

# EXPERIENCES WITH SUBSIDIES AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF EU-ACP FISHERIES ACCESS AGREEMENTS

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## Portrait of a fishing power...

### Facts and Figures

- Currently, some 500 EU fishing vessels (20% of the EU fleet) are fishing under 16 bilateral EU-ACP fisheries agreements. The cost to the EU taxpayers is some €145 million per annum, paid to ACP countries as compensation payments in exchange for negotiated fisheries access. European operators pay an additional €30 million in access fees.
- A cost-benefit analysis showed in 1999, that, on average, for each euro invested by EU tax-payers in a fisheries agreement, there was a return of 3 euros for the EU operators, represented by the value of the fish caught but mainly the adding value processing and marketing operations.
- The quantities of commercial fish stocks (mainly demersal species) in EU waters have in many cases declined significantly over the last 25 years, due to over-fishing. On average, the quantities available in the late 1990s are 90% less than in the early 1970s, as is reflected in the decline in landings.
- An additional 9 million tonnes of fish caught outside EU waters (from imports and access agreements) is needed to meet the demands of the EU fish-processing industry and domestic consumer demand. It is important to note that fish caught in EU waters is mainly destined for the fresh fish market, whilst imports are mainly comprised of fish as raw material for the processing industry. The growing demand for fish as raw material for the EU fish-processing industry is an important factor in the evolution of ACP-EU fisheries relations. It raises serious questions about the food-security situation in ACP countries.

In the past, the policy framework for EU-ACP fisheries relations has been determined by EU fisheries objectives – *i.e. shedding over-capacity and supplying the growing demand for fish on the EU market-*, and not the policy objectives for achieving the sustainable development of ACP fisheries. This is, from our point of view, the main reason why EU subsidised activities have negative impacts in ACP countries.

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In future EU-ACP fisheries relations, to be developed under “Fisheries Partnership Agreements”, there is a need for a careful analysis of the evolution of the EU’s internal fisheries policies and to evaluate whether the fisheries relationships on offer, are likely to provide the long term benefits that the ACP countries seek.

To help us in that analysis, we can look at several examples, see how EU subsidised activities have impacted the ACP fisheries and propose some changes that should be included in future “fisheries partnerships” to make them compatible with sustainable development.

### **Subsidised Access Agreements:**

#### 1. Need to de-link level of access from level of financial compensation

Financial compensation of EU-ACP fisheries access agreements goes usually to the Treasury in the recipient ACP state. Part of it, called the “targeted actions”, is allocated to programs of research, control, training, etc

On average, the EU financial contribution through fisheries agreements makes up to 80% of the total financial benefits received by the ACP states from the EU.

Some years ago, in Guinea Bissau, the amount of the financial compensation represented more than 60% of overall Government revenues. In this case, the high level of dependency means that it’s virtually impossible for the third country to refuse whatever is demanded by the EU...

In Mauritania, the importance of the financial compensation means that excessive level of fishing capacity has been granted to the EU, increasing the competition with local fleets, particularly the artisanal sector. In a context of 30% over-capacity in the

Mauritanian octopus fishery, a recent study<sup>2</sup> showed that the European fishing effort has actually increased over the last seven years, while catches for the fleet landing in Mauritania have decreased: artisanal fish catch falling from 5818 tons in 1996 to 3500 tons in 2002 and local industrial fish catch falling from 18408 to 15673 tons.

It is therefore very important that in future EU-ACP fisheries “partnerships”, the level of access is de-coupled from the level of financial compensation received.

## 2. Need to improve the conditions of access

But it’s not only the level of access granted to EU fleets which is a cause of concern. The conditions of this access, particularly regarding selectivity, are also problematic. In general, EU fleet regulations on selectivity are much less stringent for operators in ACP waters than for operators in EU waters. For example, for demersal trawlers fishing in EU waters, there are many regulations that must be complied with (mesh type, netting material, twine diameter, extension length, etc. In ACP-EU fisheries agreements, the only criteria mentioned for demersal trawlers is the mesh size; no other restriction is mentioned.

Secondly, in the latest EU-Guinea protocol, the permitted by-catch levels for European boats are extraordinarily high when compared to those allowed for Guinean national trawlers<sup>3</sup> under the national fisheries policy. The acceptable by-catch quotas are 35% for European cephalopod trawlers, while for similar type Guinean trawlers they are limited to 7.5%. For shrimp operations, permitted European by-catch levels may be as high as 30%, while for Guinean trawlers it is limited to 12.5%. The by-catch levels set for Guinean vessels take account of the nature of demersal fish stocks and the excessive catch levels of juveniles. This raises serious questions about the lenient by-catch levels set for EU trawlers, and its negative implications for achieving sustainable development.

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<sup>2</sup> Study by IMROP-RIVO on the state of Mauritanian resources

<sup>3</sup> 2002 Fisheries Plan, Republic of Guinea, Available potential and percentages of authorized by-catch.

It's therefore crucial that in future EU-ACP partnerships, conditions of access for EU fleets should take into account management measures put in place for conservation, such as selectivity measures, etc

To conclude on a positive note, it has to be acknowledged that recent efforts made by the EU are playing a very positive role in protecting artisanal fisheries. For example the latest EU-Guinea protocol includes the following measure: *“The Republic of Guinea undertakes to incorporate in its fisheries plan for the year 2004 and subsequent years during the validity period of this Protocol a provision reserving for the Guinean non-industrial fleet the fishing zone between the coast and the 20 metres isobath and, where this isobath is reached less than 12 miles from the coast, the zone between the coast and 12 nautical miles from the coast”*. If enforced, this measure would go a long way towards protecting coastal zone and coastal communities whose artisanal fishing livelihoods depend on it.

### 3. Targeted actions: lack of accountability and improvisation

In the case of the latest EU-Mauritania protocol, about 60% of the financial compensation is used for debt service, and the remaining 40% allocated for targeted actions (control, research, etc). This 40% represents twice the annual budget of the fisheries Ministry. But no careful planning has been done to allocate these “targeted actions” monies to where they are most needed. At the moment, we are in a situation where Mauritanian fishery products may be banned from entering the EU markets because Mauritanian enterprises do not comply with the hygiene standards required by the EU, although several millions of Euros were made available for this under the “targeted actions” when the agreement was signed two years ago.

In our view, the access provided under EU-ACP fisheries partnerships should be completely paid for by fees from the boat owners. In parallel, development programs, carefully planned by the two parties, should be financed by the EU to ensure sufficient support for the sustainable development of the ACP fisheries.