



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/B3/MM (2022)

Subject: LDAC Advice for EU-Mauritania SFPA Joint Committee, including recommendations on the small pelagic management plan proposal for Mauritania, and demersal fisheries where EU operators are involved

Ref: your email of 25.11.2022.

Dear Mr. López,

First of all, I would like to thank you for the advice prepared by the LDAC ahead of the Joint Committee Meeting in the framework of the EU/Mauritania SFPA, which we received a few days before the meeting.

Most of the issues raised in the referenced advice were discussed during the Joint Committee which met from 30 November to 2nd December.

Sustainability and the preservation of fishery resources are at the heart of our Fishery Partnership with Mauritania. As correctly highlighted in your paper, the Management plan for small pelagic - which is applicable to all fleets operating in Mauritanian waters since 11th November 2022 - is backed by a rigorous scientific analysis which was conducted by the Joint scientific committee during the summer. In our view, it represents an important step in the right direction: firstly, to address our common concerns on the status of certain stocks and; secondly, under a management perspective, to increase the attractiveness of the agreement for the EU fleet, whether through the definition of a larger zone in which EU operators can fish but also the improved level playing field as this plan applies to all fleets fishing in these waters.

As you probably know, despite the improvements of the technical conditions included in the new Protocol¹, after more than one year of implementation, the utilisation rate of the

¹ Such as lower fees for certain categories, or the maintaining the in-kind contribution rate at the level of the past protocol.

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fishing opportunities remains extremely low (18% on average and only 14% for the small pelagic category). This is a matter of concern for the European Commission, on a policy perspective but also because the EU financial compensation is being paid for fishing possibilities that are actually not used. The utilisation rate is an important parameter that will be considered during the revision process of the Protocol, which will start in 2023. It is clear that, if this low utilisation of the quotas persists, an adjusted alignment of the fishing possibilities and the financial contribution will be necessary. This is why an increase in the EU presence is essential.

In the margin of the Joint Committee, DG MARE held several meetings with representatives of the EU industry to discuss the current difficulties faced by EU operators and to identify possible solutions. Based on these meetings, the Commission was able to enter into constructive discussions with the Mauritians, in the framework of the Joint Committee, but also during high-level meetings with the Minister of Fisheries of Mauritania, which took place on 5th December.

In this context, I have the pleasure to inform you that the next Joint Scientific Committee, which will meet in March 2023, has been charged by the Joint Committee to explore the most adequate solutions to address the requests put forward in your recommendation and by operators for category 1, 2, 2bis and 3, notably those categories targeting demersal species. Mauritians showed a very open position towards these requests and we are confident that practical solutions will be found. Avenues to increase the practicability of the agreement, for example in the Mauritanian ports, have also been discussed and there are good prospects for improvements there as well.

Transparency and non-discrimination remain a top priority in general in the management of all our SFPAs. Mauritania started in 2015 with a fishery management approach based on the definition of TACs for all the fishery categories². Now, according to the provisions of the new Protocol³, Mauritania is providing the Joint Committee with relevant data concerning the TAC allocations and the related catches for all the fleets operating in its EEZ. These efforts to increase transparency have started to bring their fruits and we have encouraged Mauritania to continue on this path by providing additional and detailed figures, notably by including, to the extent possible, a breakdown for all the species caught in its waters.

In this context, it is worth underlining that Mauritania has recently adopted specific measures to address the need to reduce fishmeal and fish oil production, in particular through rules aimed at increasing traceability and certification of products, as well as to improve data collection, including for the artisanal fleet. Moreover, as mentioned in the LDAC advice, an ambitious target for human consumption of fishery products has been set in the national strategy. This is a complex and challenging process for national authorities, and we must be aware that it will require some time. Indeed, the Commission intends to continue accompanying this national process in the future, notably in the framework of the programming of the sectoral support for the period 2023-26, for which the proposals of the Mauritanian Government are expected in the first months of 2023.

The adoption of the new programme for the sectoral support is scheduled for the next Joint Committee, which will take place in spring 2023 and will be an occasion also for a joint monitoring of the progress in the implementation of the national strategy. Science

² https://www.peches.gov.mr/IMG/pdf/code_peches_2015-017_fr_version_finale_scannee.pdf

³ Ref. Annex III of the Protocol. (OJ No L 439, p. 57).

and surveillance will continue to be fundamental pillars for this partnership, but we will look with particular interest also to the proposals that Mauritanian authorities intend to present, inter alia, to develop port infrastructures and facilities that could benefit our fleets, among others.

We will continue to work in the coming months with Mauritanian authorities to further improve the implementation of this partnership agreement and we will certainly have the occasion to discuss with the LDAC in one of the coming meetings.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Pascale COLSON, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (Pascale.COLSON@ec.europa.eu; +32.2.295.62.73), who will forward them to relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

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