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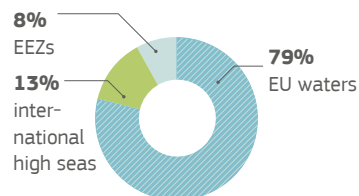
EU Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements

A transparent, coherent and mutually beneficial tool that enhances fisheries governance for sustainable exploitation, fish supply and development of the fisheries sector with partner countries.

Fisheries

Sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs) comply with the EU common fisheries policy (CFP) and international law (UNCLOS).

• While 79% of all EU catches are taken in EU waters, **13% come from the international high seas, and 8% are caught in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs)** within 200m of the partner countries' waters.



• **EU fishing in the high seas is regulated through regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs).** The EU plays an active role in 17 RFMOs across the world's oceans¹.

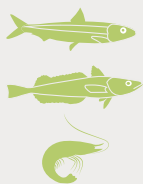
• **In the waters of non-EU countries, EU fishing is negotiated through bilateral agreements.** There are two types of fishing agreements:

- **Northern agreements** – joint management of shared stocks with Norway and the Faroe Islands;
- **SFPAs** – bilateral fisheries agreements consisting of financial and technical support in exchange for fishing rights in the EEZs of partner countries.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/rfmo/>



Tuna agreements allow EU vessels to catch different species of large tuna, as they migrate along the shores of Africa and through the Indian Ocean, using purse seines, pole and line, and long surface lines.



Multi-species agreements allow EU vessels to catch a wide range of fish in the partner countries' fishing grounds, including small pelagics like pilchard, or demersal species like hake, shrimp and flatfish, and mainly involving trawlers, purse seiners and longliners.

SFPAs - structure and content

Each SFPA is an exclusive Agreement: once in place, EU vessels can only fish under this SFPA, and cannot enter into private agreements with the partner country. The SFPA ensures a level playing field and establishes minimum standards for sustainable resource management as it includes provisions prohibiting the granting of more favourable conditions to other foreign fleets. SFPAs are made operational through implementing protocols that contain technical annexes.

SFPAs consist of 3 major parts: agreements, protocols and technical annexes:



Fisheries agreement: sets out the scope and basic principles of cooperation, as well as the commitment to cooperate, mainly through joint committees that are set up jointly to monitor the application of the SFPAs.



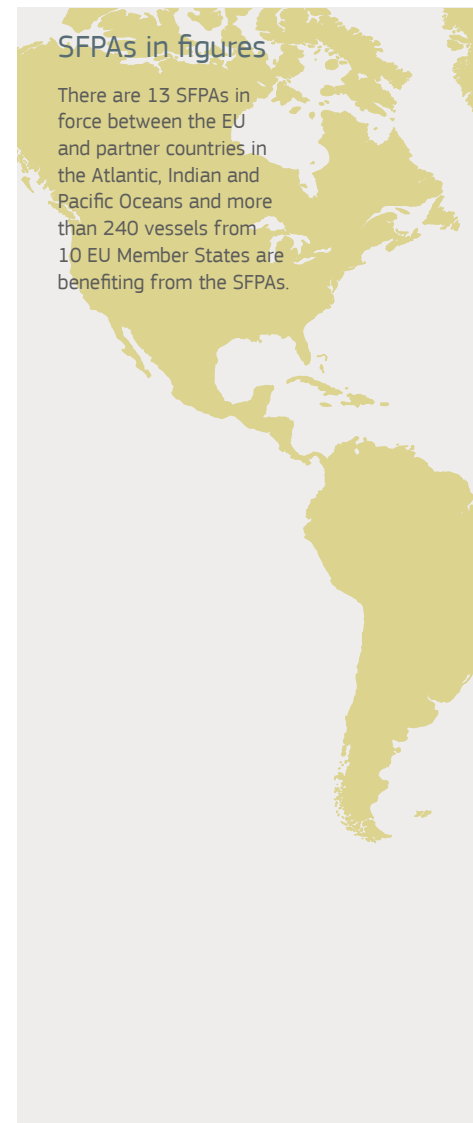
Protocol: authorises fishing access of EU vessels and specifies fishing opportunities, amounts and methods of payment, modalities of cooperation, etc.



Technical annexes: set out implementation and procedural aspects such as the licensing system, electronic catch reporting system (ERS), observers, vessel monitoring system (VMS), and control and enforcement.

SFPAs in figures

There are 13 SFPAs in force between the EU and partner countries in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans and more than 240 vessels from 10 EU Member States are benefiting from the SFPAs.





