

Compulsory contributions to Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and other international organisations and Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs)

Lead DG: MARE

I. Overview

What the programme is about?

Sustainable Fisheries Agreements

Under its exclusive competence of negotiating bilateral fisheries agreements the European Commission negotiates, concludes and implements bilateral Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) between the European Union and third countries with the objective of contributing to a regulated framework for the EU long-distance fishing fleet while ensuring a suitable exploitation of the third countries' relevant fisheries resources and supporting competitiveness of the Union's fishing fleet. Within the framework of the SFPAs, the Commission maintains a political dialogue on fisheries related policies with third countries concerned, in coherence with the principles governing the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the commitments under other relevant European policies in order to contribute to healthy fish stocks around the world. SFPAs constitute a benchmark for the management of international fishing policies and therefore also contribute to fostering the EU position as a global and leading actor in the field of international fisheries.

Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and international organisations

Given the exclusive competence of the EU for the conservation of marine living resources and international obligations deriving from the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the implementing UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA), to which the EU is Party, the Commission pays compulsory annual contributions deriving from EU membership in these bodies. This includes various RFMOs where the EU has an interest and bodies set up by the UNCLOS, namely the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

EU added value of the programme

Sustainable Fisheries Agreements

The conclusion of bilateral agreements with third countries is necessary to allow European Union fleets access to fish surplus stocks that are not being fished by the coastal States' local fleets and to provide sustainable food supply to the European citizens. Most of these fish stocks cannot be found in European waters (tuna, small pelagic species, crustaceans, cephalopods). An important part of the EU fleet depends on them and therefore needs access to the waters of non-EU countries. At the same time, these bilateral agreements are playing an essential role in developing the partner country's governance of the fishing sector in a sustainable manner through the provision of sectoral support.

In summary, SFPAs deliver the following overall benefits:

- SFPAs give the European fleet access to fishing grounds under a clearer, uniform and more stable legal framework, offering greater legal certainty for European vessel owners, and contributing to their competitiveness;
- SFPAs foster scientific cooperation between the EU and its partner countries;
- SFPAs promote transparency and sustainability in the partner countries that also apply to other agreements between the partner countries concerned and other fleets present in their EEZ. This is therefore contributing to the sustainable management of fishing resources worldwide.
- In the partner countries, SFPAs encourage improved governance and management of the local fisheries sector by supporting the monitoring, control and surveillance of national and foreign fleets' activities. SFPAs provide significant funding to contribute to the sustainable development of local fishing activities, and to the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) and international organisations

In line with the External Dimension of the CFP, which is an exclusive Union policy, the EU promotes better international fisheries and ocean governance and the sustainable management of international fish stocks as well as defends EU economic and social interests within these organisations. As the EU is a Contracting Party to the UNCLOS and UNFSA it must cooperate with other fishing nations and be a member of RFMOs when fishing in high seas. As the sole representative for all EU fishing interests in RFMOs with a common strategy for all EU fleets, the EU is a leading member in these organisations and has the clout and authority to defend the EU interests more effectively and forcefully than EU Member States separately.

Implementation mode

Expenditure related to compulsory contributions to RFMOs and other international organisations as well as to Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements are implemented directly by the Commission.

II. Programme Implementation Update**Implementation Status (2017-2019)**SFPAs

At the end of 2019, a total number of 13 protocols ⁽¹⁾ to Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) were in force, to be compared with 9 at the end of the previous year. The voted budget was fully utilised to pay access and sectoral support as foreseen in given protocols.

In 2019, SFPA-related negotiations were successfully completed for the renewal of the SFPA protocol with São Tomé e Príncipe, Senegal and Seychelles and were ongoing with Madagascar and Kiribati.

Following the completion of legislative procedures, new SFPA protocols with the following countries started to apply in the course of 2019: Morocco, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Senegal and São Tomé e Príncipe. In the case of Mauritania, a one-year extension had been agreed upon, which ensured continuity of operations at the expiry of the previous protocol, in line with the negotiation mandate.

Also in 2019, a mandate to open negotiations for a new SFPA with Greenland was adopted as well a mandate to renew the Access agreement to Mayotte waters. In addition, preliminary steps have been taken in view of obtaining a negotiation mandate with Liberia and Cook Islands, through the launch of procedures for the ex-post and ex-ante evaluations of the SFPA Protocols with these countries.

