



Att. Charlina Vitcheva

Director General of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

DG MARE – European Commission

Joseph Straat II 99, B-1000- Brussels (Belgium)

Madrid, 18th of June 2025

Subject: 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.

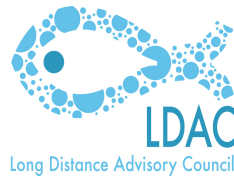
Dear Director General Vitcheva,

We are writing to you to follow up on the request submitted during the meeting of LDAC Working Group 4, dealing with fisheries agreements, held in Brussels last 11 March, on the **socio-economic consequences for the European fleets (particularly pole and line) of the non-renewal of the fisheries protocol between the European Union and Senegal.**

As you know, the impossibility to continue with the negotiations for a new protocol takes place within the context of the yellow card issued to Senegal by the European Commission for insufficient cooperation in the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. This situation, added to the unilateral decisions previously taken by the Senegalese authorities in terms of the implementation of a fishing closure in the Bay of Hann, affected European operators who were regularly fishing in the framework of this agreement, particularly pole and liners fishing with live bait with targeted species sardine, anchovy, mackerel or horse mackerel.

Pole-and-line fishing is a very selective and ancient gear with low fuel consumption, whose fishery is in the process of being awarded the MSC certification for the three targeted commercial tuna species (SKJ - skipjack, BET - bigeye and ALB - albacore). Pole and line fishing vessels have been historically operating from Dakar under Spanish and French flags. It is also the only fishery in Europe in this modality that freezes on board.

Considering the above-described situation, this fleet made up of four vessels (three from Spain and one from France) is currently tied up indefinitely.



Owing to the conditions of the fishing ground, live bait can only be found in large quantities in Hann Bay, subject to a closure. For several years now, affected vessels have been looking for live bait in the waters of other countries that have a fisheries agreement with the EU, such as Mauritania, Morocco, Cape Verde, Gambia or Guinea-Bissau. However, they have found neither the right size nor the right quantities.

The flag authorities for these vessels (Spain and France) cannot grant aid since this situation of temporary cessation does not fall within the cases covered by the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF).

In addition, the governments of Spain and France are not willing to offer scrapping/decommissioning aid, so the only solution allowing for the continuation of the activity is finding other fishing grounds to ensure the economic viability of this fleet.

For the time being, the four vessels concerned have been forced to stop in the Dakar port for seven months, with an average cost per vessel of €55,000 per month, including diesel inputs (an average of 300 litres a day per vessel), electricity, maintenance and security costs, mooring, port taxes, shipping agency procedures, supplies and food, among other.

During its Working Group 4 meeting in March, the LDAC was informed of an initiative on the exploration of new fishing grounds and alternative resources (tuna and bait) in the waters of Eastern Pacific third countries, such as Costa Rica, Panama or Colombia. This proposal includes the design of a pilot project with experimental scientific evaluation surveys, in cooperation with local authorities and operators, to assess the socio-economic and environmental viability of a future authorised activity, as well as the necessary support for the maintenance of its activity in the pre-design phase of the project.

At the LDAC we understand that this situation brings about a relevant case regarding how to address fair and sustainable transitions for fleets affected by public policy decisions. For this reason, and without prejudging the technical, legal or financial viability of the aforementioned proposal, we deem it appropriate to submit this issue to the European Commission for consideration.



In virtue of the above, the LDAC asks the European Commission to explore support mechanisms and mobilise the necessary funds -in line with available instruments in terms of research, international cooperation or fair transition- to develop a pilot project in the Pacific waters of Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia with scientific experimental surveys to study the state of the resource (i.e. tuna species and live bait) for its potential exploitation.

Hoping that this request will be considered, we remain at the Commission's disposal to provide any technical elements or additional information that it may deem appropriate.

Yours faithfully,



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LDAC Executive Secretary on behalf of the LDAC Chair and members