9 tuna SFPAs:

- 1 Cape Verde
- 2 The Gambia
- 3 Senegal
- 4 Liberia
- 5 Ivory Coast
- 6 São Tomé and Príncipe
- 7 Seychelles
- 8 Mauritius
- 9 Cook Islands

Offering fishing opportunities for the highly migratory species listed in Annex 1 to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982).

4 multi-species SFPAs:

- 1 Greenland
- 2 Morocco
- 3 Mauritania
- 4 Guinea-Bissau

Offering fishing opportunities for demersal and pelagic species, tuna, cephalopods and shrimp.

SFPAs - a transparent, coherent and mutually beneficial tool

SFPAs have gained worldwide recognition as a benchmark for good fisheries governance. SFPAs ensure equal rules, scientific management and social empowerment, with a focus on environmental sustainability, local growth, human rights and shared accountability.



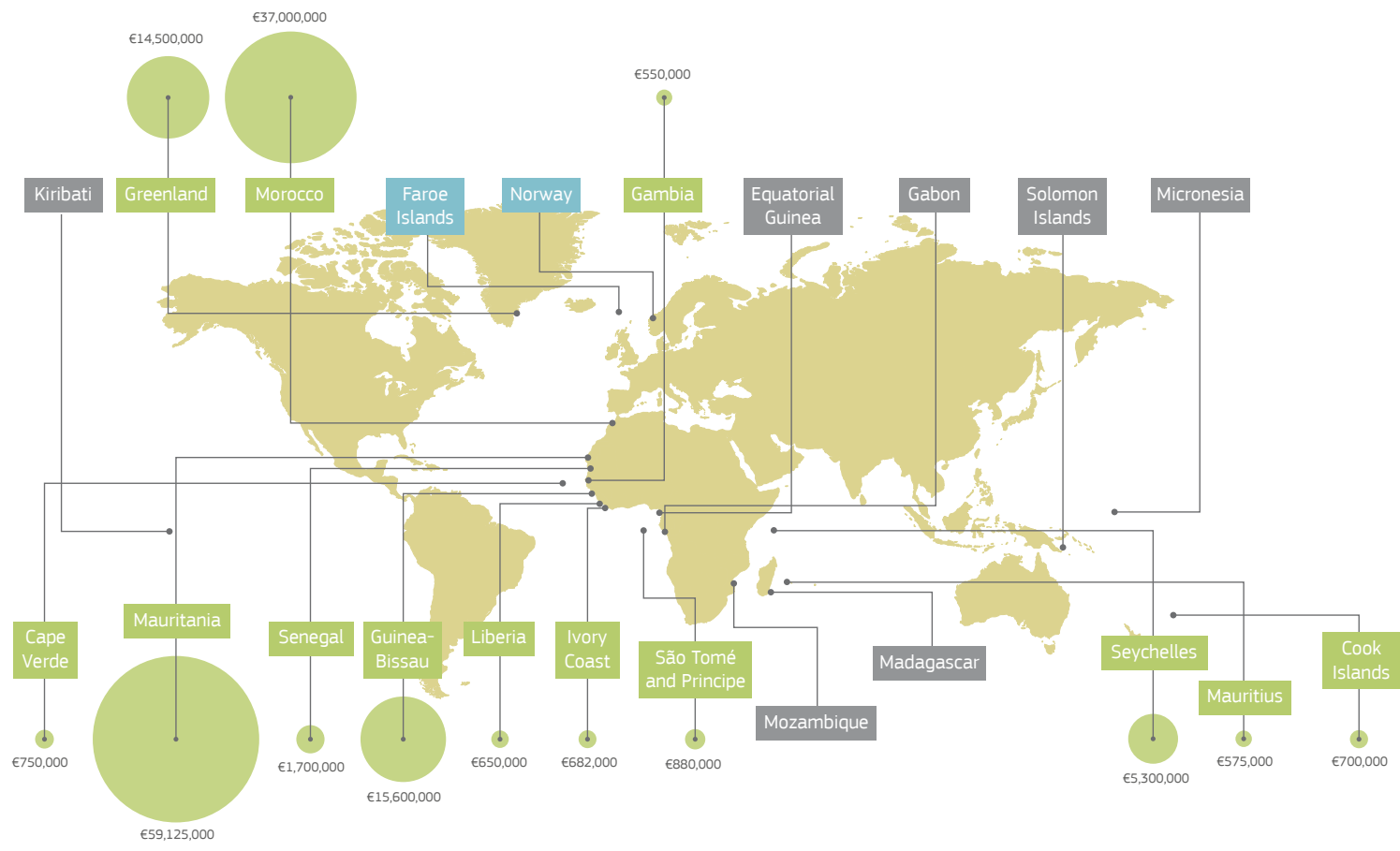
Promote SUSTAINABLE fisheries: fish only scientifically assessed surplus stocks and involve bilateral joint scientific committees to improve methods and policies.



