



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.B.3/AD

Dear Sirs,

I thank you for your letter from 23rd January 2024 in which you share your joint advice of the role of women in African fisheries, updating a previous advice published in May 2020 ⁽¹⁾. Allow me also to apologise for the delay in our answer.

I take this opportunity to thank you for all your initiatives raising awareness on the difficulties faced by the artisanal fishers, coastal communities and, in particular, women from these groups.

The assessment we made in 2020, in response to your advice, remains valid ⁽²⁾, in particular:

- The Commission pursues the objective of non-discrimination between the conditions granted to other fleets operating in the waters of a partner country and those granted to Union operators; but the implementation of this provision is not always optimal and would benefit from being strengthened and better promoted in partner countries.
- The flexibility to change existing trade channels for catches requires strong consultation on the spot, a voluntary commitment by EU operators, including from LDAC members, adequate sanitary and logistical conditions, and the capacity of women's associations, both in their organisation as an economic player and in their bargaining power. Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) can contribute in particular by supporting processing capacities, but also by supporting a local analysis of possible needs and responses. However, this contribution alone is not sufficient and requires combined efforts through mechanisms to support entrepreneurship and private sector development, credit and investment support provided by the EU, by the European Investment Bank (EIB), and other public or non-governmental donors or actors.

⁽¹⁾ https://ldac.eu/images/EN_LDAC_Advice_on_Women_in_Fisheries_SFPAs_26May2020.pdf

⁽²⁾ Ares(2020)3869229

Gaoussou GUEYE
President of Agrifish-Net

Iván LÓPEZ VAN DER VEEN
President of LDAC

DG MARE is committed to using its cooperation with African partners to encourage better visibility, support and recognition of women's role in fisheries.

I would like to share with you the following concrete examples:

- Ivory Coast (Protocol 2018-2024), based on a market study assessing the profitability and way of improvement, associations of women fishmongers were enrolled in capacity building training and tailor-made support. In addition, a cold store container (August 2020) was donated to the women fishing association to support fish sale activities from San Pedro, to reduce the large number of fish not reaching the market due to a lack of storage facilities.
- Morocco (Protocol 2019-2023), the sectoral support program allowed:
 - i) to support the project of packaging and valorisation of aquaculture products for the benefit of the cooperative of women fishers in the Souss-Massa Region. The project creates 20 direct jobs for women and 30 indirect jobs.
 - ii) the acquisition of diving equipment for the collection of seaweed: the project was oriented towards women and benefits the women's cooperative Agar Agar of Amegriou. The project enables the valorisation of seaweed, the improvement of the socio-economic situation of the women working in this activity, and the preservation of the health of the women fishers on foot and thus strengthen the cohesion of the members of the cooperative. This project aimed to directly benefit the population of female fishers and more precisely the women who collect seaweed at the Amegriou site, which are estimated at nearly 100.
- Gambia (Protocol 2019-2025), the sectoral support programme increased the contribution of artisanal fishing communities to the management of national fisheries through engagement in co-management initiatives. The Women Oyster Association (TRY) was identified as one of the organisations involved in the implementation of the co-management plans; which includes the restoration and regeneration of mangroves as habitats and carbon sink and their monitoring during the closed season by harvesters as part of alternative livelihoods activities of the women.
- Guinea Bissau (Protocol 2019-2024), the sectoral support programme contributed to the construction of artisanal processing workshops for women of the Bubacalão fishing community (e.g., drying, salting), and to the acquisition of an ice-making machine and other equipment to complete the renovation of the Bubaque, Alto Bandim and Uracane artisanal landing sites.
- Cabo Verde (Protocol 2019 – 2024), the sectoral support program financed the training for women in the fish markets; now, all saleswomen in the main markets of Cape Verde (Mindelo, Brava, Sal, Boavista, Maio, Praia) have been trained and certified.

Furthermore, in upcoming negotiations, DG MARE will propose to introduce a reference in the protocol to the voluntary guidelines for securing small-scale fisheries.

On the specific question of small pelagics you rightly raise in your letter, I refer to the answer provided by Commissioner Sinkevičius to the letter sent by several organisations, including COAPA on the issue of fish oil and fish meal. Commissioner's answer is annexed to this letter.

I would be most interested in further results on your efforts to gather more information and quantitative data describing the scale of African women participation and contribution in Fisheries with Afrifish.

Yours faithfully,

Charlina VITCHEVA

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