

## **Roadmap on “Trade & development agreements with African, Caribbean & Pacific countries – updated negotiating guidelines”**

21.11.2019

The European Commission has published an initiative on “Trade & development agreements with African, Caribbean & Pacific (ACP) countries – updated negotiating guidelines”.

The MAC welcomes this initiative, as the EC wishes to update the guidelines to align them, in particular, with recent developments and EU policies, such as labour rights and environmental aspects.

The EU is a very important export market for ACP fisheries products. It can therefore play an important role to promote environmentally and socially sustainable production conditions in ACP countries for fish products.

Regarding the duty-free and quota-free market access offered to ACP countries for fish products meeting rules of origin, the MAC notes that preferential treatment has been granted. Over time, with the enlargement of GSP+ and the signing between the EU and a growing number of non ACP countries of FTAs that also include duty free access to the EU market, the value of the preferential treatment offered to ACP countries has been eroded. The issues that require increased attention from ACP countries -and where appropriate support from the EU could play a positive role to increase EU market access for ACP fisheries and aquaculture products -, are the development of high sanitary and sustainability standards by the EU for its imported fisheries and aquaculture products.

In our view, the updated negotiated guidelines for future Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) should include provisions on sustainability to:

- Contribute to the fight against IUU fishing in ACP waters;
- Strengthen ACP regional, national and local initiatives promoting environmentally and socially sustainable fisheries as well as enhancing their capacity to meet voluntary sustainability standards in the region<sup>1</sup>;
- Promote decent employment opportunities in ACP fisheries and aquaculture sectors, in particular for young people and women;
- Maximise the contribution of ACP fisheries and aquaculture to local food security and revenue;
- Improve ACP participation in RFMOs and UN bodies discussing sustainable fisheries;
- Improve ACP civil society involvement in EPA negotiations and implementation, particularly on the sustainable development provisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Such as those benchmarked in accordance with the Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative.



## **To support the improvement of socially and environmentally sustainable production conditions in ACP fisheries and aquaculture :**

- Reinforced environmental and social sustainability provisions should be introduced in EPA's agriculture and fisheries chapters, that address specific fishery and aquaculture concerns, including incentives for sustainable resource management by ACP countries and fishing operators flying their flags, and that explicitly reinforce the requirements of the IUU Regulation;
- The European Union should require the ACP countries concerned to ratify and implement effectively key international fishery instruments, such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, the FAO Port State Measures Agreement and the FAO Compliance Agreement, and the ILO Work in Fishing Convention C188<sup>2</sup>, particularly in light of the entry into force of the Directive (EU) 2017/159 transposing the latter Convention. It is equally important that ACP adhere to the standards of the relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).
- In order to facilitate the implementation of social and environmental sustainability standards for ACP fisheries and aquaculture products, the EU should provide specific financial and technical support, including by incentivising fleets flying the flag of those countries;
- Future EPAs should be subject to ACP states commitments to ratify and concretely implement the ILO C188;
- The EU should provide financial and operational support to RFMOs ACP contracting parties to assist them in documenting social and environmental aspects of the concerned fisheries, enhancing data collection, monitoring and control;
- Through EPAs, the European Union should continue to adequately provide assistance and help capacity building, including financial and technical assistance, training for ACP states administrations in order to implement international guidelines promoting sustainable fisheries, such as guidelines on electronic catch certificates, on sustainable artisanal fisheries, etc.

## **To improve ACP access to EU markets:**

- The EU should encourage ACP countries to develop traceability along the entire fish value chain, and should support, wherever possible, the use of electronic means to do so based on FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Catch Documentation Schemes;
- The EU should support ACP efforts in sanitary controls for both fishery and aquaculture products and IUU inspections.

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<sup>2</sup> This is allowed under WTO since its Member States have right to implement measures to achieve legitimate policy objectives, such as the protection of human health and safety, or protection of the environment.