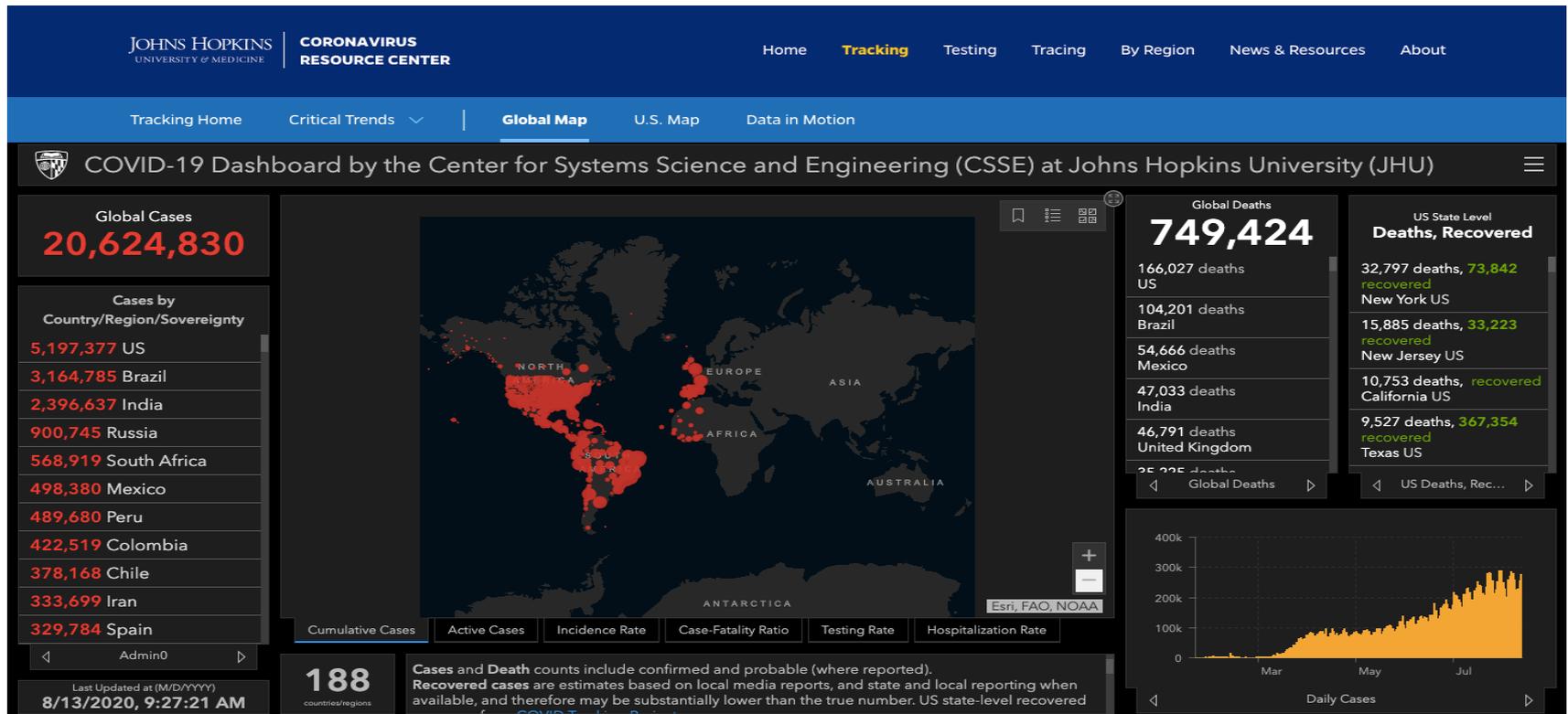


The EU Distant Water Fleet in the context of COVID-19

COMHAFAT Webinar on « Working conditions of fishers onboard EU vessels in the waters of African countries »



Alexandre Rodríguez
LDAC Executive Secretary





COVID-19

Coronavirus Disease 2019

Chronology of a pandemic: impact on fishing sector

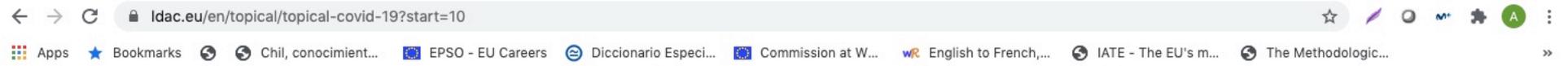
- The WHO declared SARS-COV2 as a pandemic on 11 March, establishing a Solidarity Fund on 13 March
- Many countries adopted strict confinement measures including State of Alarm in March & April
- Restrictions to travel and free movement of persons, goods and services were established.
- **Fishing was considered an essential service and supply of fish an strategic sector worldwide.**
- The IMO recommended that crew changeovers should be permitted around the globe.
- The European Commission took steps to facilitate and coordinate the efforts of Member States to enable crew changes in their ports.

