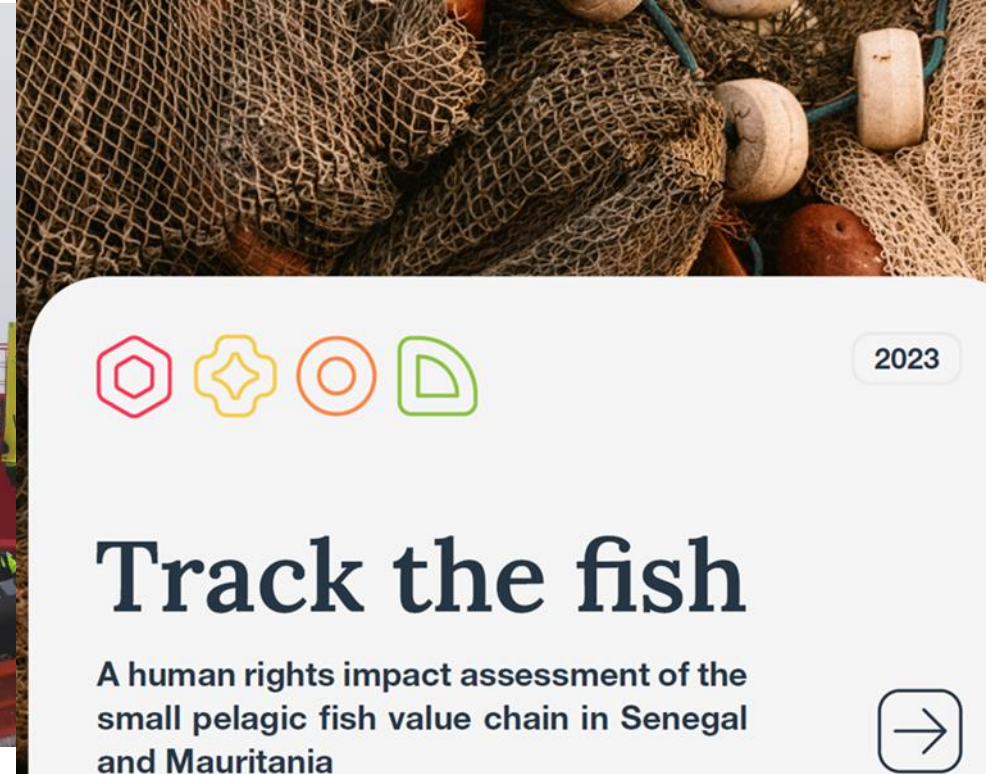


Search



# Feed or food? Marine ingredients

- Changes in exploitation of West African pelagic fisheries following entry of industrial fishers and FM/FO plants
- Major impacts on human rights and local nutritional security
- Recent Guardian headlines linking consumption of farmed fish with child malnutrition in West Africa





# A balanced but contested view?

- Media can usefully highlight the issue , build on detailed academic research and ‘tell the story’
- Finding solutions more challenging-ingredient suppliers supporting FIPs, (Marin Trust, MSC), enforcing standards for purchase etc
- Improving traceability and transparency of ingredient supply chains for shrimp feed is critical. Digital approaches?
- Positive narratives?