Reinforce TRANSPARENCY as all SFPAs are publicly available, including evaluations of the previous and future protocols and reports by scientific committees.



Encourage PARTNERSHIP with partner countries. SFPAs evolved from commercial agreements in the late 1970s to partnership agreements in 2002, as EU support to the fisheries sector was decoupled from the access payments. In recent years, shipowners' access payments have increased and the EU's public contribution decreased.



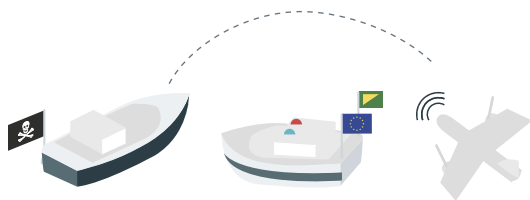
● Bilateral fisheries agreements (countries with exclusive zones to which EU vessels have access)

● Northern agreements (joint management of shared stocks)

● Dormant bilateral agreements (countries with fisheries agreements but without a protocol in force)

Benefits of SFPAs

• **Overall benefits:** SFPAs fight IUU, and ensure equal **rules**, scientific **management** and **social empowerment**, with a focus on environmental **sustainability**, local **growth**, **human rights** and shared **accountability**.



• **Benefits to fleet operators:** Through various agreements in the Atlantic (Western Africa) and Indian Oceans, SFPAs create **legal certainty** and **reliable operating conditions**. Through a set of clearly defined rules, the EU fleet becomes a trusted operator, and the EU and its members become trusted partners.



• **Benefits to partner countries:** EU contributions to the partner countries are divided into two distinct areas:

- Payment of access rights to the EEZ.
- Support the sector in the partner countries, to promote development and to strengthen their administrative and scientific capacity.

• **SFPAs contribute to fighting and eradicating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU):** SFPAs support IUU policy objectives through various tools, such as capacity-building (training and advice) and monitoring and control surveillance actions, with the help of the vessel monitoring system (VMS). Good governance, traceability and cooperative surveillance also protect fisheries-dependent countries in the global fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Examples of success stories



The EU supports SFPA partner countries' fishing sector

More than **€135 million** is earmarked from the EU budget for the SFPAs, where **46%** on average is devoted to support for the sustainable development of the fisheries sector of the partner countries and for enhancing their overall fisheries governance capacity. This includes:

- monitoring and control capacities;
- improving capacities in research and science areas and
- assistance to small-scale fisheries.

Support actions to the sector are determined jointly between the EU and the partner country. The economic impact of SFPAs is clear and contributes largely to job creation: over **6,000 direct** (2,500 in the EU, 3,500 in partner countries), **and about 9,000 indirect** jobs (mostly in processing industries in partner countries) are created through SFPAs.

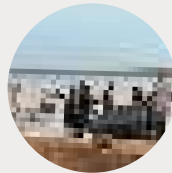
What do partner countries gain through SFPAs and what are the “success stories” of support to the sector?

(1) Firstly, a financial contribution for the access to fisheries resources and support for development of the local fisheries sector. For many partner countries, this support is the main resource for the fisheries administration;

(2) Secondly, employment by developing industries and port facilities in partner countries. For example, 50-60% of the crews on EU vessels are partner countries nationals, and more than 70% of the catches are processed in partner countries; and

(3) Thirdly, food security, as some of the fish caught by the EU is supplied to the local market, in particular small pelagics.

SFPAs: What do partner countries gain?

