

## **Annex A                      Actions of the European Commission**

### *European Commission funds*

The European Commission has committed €184 million to support regional ocean programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa addressing three challenges - improving international ocean governance, promoting a sustainable and inclusive blue economy, and conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems. In November 2023, regional programmes for a total amount of €70 million were adopted for Western Africa and the Blue Benguela Current. The EU also funds development cooperation projects with developing countries in the fisheries sector. The projects focus on aquaculture, marine capture fisheries and inland capture fisheries. Overall, Africa is the main recipient of EU funds for fisheries and aquaculture, receiving about €200 million.

These important topics are also within the purview of the Africa-Europe Strategy Group on Ocean Governance established, on the initiative and with funding of the European Union, by the Africa - Europe Foundation. The importance of focusing on science, climate and local communities was reiterated during the high-level discussion of the Group in May 2023. The participants agreed on the critical need for data to measure and track ocean biodiversity and fish stocks to support the livelihoods of coastal communities, laying the foundation for robust capacity building and sharing, which can be supported by initiatives such as Centres of Excellence and the EU's Horizon Europe Programme. The discussion also focused on concrete ways to reverse the degradation of ocean resources and support the livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities.

It should also be noted that Fish4ACP, funded by the EU, included a program dedicated to the small pelagics value chain, and these examples are good opportunities to analyse the whole production chain and bring tailored made solutions along the whole chain.

### *Involvement in regional organisations*

With the objective of supporting the sustainable management of natural resources and good governance practices, the EU implements several actions, including continued engagement in regional organisations and support to African partners to promote the conservation and long-term sustainability of the oceans, as well as the effective implementation of measures adopted by those organisations.

While the EU's long-lasting efforts to convert CECAF into a fully-fledged RFMO (i.e. organisation capable of addressing binding decisions to its members) have unfortunately so far proven unsuccessful, the EU's contribution to CECAF's scientific work is indisputably crucial for the region. The EU supports CECAF's primary role in developing scientific expertise, providing scientific advice and formulating scientific and management recommendations. Through those measures, it contributes to regional coordination to promote sustainable management of the stocks in the region and coordination of national administration and scientific institutions.

### *Actions in the framework of SFPAs*

Under Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs), such as for example those with Senegal and Mauritania, the EU supports regional coordination by financing the participation of State authorities and national scientists in international and regional organizations. The EU also discusses the issue where relevant, e.g. most recently during the 2024 EU-Gambia Joint Committee meeting, where The Gambia informed about implementing measures aiming to limit fishmeal production (significant increases in annual fees imposed on fishmeal producers) and increase supply of affordable fish to the local population (retention by the state of 10% of landings for distribution at discounted price).

Moreover, the EU uses the SFPAs' Joint scientific committees (JSC) with Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau to support the urgently needed scientific and research activities in the CECAF area, and to further fuel collaboration and data collection with and among these countries. Exemplarily, below several success stories that highlight the positive and successful impact that our scientific collaboration through SFPAs and funding for scientific support beyond EU waters has achieved:

- In the framework of a "Study on improvement for the analysis and exploitation of observer reports in EU fisheries from NW African waters"<sup>1</sup>, scientists from the EU, Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau consolidated, during a joint workshop in January 2020 on the standardisation of on-board observer methods, four manuals for scientific observers. The coastal states have welcomed these manuals as a very useful basis to inform about properly carrying out scientific observations for scientific data collection.
- As an alternative to the missing legally binding management component of CECAF, the EU-Mauritania JSC has repeatedly recommended to start improving fisheries management bilaterally, specifically concerning sardinella and sardine, together with Senegal and Morocco, respectively. As a matter of fact, bilateral meetings between these countries have increased in the last two years and led to new bilateral fisheries management agreements.

Furthermore, not only, but also as a result of repeated scientific alarm bells from the EU-Mauritania JSC and the CECAF assessment working group on small pelagics, the issues of small pelagic stocks status and fish meal factories have been at the heart of the discussion with Mauritania since 2019, issues repeatedly raised both during the political dialogues and at technical level. In signing the 2021-2026 Protocol, it was requested that Mauritania adopts a plan for the sustainable management of small pelagics. In a precautionary approach, the EU fleet of pelagic trawlers was only able to fish beyond 20 miles until adoption and implementation of this management plan.

Approved in 2022, the small pelagic management plan has been accompanied by the adoption of a series of decrees, establishing the condition and regulatory measures for small pelagic fishing activities. Since its development and approval, concrete actions have been put in place, including a new zoning of fishing areas, the closing of several fishmeal

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<sup>1</sup> Specific Contract No 12 under the Framework Contract EASME/EMFF/2016/008

factories, and management measures to channel small pelagics to supply chains for human consumption. The implementation of this plan is yearly assessed by the SFPAs' Joint Scientific Committee and closely followed by the Joint Committee, for which it remains a priority.

Finally, the SFPAs protocols directly contribute to food security by 2% landings of the EU fleets being donated to beneficiaries of food supply schemes.

Furthermore, the structures for the treatment of small pelagics have also been reinforced through SFPAs' sectoral support and cooperation projects, where the partner State authorities agree on such projects. For example, under the Protocol 2019-2023 to the SFPAs with Morocco, 8,69M€ were dedicated to support for small-scale fishing cooperatives (setting up fish shops, packaging and marketing fish products, packaging and adding value to fish products, preparing processed products, distributing fish products, acquiring means of transporting fish).

### *Aquaculture*

In the context of the preparation of the FAO Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture, the EU has pushed for addressing the use of wild fishing stocks for feed for farmed fish. In this regard, language has been included in the approved text that avoids that the use of wild stocks for aquaculture feed endangers food security and livelihoods of local communities.

At EU level, our Strategic Guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture adopted in 2021 also address the importance of sustainable feed systems. This is approached from an environmental perspective (ingredients sourced in a way that respects ecosystems and biodiversity and is appropriate to ensure animal health and welfare) but also from the need to reduce reliance on fish meal and fish oil taken from wild stocks (e.g. by using alternative protein ingredients algae or insects, or waste from other industries). EU funding is available to ensure sustainable feed systems and, the Commission is preparing a guidance document on environmental performance that will map good practices at public and private level that will include the use of sustainable feed.

It is worth noting that the ratio of use of wild fish stocks in aqua feed production in Europe has been declining over the last few years. Furthermore, an increasing share of feed ingredients come from by-products from the fish processing industry (e.g. trimmings).

### *Imports*

As regards imports into the EU of fish meal and fish oil, as well as aquaculture products produced using fishmeal, DG MARE is currently reflecting internally on a potential fisheries-specific sustainability scheme applying to products imported to the EU. Any measures that could be taken with the objective to increase transparency of fisheries supply chains and ensure that products imported into the EU do not contribute to food insecurity or environmental issues in non-EU countries must be very well-calibrated to stay within the limits of the EU commitments in the World Trade Organization. The trade-related requests formulated in your letter will feed into this reflection and we remain open to receive any other suggestions how such new rules could be formulated.