



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director General

Brussels
MARE.B.3/CC

Mr. Iván López
Chair of the Long Distance
Advisory Council
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Subject: Supporting the role of women in the fisheries sector - The example of SFPAs

Dear Mr. López,

Thank you very much for your letter of 26 May 2020 regarding the role of women in small-scale fisheries, especially in countries that have signed Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs), and the difficulties they face.

I am also grateful for the recommendations issued by the Long Distance Advisory Council in this regard. In response to these, I would like to state the following:

- The Commission has chosen not to discriminate between conditions negotiated with the rest of the fleets fishing in the waters of a country with an SFPAs and conditions negotiated with EU operators, and has made every effort possible to succeed in introducing this clause in the agreements or protocols, as set forth in the Common Fisheries Policy regulation. However, the implementation of this provision should have the support of partner countries, who should particularly convey at an early stage all the information possible on the different specific and documented infringements of this clause, so that each and every one of them can be addressed with the relevant country and the latter is encouraged to do something about it.
- The issue regarding landing of catches by European Union vessels is usually subject to extensive discussions with each partner when negotiating the protocol. Fisheries agreements are marked by a commercial dimension and, logically, catches that are not discarded are marketed in a global industrial channel (local canning factories or transshipments in port for export purposes) or in a local channel, the organisation of which presents peculiarities mainly known to local actors (supply of markets and restaurant channels); in most cases without there being a public sale market organised as some type of fish market or ordinary market of national interest.

- Modification of existing commercial channels requires strong on-site coordination, voluntary engagement of EU operators, including LDAC members, appropriate health and logistic conditions and capacity building of women associations, both within their organisation in their capacity as economic actors and regarding their negotiation power. National sectoral strategies of some of our partners, such as Guinea-Bissau, have become the strategic axes of the reform.
- Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements can make a great contribution supporting the processing capacity, but also supporting the local analysis of possible needs and responses. As an example, I would like to highlight the sectoral support of the protocol for the sustainable fisheries partnership agreement 2014-2017 signed with Guinea-Bissau, that has allowed to refurbish a fish-salting plant (salt-and-dry) managed by a women's cooperative in the municipality of Buba (centre-east of the country). And also the sectoral approach of the protocol for sustainable fisheries partnership agreement 2018-2024 signed with Côte d'Ivoire, that has allowed to pay for the building of two FTT ovens and one facility in Locodjoro, both managed by the Union des Sociétés Coopératives des Femmes de la Pêche et assimilés de Côte d'Ivoire (Women Fish Processors of Côte d'Ivoire grouped in the USCOFEP-CI cooperative).
- But this contribution alone is not enough and, particularly regarding the problem of limited financial capacities to acquire raw materials, it needs to join forces in terms of development through mechanisms supporting businesses and the development of the private sector, supporting credit and investment by the European Union within the framework of its cooperation and development aid programme by the European Investment Bank and other funders, or public or non-governmental actors.

Likewise, we wish that the implementation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements will contribute to consolidating governance, and that this opportunity may also be seized to support women in the fisheries sector in all our partner countries. In this sense, we appreciate your eagerness to see a consolidated specific analysis of women's associations needs in the retrospective or anticipatory assessment of the sustainable fisheries partnership agreements protocols, without forgetting potential recommendations to be borne in mind in the development and monitoring of sectoral support programmes.

We also consider the possibility of including this issue in a wider assessment study focusing on Agreements and sectoral support, which we wish to start at the end of the year.

We thank you for your commitment and recommendations, of which we take careful note. Should you have any doubts concerning this response, please contact Ms. Pascale Colson (Pascale.Colson@ec.europa.eu, Tel: +32.2.295.62.73), AC coordinator.

Kindest regards,

Charlina VITCHEVA