LDAC advice and EC response on health and safety measures for EU fishing fleets

- The **LDAC** submitted on 27 May 2020 a letter to the European Commission requesting a multilingual brochure providing essential information on health and safety measures to ensure well being of European fishing fleets during COVID-19.
- This brochure should provide shipowners and crews standardized procedures:
 - Before departure: early detection test, travel restrictions, etc.
 - On board and during fishing trip: preventive measures, suspicious cases;
 - Landings and arrivals to ports: quarantine windows, tests, crew changes, etc.
- The **EC** replied in early July that, although the EU has actively adopted legislative measures to mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID/19 for fishing and aquaculture, they have no mandate in relation to public health and specifically prevention, diagnostics and management of infectious diseases.
- The **EC** invited the LDAC to share information amongst members and fishers on the recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions as well as FAO/UN. Also, national governments can adopt restrictions and measures specific to each country.

UPDATED INFO ON EU AND INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION RELATED TO COVID-19

<https://ldac.eu/en/topical/topical-covid-19>



ABOUT US MEMBERS MEETINGS ADMINISTRATION PUBLICATIONS TOPICAL CONTACT

COVID-19

Communication EC Amendment to the Temporary Framework for State aid measures to support the economy in the current COVID-19 outbreak (2020/C 112 I/01)



Communication COM (2020)112 Final Coordinated economic response to the COVID-19 Outbreak



EC 2020 Factsheet Coronavirus



Guidance for Ship Operators for the Protection of the Health of Seafarers



DG MARE Information Note Coronavirus emergency response to support the fishing and aquaculture sectors



EU Recommendations for community measures (18 March 2020)



FAO Globefish European Price Report March 2020



World Health Organisation: Operational considerations for managing COVID-19 cases or outbreaks on board ships



EU COMMUNICATION ON GUIDELINES FOR THE PROTECTION OF HEALTH, REPATRIATION, TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEAFARERS, PASSENGERS AND OTHER PERSONS ON BOARD SHIPS (APRIL 2020)

The EU acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic has far-reaching effects on maritime transport and fishing for persons on board ships (including fishers)

Fishers are within the scope of this legislative text:

(1) Member States should facilitate the transit of EU citizens and third-country nationals who are EU residents for their return home.

(2) Workers in essential functions regardless of their nationality, should be able to transit and travel to ensure continued professional activity.

(3) Persons on board of ships should be able to undertake essential travel. EU citizens stranded in Member States other than that of their nationality or residence, in third countries or on the High Seas should be able to return home, if their health status permits.

(4) Many fishers in vessels operating in European waters are third country nationals. Regardless of their nationality, they should be able to travel to the ports where they need to embark and be allowed to disembark and return home, which would also contribute to ensuring that the sector remains operational in the medium and long term. Therefore, Member States should designate ports, where crew changes are facilitated.

The importance of EU DWF for Fish Supply (e.g. Spain)

Register:
8,884
vessels

CATCHES
922,564 Tm
(2018)



SPANISH WATERS
8,587 vessels
(96.7% of total)

39% CATCHES
6,982 multi gear
1,486 trawlers
119 Surface LL



EU WATERS
104 vessels
(1.2% of total)

3% CATCHES



INTERNATIONAL
WATERS
193 vessels
(2.1% of total)

58% CATCHES
80 Surface LL
113 Rest TR/PS/HK





COVID-19
Main barriers
encountered
for the EU
DWF related
to work
conditions
onboard
fishing vessels

- Regular and reliable medical care in foreign fishing ports
- No standard protocol in the event of quarantine on fishing vessels in foreign ports to avoid infection spread.
- Temporary impossibility of repatriating sailors or making crew changes due to world travel restrictions.
- Availability of qualified physicians for cases of treatment of sick, injured or infected fishers at sea / in ports.
- Drug supply and transport can be difficult for reaching the long distance fleet hundreds of miles away from the coast
- Shortage of stock or difficulties in the supply of protective equipment such as masks, gloves, etc.

Specific demands from EU Fishing Sector



- Ensure supply of **individual protection kits / EPIs** (gloves, masks, hydroalcoholic gels, etc.) for crew and staff in the fishing value chain → difficult to respect minimum safety distance (1.5-2m)
- Put in place a system to resolve issues with **crew changes** – lift travel restrictions among countries for fishers, including repatriation
- Declare an exemption from general transport merchant rules for **boarding and landing** in ports
- Guarantee 100% **medical coverage**: Screening and detection tests (PCR/serology for antibodies)
- Implement **financial aid for mitigation of socio-economic impact of COVID-19**: Compensation for fishing companies/vessels which have continued their activity with operating losses (de minimis)



How did the EU DWF react? Logistics and operations

Source: EUROPECHE / CEPESCA / LDAC

- **Aim:** Ensure continuation of operations
- **Main problem:** crew changes and replacements.
- **Resolved cases:**
 - Mauritania - Boarding/sanitary procedures in Las Palmas.
 - Seychelles - Arrangement between tuna purse seine operators and government (protocol to detect COVID-19)
- **Pending cases:**
 - Smaller vessels (e.g. LL or TR) spread in several countries such as Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Namibia...