# Nutrition security

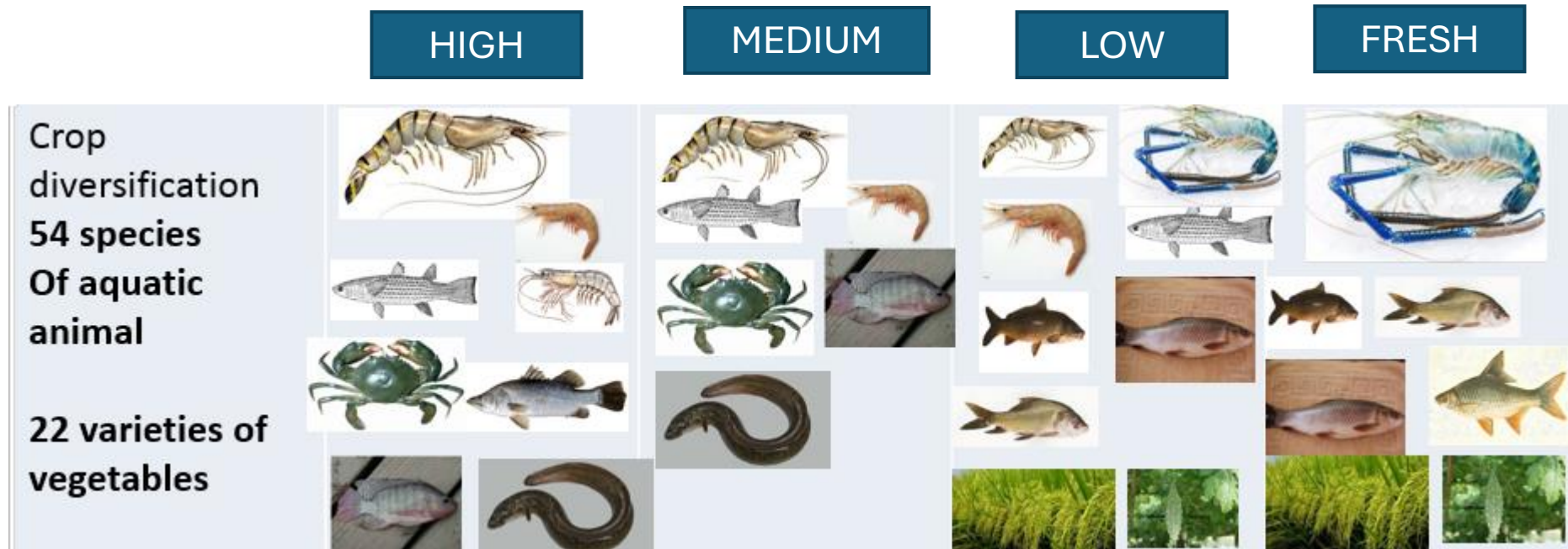
**and enhance environmental,  
economic and social outcomes**

## **Polycultures deliver local nutrition**

- Shrimp are often NOT produced in monoculture
- Non-fed shrimp used to enhance economic returns from finfish production
- Accessibility, affordability and seasonal value that impacts producer and non producer

