



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels  
MARE.B.3

Alexandre Rodriguez  
LDAC Executive Secretary

**Subject: Reply to your letter on exploring alternatives for the continuation of pole-and-line tuna fisheries with live bait in the light of the expiry of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and Senegal**

Dear Mr Rodríguez,

Thank you for your letter of 18 June on the EU pole-and-line fleet previously active under the EU's Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA) with Senegal. The subject-matter has required extensive internal consultations, but our initial feedback was already provided to the representatives of that fleet in a meeting with DG MARE before the summer break.

Be assured that the European Commission is aware of the challenges faced by the EU pole-and-line vessels due to the non-renewal of the implementing protocol of the SFPA with Senegal.

However, in line with the EU's zero tolerance policy towards illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and given its decision on the pre-identification of Senegal as a non-cooperating country in the fight against IUU fishing in May 2024, the Commission decided not to renew the SFPA protocol that expired in November 2024. If the yellow card is not lifted, and the formal IUU dialogue has just begun, the renewal of the protocol cannot be considered.

As you highlight in your letter, it is not possible to compensate losses in cases of non-renewal of a SFPA or their implementing protocols under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) for 2021-2027, or under the Guidelines for State Aid in the fisheries and aquaculture sector adopted in 2023<sup>(1)</sup>.

I understand from your letter that you request financial assistance for this segment of the fleet to conduct an exploratory fishing campaign in Eastern Pacific. We have explored several solutions and here are our findings:

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<sup>(1)</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023XC0323\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023XC0323(01))  
Section 3.6 point (313)d).

- Horizon Europe supports primarily research projects. A survey, and the corresponding scientific advice on the state of a stock, is not a research project, nor is a socio-economic and environmental viability of a fishery study. Thus, Horizon Europe (in view of its size of projects and scope) does not seem to be the appropriate funding mechanism.
- In the EMFAF Regulation (Article 13(f)), exploratory fishing is listed among the ineligible operations or expenditure.
- For exploratory fisheries, aid is also excluded under the Fisheries Block Exemption Regulation (Article 1(3)(e)(vi), Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/2473) and the Fisheries De minimis Regulation (Article 1(1)(i) Commission Regulation (EU) No 717/2014). Aid for such activities is also unlikely to be compatible with the internal market considering point 135 of the Guidelines for State aid in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

These conclusions are based on the initial information we were provided. Should you have more details on the activities for which the fleet would need financial support we stand ready to reassess the case.

In parallel as requested, please find attached the information provided by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission on fishing activities conducted by pole-and-line vessels in the region.

Yours sincerely,

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Enclosure: Information on fishing activities in the IATTC area

## **Annex A                      Information on fishing activities in IATTC area**

### **I.        Legal and administrative requirements to conduct fishing activities under the scope of IATTC**

There are not restrictions established for accessing IATTC fisheries with pole and line gear. Based on information provided by the Flag State, the EU should request the inclusion of the vessels on the IATTC Regional Vessel Register, reflecting all the information that is required under [Resolution C-24-07](#), which would include the relevant permission/permit to conduct fishing.

A fishing authorization must be issued in accordance with Chapter III of the [SMEFF Regulation EU 2017/2403](#). In some cases, fishing in the EEZ of a third country requires that the company is physically present in the coastal state.

### **II.        Additional information**

According to the IATTC Secretariat, there are currently just over 100 pole and line vessels on the Regional Vessel Register, with little indication on their actual fishing activities.

Artisanal boats in Panama provides bait for longliners. In past years, IATTC has been granting permits to catch bait in the gulf of Panama for pole-and-line tagging cruises. The bait anchoveta (*Cetengraulis mysticetus*) is caught with a lampara net in shallow water. Anchoveta is a robust bait that could be kept aboard for up to 60d. It seems to be available only around or accessible from about mid-February to August.

Anchoveta was historically caught in the Gulf of Nicoya, Costa Rica and at times in the Gulf of Fonseca, Nicaragua. Costa Rica has a 60nm exclusion area for industrial fishing.