RFMOs

According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), RFMOs are the responsible bodies for the sustainable management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. They play a critical role in promoting the preservation and restoration of marine ecosystems and biodiversity, while contributing to food security, fair, healthy and sustainable food systems, the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, as well as sustainable growth and jobs. RFMOs also offer an opportunity to increase the role of the EU as a global actor and to promote the same principles and standards as those applicable under Union law in the areas of the CFP and a level-playing field for Union operators in line with Article 28 of the basic regulation. The EU, represented by the Commission due to the exclusive competence under the CFP, plays an active role in 5 tuna and 12 non-tuna RFMOs, Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) and other organisations.

The EU paid its membership contributions to 13 RFMOs ⁽²⁾ and 3 other International Bodies in view of the EU's membership to them (i.e. CMS, ITLOS, ISBA) in 2019 as foreseen in the budget 2019.

Key achievementsSFPAs

The number of fishing authorisations issued in 2019 in the framework of the SFPAs in force

- slightly increased to a total of 412 authorisations issued in 2019 for 128 vessels related to tuna agreements (one vessel can receive several authorisations to fish in various countries) and
- increased from around 343 to 470 authorisations for 207 vessels in the case of mixed fisheries, essentially because of the reactivation of the SFPA with Morocco.

This achievement demonstrates the efficiency gains obtained in the implementation and management of SFPAs with a high take-up of fishing opportunities made available in the framework of bilateral agreements as well as an increased level of fishing activity compared to the previous year.

In addition, SFPAs have also been contributing to the development of the fisheries sector in the partner countries and to better governance of their fisheries sector. A significant part of the total EU budget for SFPAs has been devoted to the concrete projects funded under sectoral support and related mostly to control and surveillance capacities, small port infrastructures, landing facilities and laboratories, equipment for small-scale fishermen. At the same time, they contribute to eliminating illegal fishing and providing good framework conditions for local fishermen. SFPAs therefore also contribute to ensuring food security to local coastal communities. Concrete projects financed include for example the supply of fishing equipment for small fishermen, including

⁽¹⁾ 9 tuna agreements: Cape Verde, Cook Islands, Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Senegal, Mauritius, Liberia, Sao Tome e Principe and Seychelles; and 4 multi-species (mixed) agreements: Mauritania, Morocco, Greenland and Guinea-Bissau.

⁽²⁾ There are 4 organisations targeting the conservation of tuna (CCSBT, IATTC, ICCAT and IOTC), 1 targeting the conservation of salmon (NASCO) and 8 targeting general fisheries aspects (CCAMLR, GFCM, NAFO, NEAFC, SEFAO, SIOFA, SPRFMO and WCPFC)

localisation and safety kits, the reinforcement of sanitary control capacity in ports, landing facilities with storage and ice facilities, financing the acquisition of patrol boats and their maintenance, training of fisheries inspectors and observers, etc.

RFMOs

Overall, the EU has remained the key driver for progress in RFMOs and for increasing their performance. In 2019, the EU tabled (or co-sponsored) 47 proposals in the RFMOs, of which 24 were adopted. Due to the decisions taken in RFMOs, the stocks under their purview are generally in good shape with the fisheries managed at sustainable levels.

The EU's voluntary contributions to the scientific advice of RFMOs played a key role in several RFMOs, including ICCAT, NAFO IOTC, WCPFC and IATTC. In 2019 there was also good progress in the protection of vulnerable species such as sharks, mobula ray, seabirds, and vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs). Key deliverables were the adoption of a quota for blue sharks in ICCAT, a strong conservation measure for mantas and mobula rays to protect these vulnerable species by the IOTC, both based on EU proposals, and the adoption of a new bottom-fishing framework to protect VMEs by the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) and the South Pacific Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO). In addition, the EU is also continuously improving the management of FADs used in tuna fisheries, and promote the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) or fisheries restricted areas.

Evaluations/ studies conducted

The results of the evaluations carried out in 2019 are taken on board in the negotiations for the renewal of agreements, more notably in relation to the level of fishing opportunities agreed upon, the relevant technical provisions applicable and the rules regarding the implementation and monitoring of the multiannual sectoral programmes. The main conclusions of the evaluations were as follows ⁽³⁾:

Greenland

- The 2016-2020 Protocol is considered to bring significant benefits to both parties and to address the needs of the various stakeholders.
- The EU fleet has made very good use of the fishing opportunities offered which concern various species such as cod, pelagic and demersal redfish. The protocol also allows for exchanges of fishing opportunities with Norway and the Faeroe Islands that are beneficial to the EU fleet as a whole.
- The evaluation considers that the renewal of the Agreement and its Protocol clearly appears as the preferred option and should retain a similar technical and financial approach as the current one, with some technical adaptations aimed at improving the implementing conditions of its access and sectoral support components.