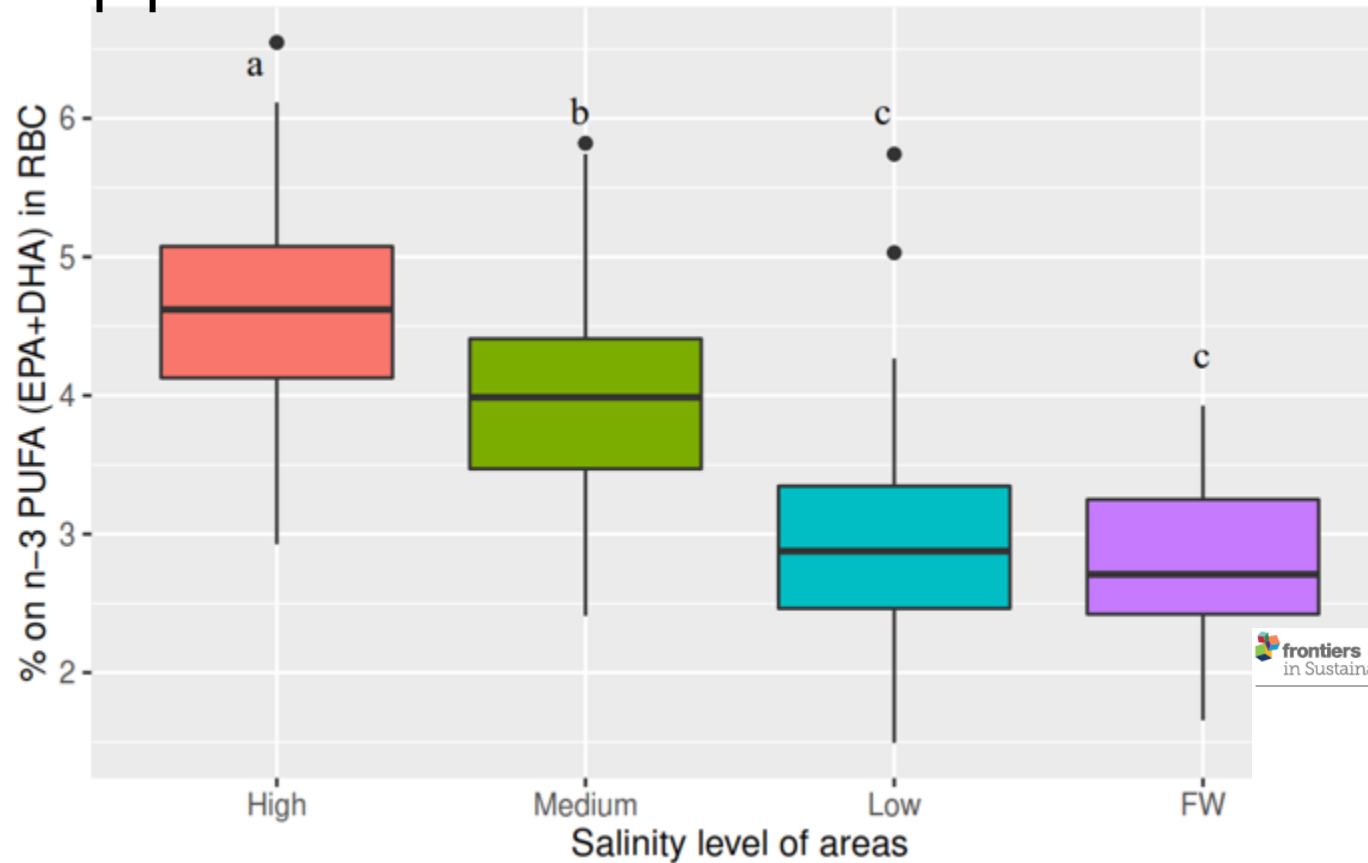


# Shrimp ponds?





# Omega 3 index (RBC) of adolescent girls-linked to accessibility to small tilapias in shrimp ponds



frontiers  
in Sustainable Food Systems

ORIGINAL RESEARCH  
published: 22 November 2021  
doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2021.713140



Mamun et al , 2021

Export-Driven, Extensive Coastal  
Aquaculture Can Benefit Nutritionally  
Vulnerable People



# Quality assurance to build social licence

- Well communicated social licence can support consumption in high income markets
- Small-scale producers often cannot control origin and quality of inputs and post harvest attributes
- Country level ratings and farm level certification have largely failed small scale farms leaving them with no access to markets demanding consistent standards
- How can other forms of assurance work?
- Supporting development of capabilities among small-scale actors (Bush et al)

# Technology, knowledge and market access

- Costs and challenge for ‘facilitated engagement’ with small-scale actors
  - -to any local facilitator and
  - the small producers themselves
- Maintaining quality in the value chain , discouraging bad and supporting good practice –the challenge of maintaining collective action that can lead to recognised provenance
- Standardising and improving performance across the intensification spectrum
- Digital approaches to reduce costs and improve connectivity

# Invest in capabilities

- Improve traceability and transparency in input supply and processing
- Highlight, share and reward innovative engagement between local actors and lead firms in high income markets
- Verification platforms developed and implemented by coalitions of those close to the farmer and those close to the market





# Invest in communicating narratives



Photo Jad Abi Younes



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BE THE DIFFERENCE

# Japanese consumer groups visit producers

**Seeing is believing**



**Champions of free-range shrimp**



Photo credit Harry Yuli

# Summary

- Small-scale shrimp production defies simple definitions –its very diversity makes assurance complex
- Social licence needs to consider benefit and cost through the value chain and approaches to mitigate problems
- Risks to losing social licence are often upstream or downstream of small-scale farming
- Building coalitions between actors close to small-scale farms and markets is critical
- Build trust and knowledge among food marketeers and customers through real stories

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