

# COLD CATCH – DEVELOPING A COLD CHAIN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE SOMALI FISHING INDUSTRY

## 1. BACKGROUND

Cold chain development is essential for improving food security in least developed countries (LDCs). Reduced food losses and improved food quality in the fishing industry, especially, create opportunities to expand markets for sea-based protein and improve the stability and value of the fishing industry.

At over 3,000 km in length, the Somali region has the longest coastline in mainland Africa. The productive fishing grounds on the region's continental shelf provide opportunities for job creation, economic growth, and food security, but the industry's growth is limited by the lack of reliable infrastructure, especially cold chain. Somali coastal communities' economies and livelihood security depend on fishing, but inefficient fishing and processing methods combined with low access to ice and cold storage mean fish often spoil before they reach the market. This translates to lost profits for fishers. Moreover, low quality handling standards mean many products are not suitable for export, further limiting potential profits. Improving the cold chain in Somali communities would immediately benefit fishers, processors, and others involved in the sector by creating opportunities to expand the market for Somali fish and increase profits without increasing fishing pressure.

We propose a pilot project to develop cold chain infrastructure to improve connections for the Bander Beyla lobster fishery to domestic and export markets. Bander Beyla is a remote coastal village in the state of Puntland, northeast Somalia. Their lucrative lobster fishery can supply domestic markets (e.g., hotels in the inland capital Garowe) and export markets (e.g., export to Dubai), but the fishing community repeatedly expresses a need for cold chain infrastructure to move their harvest beyond the local market. Without access to ice, fishers are unable to chill their catch while at sea, so time spent fishing is limited, and some of what reaches the landing site has already spoiled. There are no cold storage facilities to store the fresh catch and a lack of refrigerated trucks put fish at a high risk of spoilage en route to larger markets. A cold chain infrastructure would allow Bander Beyla's fishers to extend their fishing hours, decrease wasted harvest, extend their product shelf life from catch to consumer, improve product quality, and transport to a wider market.

Existing relationships in Bander Beyla facilitated this choice. Secure Fisheries, a program of One Earth Future, has worked there for over a year on community development and fisheries governance projects. Shuraako, a program of One Earth Future that connects Somali entrepreneurs with impact capital investors (such as Norfund and DANIDA) and provides portfolio management, has had a major client, Corno African Fishing Company (CAFCO), in the community since 2014. There are smaller fishing companies in the community that do not currently get investment support. This project would incorporate these small-scale fishers into a more accessible cold chain solution.

## 2. PROJECT GOALS

The Cold Catch pilot program aims to develop an unbroken cold chain system from catch to consumer that can serve as a model for coastal food security solutions in other Somali communities and beyond to other LDCs. Fish must be able to be kept cold and handled appropriately to maintain quality from the moment they are caught to the moment they are plated for consumption. This project seeks to improve the cold chain at every point to ensure a fresh end product. Specific goals include the following.

- Improve fishers' profits by allowing them to deliver healthy, fresh products to their buyers.
- Develop coordination between fishers, processors, transporters, purchasers, exporters, and markets to minimize fish temperature fluctuations.
- Support community livelihoods by ensuring equitable access to resources and potential profits.
- Create stable jobs in the fishing sector that *do not rely on increasing catch*, such as ice and storage facility managers, drivers, or mechanics.
- Expand access to markets both within the Somali region and through exports.
- Serve as a model for expansion to other small-scale fishing communities in the Somali region.