Example of Collaboration Operator-MS

The case of OPAGAC and Seychelles

- **Main aim:** to continue the fishing activity and guarantee crew rotation under safe travel and working conditions
- **Operational plan** agreed by operators and Seychelles health and customs authorities – assistance of Spanish medical doctor based in Port Victoria from ISM
- Facilitation of **visa and travel procedures**
 - Direct charter flights arranged for crews from Spain
 - Legal and technical assistance for African crews
- **Medical protocol for early detection of cases:** PCR test in departing countries + fast tests on destination.



OPAGAC – Seychelles collaboration

- Period of crew changes: May to July 2020.
- Complex logistic operation – replacement of 1,000 fishers in 4 expeditions from 3 countries (Spain, Senegal, Ivory Coast)
- 59 positive cases from Ivory Coast and Senegal – all asymptomatic; isolated and 14-day quarantine
- Contrast tests to discard false negatives after quarantine in Port Victoria
- Vessels resumed operations with all crew tested, EPIs (incl. masks and gloves), hydrogel and disinfection equipment.

EU + NATIONAL FINANCIAL PACKAGE TO MITIGATE COVID ECONOMIC EFFECTS

- **Amendment of European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)** for mitigating the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in fisheries and aquaculture:
 - Temporary cessation of fleets – loss of income compensation targeted to shipowners, fishers and shellfish harvesters.
 - Fish storage on freezing capacities / plants
 - Increase of percentage of coverage to the POs for Research projects
(from 3% to 12% and credit advance of 100%)

European states have the obligation of adopting national measures to implement the EMFF plus providing other related accompanying measures such as soft loans (bank guarantees sponsored by States).

- Several EU Member States have also offered **public aids to employers** to maintain working staff during the COVID “hard times”: (e.g. ERTE in Spain: up to 70% salary coverage by State as temporary unemployment compensation for a max. period of 6 months (e.g. from April to September) to be complemented by employer up to 100% + exoneration of Social Security levy)

Implementation of EMFF COVID-19 aid package - Spain

Grant published in the Legislative Official Journal (BOE) on 29 July 2020

Aim: mitigate socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 for fishing business and workers

Action: compensate for temporary cessation of fishing activities to avoid job losses and bankruptcy of fishing companies

Total amount: 30 million euro

Beneficiaries: shipowners and fishers (both hired and self-employed)

Potential coverage: 6,000 - 9,000 vessels can apply

Period covered: 16 March – 15 July 2020

Co-funding allocation: 75% EU and 25% Spain (MAPA)

Other actions targeted to POs:

- Increase of threshold from 3 to 12% to investments in R&I for production & marketing plans;
- Storage of fish – aid increase from 15 to 25% of total quantities + from 2 to 20% on maximum amount to be financed

Commercial aspects for EU DWF: Impact by fleet segments

- Shellfish (shrimp) trawl fleet:
Collapsed markets. No public auctions.
Product stored and frozen.
- Surface longliners:
Fall in demand in target countries (Italy,
Brazil, Senegal...) for swordfish and frozen
sharks. Stored in Galicia / Portugal.
- Tuna purse seiners:
Drop in prices due to frozen tuna loins
purchased from China (partially due to ATQ).
- Tuna pole and line vessels:
Several weeks moored in port in Senegal.



COVID-19: EU Consumption trends

- The most affected EU countries in the demand and drop in prices in the wild fish were Spain, Italy and France.
- The drop in prices was higher for fresh than for frozen products.
- High value species whose main destination was hotels, catering and restaurants (HoReCa) were particularly hit: Shellfish (lobster, crabs, shrimps), wild turbot, grouper
- However, sales have increased in Spain for direct consumption / households – increases by 32% fresh / 67% frozen / 33% canned



The COVID-19 as a driver for a “digital revolution” in fish products



- Closing of HORECA channel has had a major impact on the EU market of fish products
- On the other side, households have raised their online purchases coupled with door to door delivery services from supermarkets and food chains / retailers.
- Business models adapted to the “new normality”:
 - Wholesalers and distribution chains more focused on end customers / households: sales increase in supermarkets
 - Less volume and variety of species offered (seasonality)
 - Increase of sales in well known species (hake, salmon, or small pelagics) – “slow food” due to more time availability at home.



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