



De Vuelta a Casa: Costa Rican artificial intelligence reaches the UN to protect the world's oceans

- The initiative led by Imperial and FIFCO combines technology, innovation, science, and global vision.
- This project has classified more than 70,000 shells for proper return to their place of origin.

June 2025. As part of World Ocean Month, the Costa Rican brand *Imperial* and the company FIFCO are celebrating the progress of the *De Vuelta a Casa* (Back Home) project, an initiative that combines artificial intelligence, volunteerism, and institutional cooperation to restore marine ecosystems. Thanks to its significant impact, it is one of the featured projects at the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in Nice, France.

The project responds to a global and often overlooked problem: the massive extraction of seashells by tourism, which threatens biodiversity, accelerates coastal erosion, and affects the marine ecosystem. In Costa Rica, around six tons of shells are confiscated at airports each year, which until recently were buried due to the inability to accurately identify their region of origin.

Aware of this need, Imperial and FIFCO, as part of their expansive sustainability vision, implemented a pioneering solution in collaboration with the University of Costa Rica, AERIS, and the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC): an artificial intelligence application capable of determining, from a single photograph, whether a shell comes from the Caribbean or the Costa Rican Pacific. This tool, trained with more than 18,500 images, achieves over 90% accuracy and allows the shells to be returned to their natural ecosystem without compromising the ocean's health.

"This tool allowed us to turn a critical situation into an opportunity to help our beaches. With science and data, we returned thousands of shells to their place of origin, accompanied by a powerful communication campaign that reminds us that they should never have been removed from their home," shared Fabián Loría., FIFCO's marketing manager.

In June 2025, the second edition of the volunteer program accompanying this initiative was held, with the participation of 205 volunteers, including FIFCO employees, consumers, and strategic allies. Together, they sorted more than 34,400 seashells confiscated at Juan Santamaría International Airport.

The next phase of the project will be carried out in the coming months, when the shells confiscated at Guanacaste Airport will also be classified. They will then be returned to the sea on beaches of the Caribbean and Pacific coasts of Costa Rica, where they can continue to fulfill their ecological role as sand stabilizers, species refuges, and regulators of marine chemical balance.

Project with international reach

The impact of *De Vuelta a Casa* has transcended national borders. In June 2025, the project was selected as one of three cases representing Costa Rica at the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in Nice, France. The initiative stands out for its innovative approach, its public-private partnership model, and its potential for scalability.

"A few months ago, we had a dream. We dedicated time, love, and all the positive energy you can imagine. Today, De Vuelta a Casa is being unveiled as part of Costa Rica's stand at the United



Nations Ocean Conference. The potential impact of participating in a forum of this kind demonstrates the power of an expansive sustainability vision,” said Maria Pía Robles, FIFCO’s Director of Corporate Relations.

In line with its global vision, Imperial released the artificial intelligence model as open source, available for governments, researchers, and environmental organizations to implement in other regions of the world. Preliminary studies indicate that if this technology is replicated in at least 24 countries, seashells could be returned to more than 100,000 beaches around the world.

With *De Vuelta a Casa*, FIFCO and Imperial are consolidating their commitment to expansive sustainability based on applied science, cross-sector partnerships, and citizen participation. Because every shell counts, and every action brings us closer to healthier, more vibrant, and more resilient oceans.

About FIFCO

FIFCO is a beverage and food company with 117 years of history, with operations in Costa Rica, Central America, Dominican Republic, Mexico, and the United States, 5 manufacturing plants and 13 distribution centers. It has 3 business divisions that include Florida Bebidas (food and beverages), FIFCO Hospitality (real estate sector) and FIFCO Retail (retail sales). It exports to over 10 countries around the world and has a portfolio of more than 2,000 products.