Mauritania

- The evaluation indicates that the protocol renewal is the preferred option for both parties, with certain modifications to be introduced in order to improve the functioning of the protocol and better assess the impact of fishing on exploited stocks and ecosystems.
- In a future Protocol, it is suggested, in particular, to adjust the level of fishing opportunities to the fishing history of EU fleets, especially for fleets targeting small pelagics and hake and to effectively implement a transparency clause for fishing activities in Mauritania, in order to best define surplus fisheries resources available in Mauritanian waters for foreign fleets, along with the equity of access to these resources.
- About the sectoral support component, the evaluation considers that improvements should be made to ensure rigorous management and monitoring of the funds and activities are financed by the agreement, and more broadly, to ensure coherence with additional support financed by other partners.

Senegal

- The 2014-2019 Protocol has been evaluated as overall effective, responding to the needs of the EU distant water fleet and at the same time supporting in an effective way Senegal's fisheries management capacities.
- The Protocol benefits from a good cost-benefit ratio for both the EU and Senegal since both parties obtain a fair share of the total value added of catches: respectively EUR 5 and 3.2 for every EUR 1 invested by the EU.
- The Protocol is also good regarding the utilisation of sectoral support funds which has improved in the second half of the protocol and which is overall meeting the significant needs of Senegal, particularly with regard to strengthening fisheries surveillance and supporting artisanal fisheries.

Seychelles

- The 2014-2020 Protocol has been evaluated as effective in terms of its objective of contributing towards sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources in the waters of Seychelles and highly relevant to the needs of the stakeholders concerned.
- The evaluation has pointed out to the very good equation between the fishing opportunities offered and their actual utilisation and the high degree of added value generated for both parties.

⁽³⁾ More information on these studies can be found: <https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/studies>

- The Protocol has been coherent with other EU interventions in the Western Indian Ocean, and the sectoral support provided did contribute to strengthening fisheries governance both in Seychelles and in the region.

Forthcoming implementation

Regarding SFPAs, it is expected that new SFPAs with Mauritania, Greenland, Liberia and Cook Islands will enter into force in 2021, thus contributing to an increase in the total number of operational SFPAs. In the years to come, the governance model represented by SFPAs will continue to be promoted with the objective of consolidating the SFPA network through timely renewal of protocols and new agreements when relevant. The sectoral support component of SFPAs will continue to support the sustainable management of fisheries resources in third countries, in particular the reinforcement of capacities, the promotion of scientific capacity, surveillance and control mechanisms and the support to small-scale fisheries. It will also contribute to the promotion of the blue economy in economies which are highly dependent on the maritime sector.

The EU will continue its membership in the RFMOs. The priorities will likely remain mostly focused on contributing to improving the scientific advice in RFMOs and improving the performance of those organisations.

Outlook for the 2021-2027 period

As part of the next EU budget framework for the 2021-2027, the European Commission proposed to allocate the budget of EUR 990 million [in current prices] for the international dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy, including the compulsory contributions to the RFMOs and other international organisations as well as the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements.

This funding will be used for renewing existing as well as concluding new protocols with third countries to allow the EU fleet to access to fish surplus stocks in those countries' exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and to contribute to a sustainable food supply to European consumers. As fishing for highly migratory and straddling stocks in the high seas is concerned, the European Union is bound by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 1995 United Nations Fish Stock Agreement (UNFSA) to cooperate with other parties by participating in RFMOs and other international organisations. They are the main vehicle for multilateral cooperation, to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainability of fish stocks under their purview. Therefore, the Commission will continue to pay compulsory contributions to these organisations.

