Illegal fishing has devastating social, economic and environmental costs. Countries are deprived of money that could fund development and economic growth. Fish stocks are depleted making it harder for small-scale fishers to support their families. Damaging fishing methods destroy marine environments.

Illegal fishing operators
Evidence shows that illegal fishing operators not only fail to comply with fisheries rules and regulations but are part of highly organised, transnational criminal operations involved in a range of criminal activity:
- Document forgery
- Money laundering
- Tax evasion
- Human trafficking and human rights abuses
- Smuggling of arms, weapons, drugs and wildlife
- Piracy
- Environmental crimes

To tackle fisheries crime requires the involvement and commitment of many agencies nationally, regionally and internationally.

Fish is vital for the health, economies and food security of African countries:

- Benin
- Côte d’Ivoire
- Ghana
- Liberia
- Nigeria
- Togo

Distant Water Fishing Nations from all over the world target the fish-rich waters of the Gulf of Guinea.

West Africa
Is a global hotspot for illegal fishing with estimated losses of $1.3 billion, of which the 6 FCWC countries, who form the West Africa Task Force lose $300 million a year.

Main countries:
- China
- Taiwan
- Russia
- South Korea
- Spain
- France
- Thailand

It is reported that China expanded their West Africa fishing operations from 13 vessels in 1985 to 462 vessels in 2013. This is 1/5th of the total Chinese distant water fleet.

Estimated global losses from IUU fishing could be as high as $23.5 billion annually.

West Africa losses $1.3b
WATF losses $300m

37%

of all fish caught in West Africa are caught illegally.

Fish production (MT) (FAO - 2012)
Contribution to GDP in USD millions
Per capita consumption in kg
Contribution to % animal protein consumed
People employed in fisheries sector

0 20 40 60 80 100
0 200,000 400,000 600,000 800,000
0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000
0 5 10 15 20
0 10 20 30 40
0 100,000 200,000 300,000 400,000 500,000 600,000 700,000 800,000
The West Africa Task Force

**Member Countries:**

- Benin
- Côte d’Ivoire
- Ghana
- Liberia
- Nigeria
- Togo

**Top 10 Violations:**

- No valid license
- Unauthorised gear or methods
- Fishing in prohibited areas
- Forged documents
- False or inaccurate information on catches
- Illegal transhipment
- Trade in illegally caught fish
- Targeting unauthorised species
- Damage to artisanal gear and vessels
- Forged documents

**Challenges:**

- A combined EEZ of 700,000 km²
- Low capacity to monitor and control waters
- Weak regional and national inter-agency cooperation
- Legal frameworks weak or not implemented
- Corruption

The West Africa Task Force has been established to help stop these violations and increase compliance in the fisheries sector.

**How can we stop illegal fishing?**

- By working together as a region
- Through national interagency cooperation
- Through supporting international processes and agreements such as the Port State Measures Agreement and the African Union Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa

**How is the FCWC and the West Africa Task Force helping?**

- The six FCWC member countries – Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo – are the founding countries. Together they are working as the WATF to share intelligence and cooperate on fisheries controls
- The WATF has established interagency National Working Groups, these will enable a more effective response to illegal fishing
- The WATF is supporting and championing national and international measures that are key to successfully stopping illegal fishing

**What is the West Africa Task Force achieving?**

- **Activity**
  - Gathering and sharing intelligence
  - Sharing licensing information
  - Requesting and receiving country to country support
  - Requesting and receiving technical support
  - Building inter-agency cooperation
  - Taking enforcement actions
  - Strengthening MCS capacity
  - Building national, regional and international awareness
  - Ensuring a common regional approach

- **Methods**
  - Communications Platform
  - Task Force Meetings
  - Training Workshops
  - Toolbox
    - Manuals
    - Presentations
    - Forms
  - Technical Support
  - Cost-effective Technology

- **Results**
  - Strengthened Regional Cooperation
  - Established Working Practices
  - MCS Actions and Process

  - Agreed Terms of Reference for the Task Force
  - Activity of the TF Embedded in the FCWC Workplan
  - Vessel Inspections as a Result of Shared Intelligence
  - Country to Country Requests for Assistance
  - License and Flagging Application Denial
  - Vessel Arrests, and Resulting Fines
  - Investigations into Broader Fleets and Owners
  - Develop a Regional Reefer Control Strategy

A Technical Team made up of the FCWC Secretariat, Trygg Mat Tracking, Stop Illegal Fishing and NFDS supports the West Africa Task Force, with funding from Norad.