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REPORT



2019

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

THE EU'S EXTERNAL FISHING ACTIVITY AND
THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

WWF RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY (CFP) EXTERNAL DIMENSION, THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF EXTERNAL FISHING FLEETS (SMEFF) AND ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING

The EU should use the Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) reporting to detail how the CFP's external dimension supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable economic, social and environmental development of developing countries, with the primary aim of eradicating poverty.

To increase accountability and transparency on the environmental impacts of EU's external fishing, real-time (or close to real-time) data collection is required including via the creation of global platforms to visualise, interpret and share the data.

Fishing and catch data from fisheries outside of EU waters needs to be made publically available so that vessel operators and EU Member States can be held accountable for fishing activities that don't comply with the CFP regulation.

Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) incorporating both video recording of fishing activities and vessel monitoring systems (VMS) to record location need to be implemented by all fisheries sectors across the EU fleet as soon as possible. REM is the best tool to increase compliance with management measures whilst helping to reduce IUU fishing and associated human rights offenses.

Stronger sanctions harmonised across EU Member States should be implemented to deter IUU fishing.

EU member states and the European Commission need to promote the mandatory use of an IMO number for eligible vessels to avoid the practice of "flag hopping" and monitor the fishing practice of each vessel.

Monetary fines should be used to compensate for the damage done to marine environments and communities impacted by reduced local fish stocks and related fisheries economies.

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS (SFPAs)

More clearly defined stock information for exploited species is needed to provide accurate estimates of stock "surplus" and to allow for fishing at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) to be properly evaluated. Where practices show overfishing or underreporting by EU vessels, there must be appropriate financial sanctions in place to compensate the partner countries.

A standardised system of data collection and presentation for all SFPAs and joint ventures, containing contact information for key personnel, is necessary to fully understand the agreements; this includes knowing who is responsible (vessels, fisheries agencies, managers, policy makers) for monitoring and delivering all aspects of these agreements accurately to evaluate, EU Member States in general.

When developing or renewing an SFPA the EU must request that the third countries provide information on all other Distant Water Fishing Nations fishing within their EEZ in order to determine the fishing effort and the status of fish stocks in the area.

Trade rules should oblige non-EU nations who trade with the EU to provide access to key data and information that will support evaluation of best practices for the EU and the partner countries of SFPAs.

The EU must require Member States to report to the European Commission on private agreements, the Member States must also be empowered to sanction their vessels that do not comply with this requirement.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CFP'S EXTERNAL DIMENSION & SFPAs WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The EU must develop meaningful quantitative indicators to explicitly detail the extent to which the CFP's external dimension contribute to the SDGs (and provide adequate resources to collect relevant data).

SFPAs will need to consider the whole fisheries supply chain, in which close to 60% of jobs are undertaken by women, to evaluate levels of effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership for women (SDG target 5.5).

A precautionary approach for management of Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) in both SFPAs and RFMOs needs to be taken until more is known about their impact on non-target species to ensure SDG target 14.4 (the effective regulation of fishing, an end to overfishing and destructive fishing practices) can be attained.

SFPAs signed between Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and EU vessels need to be carefully evaluated to ensure the EU is effectively implementing SDG target 14.7 (increasing economic benefits to SIDS and least developed countries).

THE EUROPEAN UNION'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SDGs THROUGH THE REGIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS (RFMOs)

The EU alongside other Contracting Parties within RFMOs should encourage the development of robust indicators to measure the socio-economic impacts of RFMO members and their contribution to the SDGs (including collection and dissemination of data transparently).

To improve RFMO performance in fulfilling the SDGs, EU Member States and the European Commission need to promote best practice in decision-making procedures, such as the dispute-resolution mechanisms found in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO) and the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO).

The European Commission and EU Member States must work towards better monitoring and data collection to demonstrate compliance with and links between the SFPAs and RFMOs policies and their impacts on economic, environmental and social impacts on local communities. This data needs to be cross-checked by independent third parties to ensure it is standardised, accurate and valid to build a more robust picture of the external fleet activity.



OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

THE EU'S EXTERNAL FISHING ACTIVITY AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The European Union's (EU) fishing fleet engages in extensive fishing activities in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of other countries as well as in the high seas. Vessels operating in these territories are known as the distant water or external fleet.

Fishing activities of EU Member States within EU waters have been documented through annual reporting of Member States to the European Commission, detailing their achievement of the objectives set-out in the CFP. Yet little has been reported about the EU's external fishing fleet. It is difficult to evaluate the sustainability of the EU's external fishing practices due to lack of formal documentation and scientific data as well as many cases of misreporting and continued problems of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. A lack of formal documentation and scientific data basing EU's fishing activities outside Union waters as well as many cases of misreporting and continued problems of IUU fishing outside of EU jurisdictions means it is still difficult to evaluate the sustainability of the EU's external fishing practices.

The United Nations Agenda 2030 and 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a useful framework to evaluate the contribution of the CFP's external dimension to implementing sustainable development. SDG 14 'Life Below Water', is the most relevant to fisheries policies such as the CFP as it aims to 'conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development'.

However, given the scope of the external dimension of the CFP, its contributions to sustainable development are not confined to SDG 14 alone.

This study undertakes a comprehensive review of the CFP's external dimension, the SDGs and the role of SFPAs and RFMOs clearly illustrating where strengths and deficiencies lie when considering Europe's fishing activities outside of EU waters.

WWF recommendations highlight specific areas for improvement to move the EU's external fleet towards a more sustainable future as outlined by the SDGs.