III. Programme key facts and performance framework

1. Financial programming

Legal Basis	Period of application	Reference Amount (EUR million)

	Financial Programming (EUR million)								
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020		
Operational appropriations	80,0	135,6	135,7	127,0	94,5	147,9	148,0	868,8	
Total	80,0	135,6	135,7	127,0	94,5	147,9	148,0	868,8	

2. Implementation rates

	2019				2020			
	CA	Impl. Rate	PA	Impl. Rate	CA	Impl. Rate	PA	Impl. Rate
Voted appropriations	147,900	100,00 %	142,086	100,00 %	80,157	98,54 %	78,232	27,37 %
Authorised appropriations (*)	147,900	100,00 %	142,086	100,00 %	12,314	641,46 %	13,932	153,72 %

(*) Authorised appropriations include voted appropriations, appropriations originating from assigned revenues (internal and external) as well as carried-over and reconstituted appropriations; the execution rate is calculated on 15 April 2020

3. Performance information

Programme performance

SFPAs

With a total number of 13 SFPAs protocols currently in place and with an objective of renewing SFPAs protocols with Gabon, Madagascar, the 2020 target of 15 protocols in place should be achieved. The number of active vessels in the framework of the SFPAs has increased to 128 for to tuna agreements and to 207 vessels in the case of mixed agreements. This shows a large increase compared to previous years, in line with the 2020 target, thanks to an evolution in the total number of SFPAs in force and in particular thanks to the reactivation of the SFPA with Morocco. This implementation and management of SFPAs has led to a high take-up of fishing opportunities made available in the framework of bilateral agreements as well as an increased level of fishing activity and therefore providing more fish on the European markets. At the same time, SFPAs performed well in contributing to eliminating illegal fishing.

RFMOs

The Commission continued to deliver on its commitment to achieve more sustainable fisheries worldwide. The contributions are being rather successful in achieving their objective as up to 88 % of all conservation measures adopted by RFMOs in 2019 to which the EU is a member were in line with scientific advice. The main shortcoming is the decision-making procedure set out in RFMOs which is consensus. As such, this result does of course also reflect the reality of decision-making within RFMOs where the EU is not the only actor involved in the process. The 2020 target of 100 % will continue to be pursued by the Commission. Other identified shortcomings are the lengthy procedures for the identification and implementation of the projects as well as the delays in the reporting by RFMO. Several individual reminders were sent out to recall the applicable rules and the existing deadlines.

There are currently illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing IUU listing procedures in place in all RFMOs. In addition to that, an increasing number of RFMOs have cross listing procedures (e.g., NAFO, SEAFO, SIOFA, IOTC) and/or specific provisions to address the responsibility of nationals involved in IUU fishing (e.g., CCAMLR, SPRFMO, SIOFA). Only one RFMO, IATTC, has not adopted PSM measures to date despite the fact that the EU has been submitting a proposal to establish PSM in IATTC every year since 2010. The Commission will continue to push for the adoption of PSM in this organisation. International discussions on the adoption of Catch Documentation System (CDS) for high value species was monopolised until the end of 2017 by side progress made by the FAO on the adoption of voluntary guidelines. In 2018 and 2019, ICCAT, CCAMLR and CCSBT undertook technical discussions to introduce improvements to their existing CDS. The Commission will continue to advocate the adoption of CDS in all RFMOs.

Specific objectives

Specific Objective 1: To promote, through active involvement in international organisations, sustainable development for fisheries management and maritime governance in line with the CFP objectives, and ensure that fishery resources are maintained above or restored above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield

Indicator 1: Conservation measures based on scientific advice adopted, for all species under the purview of RFMOs to which the EU is a member

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2012	Milestones foreseen							2020
49 out of 53 (92 %)				95 % of the conservation measures adopted				All conservation measures adopted
	Actual results							
				55 out of 57 (96 %)	52 out of 59 (88 %)	57 out of 65 (88 %)		

Availability of Data: Data for NEAFC pending.

Unit of measure: Conservation measures adopted by RFMOs in their annual meeting are in line with the best available scientific advice.

Indicator 2: Tools to fight IUU fishing adopted in RFMOs

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2012	Milestones foreseen							2020
IUU listing in place in all relevant RFMOs, port state measures adopted only in some RFMOs, catch documentation system in place in CCAMLR for toot fish and ICCAT for Bluefin tuna.				Revision of transhipment procedures in CCAMLR. Adoption of MCS in SIOFA. Revision of country-by-country compliance process in SPRFMO.	Adoption of PSM in IATTC; Revision of country-by-country compliance mechanisms in IOTC. CCAMLR and SPRFMO.	Adoption of PSM measures in IATTC. revision of PSM and IUU procedures in SPRFMO.		IUU listing procedures in place and operational in all RFMOs (annual). incremental introduction of port state measures in all RFMOs in line with the FAO Port State Measures until 2020. Gradual introduction of catch documentation systems for high value species until 2020.
	Actual results							
	Adoption of PSM in CCSBT	Revision of IUU listing procedures in CCAMLR and a new measure in SIOFA. Implementation of revamped e-CDS in CCAMLR. Revision of MCS measures in	Revision of IUU listing procedures in IOTC. CCAMLR and CCSBT; new Port Inspection Scheme in SIOFA; Revision of CDS requirements in	Revision of IUU listing procedures in CCAMLR IOTC and SIOFA; Revision of country-by-country compliance	Revision of IUU procedures to include cross-listing (IOTC and SIOFA) as well provisions related to			

