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The Success Story of the Co-Management of a Sea-Cucumber Fishery

The sandfish (*Holothuria scabra*) fishery located in a 26 km² seagrass flat in New Caledonia has been targeted for 15 years by a fisher community, who established a temporary closure in 2008. Since then, scientists, public authorities and fishers have implemented a cost-effective co-management regime based on total admissible catch (TAC) and additional informal limitations to share and sustain economical benefits. Participative assessments of sandfish biomass were repeated six times from 2008 to 2011 following an adaptive approach. The biomass of commercial-sized sandfish has doubled in the past three years while the activity has become much more profitable. This local success story shows the need for implementing fishing rules proposed and endorsed by local fishers and supported by government agents (i.e., Fisheries Departments) and specific scientific inputs. Local governance and contextual issues must be carefully considered should this co-management system be up-scaled and/or transferred to other sea cucumber fisheries.