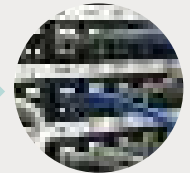


Support to small-scale fisheries

Safety kits
Fish aggregating devices
Ice-making equipment
Establishment of fish processing sites (fish drying, smoking)

Strengthening institutional capacities

Office equipment
Buildings
Training
Sanitary Control Office



Science and research

Scientific observer schemes
Databases
Statistics

Reinforcing monitoring and control capacities

Vessel monitoring system
Electronic catch reporting
Inspection
Patrol boats



EU sectoral support benefits for SFPA partner countries

In West Africa and island States where SFPAs are in force, the proportion of total dietary protein from fish can reach 60%, and their micronutrients are essential for children and pregnant women. Moreover, an average 40% of seafood production enters international trade, worth more than €115 billion per year. This can represent up to 20% of GDP for some partner countries, providing them with jobs and opportunities that are vital for peace and stability.

The EU supports these countries to better manage their seafood resources inclusively, sustainably and profitably. This is a firm commitment as the EU is both the world's largest market in value for seafood and the world's largest donor for cooperation.

SFPAs constitute a benchmark of transparent management of international fishing policies. Since 2004, this new generation of agreements has contributed to the social and economic development of partner countries, strengthening their industry and improving the conditions of vulnerable sectors.

All the main stakeholders are consulted during the negotiations, including the public, private and scientific sectors, civil associations and NGOs. SFPAs are evaluated periodically and can be scrutinised by anyone, with information available online.

SFPAs thus contribute to regional stability, food security, accessible blue growth and human rights; and guarantee long-term benefits for local communities. They also integrate other EU policies including trade, development, environment and external action, ensuring that all combine efficiently to produce results at sea and on land.



In the Seychelles, the EU has co-funded a training vessel and the construction of three fish processing facilities. Learning navigation and fishing techniques allows young fishers to protect ecosystems and to better target more valuable species. In addition, modern infrastructures support local jobs and encourage entrepreneurship.

Development aspect of SFPAs: consistency with FAO strategic objectives and the UN 2030 agenda (sustainable development goals)

SFPAs strongly support **the UN 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and are in line with the FAO priorities and efforts to address food insecurity. EU development policy aims to improve food security and reduce poverty** in the world, and SFPAs contribute to these objectives, **building the resilience of the most vulnerable while promoting sustainable fisheries management.**

The EU also works very much in **synergy with other financial donors**, including the World Bank, the IMF, the African Union and other regional and sub-regional bodies. The **EU actively seeks complementarity** with other instruments or other types of financial interventions, in particular through SFPAs.

Most SFPA countries are developing countries that need assistance and support from the EU and the rest of the world.



SFPAs: an instrument for ocean governance

71% of our planet is ocean. Healthy oceans are indispensable for managing our climate, protecting our marine ecosystems, boosting blue economies, and ensuring our well-being. Common goods like oceans require common actions: no country alone can achieve this, which is why the EU is strengthening its external fisheries policy through full engagement and support to regional fisheries management organisations, the SFPA network, and our action to tackle IUU.

Historical and legal context of the SFPAs

The European Economic Community concluded its first bilateral fisheries agreements in the late 1970s. More than 30 other bilateral agreements have been concluded to date, mainly with developing States in Africa or in the Pacific. The negotiation of fisheries bilateral agreements resulted from the adoption of the [UN Convention on the Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\)](#), which establishes a legal sovereignty for coastal States over living marine resources in maritime zones within 200 nautical miles from their baselines (the “Exclusive Economic Zone”). As a result, the conclusion of bilateral agreements with third countries became necessary to allow European Union fleets access to fish surplus stocks that were not being fished by the coastal States’ local fleets.

SFPAs: an instrument for ocean governance



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SFPAs guarantee the respect of the European common fisheries policy's key principles, building upon commercial relationships for closer cooperation and partnerships. These principles are:



Sustainable

Based on the best available science and ecosystem-based management, enhancing good governance and local capacity.



Beneficial

Following fair bilateral negotiations in line with both partners' industrial and social requirements, and contributing to inclusive development.



Coherent

Integrating EU policies regarding natural resources, sustainable development and regional employment, increasing the overall effectiveness of EU cooperation.



Transparent

Consulting all main stakeholders, and with information publicly available online about each SFPA and their protocols, budgets and evaluations.

+ Learn more:

DG MARE website and social media

https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international_en

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OTHER EXTERNAL REFERENCES:

UNCLOS: https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm

UN Food and Agriculture Organization FAO: <http://www.fao.org/fisheries/en/>

DG International Cooperation and Development: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/home_en

DG Health and Food Safety: https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/health-and-food-safety_en

European External Action Service EEAS: <https://eeas.europa.eu>

European Fisheries Control Agency EFCA: <http://efca.europa.eu/>

Video on EU fisheries support: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-109786>



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