			SEAFO. Revision of VMS legal framework and selection of VMS provider in SPRFMO. Adoption of electronic PSM in IOTC&IUU listing procedures and vessels without nationality in SIOFA and IOTC Adoption of a GFCM recommendation on Port State Measures.	CCAMLR; Revision of PSM in SEAFO. Voluntary Port state procedures adopted in WCPFC. Adoption of a GFCM recommendation on a regional plan of action to combat IUU.	procedures in SIOFA.	nationals involved in IUU fishing (SIOFA and SPRFMO). All RFMOs except IATTC have PSM in place.		
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Expenditure related outputs

Outputs	Budget line	Budget 2020	
		Number	EUR million
1. Annual financial contributions to RFMOs enabling the right of full participation in decision-making in the RFMO concerned	11 03 02	14*	5.2
2. Contribution to the annual budget of International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and the International Seabed Authority (ISBA UN), convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals (CMS)	11 03 02	3	0.2
Total		17	5.4

Outputs		Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1. Annual financial contributions to RFMOs enabling the right of full participation in decision-making in the RFMO concerned	F	12	13	14	14	14	14*	14*
	P	12	13	13	13	13	13	14*
2. Contribution to the annual budget of International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and the International Seabed Authority (ISBA UN)	F	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	P	2	3	3	3	3	3	3

* Subject to the approval of the accession instrument adoption of the Council Decision of the new RFMO (NPFC)

Specific Objective 2: To establish, through Sustainable Fisheries Agreements, a legal, economic and environmental governance framework for fishing activities carried out by Union fishing vessels in third country waters, in coherence with other EU policies

Performance

At the end of December 2019, 13 SFPAs were in force: Greenland, Morocco, Mauritania, Cabo Verde, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Ivory-Coast, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Mauritius and Cook Islands. Negotiations for a new SFPAs with Mauritania as well as negotiations for the renewal of the dormant SFPAs with Madagascar and Kiribati were ongoing, which resulted in not meeting the 2019 milestones for indicator 1 and indicator 3.

Indicator 1: Number of Sustainable Fisheries Agreements in force								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
10	13	13	14	14	15	15	15	15
	Actual results							
	13	13	14	12	9	13		

Indicator 2: Fishing possibilities for EU vessels								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020

Tuna vessels: 118	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
	Actual results							
	134	115	121	121	121	128		
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Vessels for mixed SFAs: 63	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Actual results							
	112	123	165	160	160	207		

Indicator 3: Number of matrix adopted for the follow-up of the sectoral support (matrix of objectives, indicators and targets adopted with the third country, for each protocol in force)

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
10	13	13	14	14	15	15	15	15
	Actual results							
	13	14	14	12	9	13		

Expenditure related outputs

Outputs	Budget line	Budget 2020	
		Number	EUR million
1. Financial contribution to all the protocols in force providing access for EU vessels in third countries waters	11 03 01 and reserve line	16	145.2
Total		16	142.6

Outputs		Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1. Financial contribution to all the protocols in force providing access for EU vessels in third countries waters	F	13	13	14	14	15	15	15
	P	13	14	14	12	9	13	15

5. Programme contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

SFPAs contribute to the achievement of the following goals:

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements provide the guarantee that only surplus resources will be fished by EU fishing fleet operating in third country waters. They therefore contribute to the sustainable management of fisheries resources and to food security for local population dependent on fishing resources. This is being reinforced in some SFPAs though provisions regarding compulsory landings, or in-kind donation of fish which also contribute directly or indirectly to improved nutrition in developing countries.

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements are a tool to help promote long-term resource conservation, good governance and the sustainable development of our partners' fisheries sector. In addition, thanks to the sectoral support, the scientific, administrative and technical capacity of local partners for the sustainable development of their fisheries is being reinforced, in coordination with development policy tools. SFPAs therefore contribute directly to the sustainable management of fisheries worldwide.