

# IMPROVED REGIONAL FISHERIES GOVERNANCE IN WEST AFRICA



## Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in Western Africa (PESCAO)

The Programme for Regional Fisheries Governance in Western Africa (PESCAO) is a five-year, European Union funded initiative, implemented with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission. PESCAO has a budget of EUR 15 million and is running from 2018 to 2023.

The objective of PESCAO is to enhance the contribution of fisheries resources to sustainable development, food security, and poverty alleviation in West Africa. This is being implemented through three components:

- 1 Developing a framework for regional fisheries priorities and facilitating cooperation.**
- 2 Building the capacities of competent national and regional monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) authorities to deter illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.**
- 3 Supporting coordination for shared approaches to fisheries management.**

PESCAO will support the ECOWAS to facilitate cooperation with development partners and the two sub-regional fisheries organizations, the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) and the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC). PESCAO, through its cooperation with the FCWC will support and strengthen existing fisheries mechanisms, such as the West Africa Task Force (WATF), while building new partnership, such as between the FCWC and the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA).

While FCWC Member States are benefiting from all of the PESCAO project, the direct support to the FCWC Secretariat, named the FCWC PESCAO Project, is related to component two *'building the capacities of competent national and regional MCS authorities to deter IUU fishing'*.



## Regional harmonisation of national legal frameworks for fisheries

IUU fishing is an international, trans-boundary phenomenon that takes advantage of disconnected national efforts and the patchwork of national, regional and international regulations and laws. National legal frameworks provide the basis for effective decision-making, cooperation, enforcement action, and successful sanctioning of illegal operators. Ensuring that legislation is up to date, fit for purpose and that all relevant provisions of international agreements are domesticated plays an essential role in fighting illegal fishing.

PESCAO is supporting the development of updated national fisheries legal frameworks that are regionally harmonised and consistent with international standards. The legal and regulatory framework of fisheries in the FCWC countries will be reviewed and adapted to the context of sustainable management and more specifically to the fight against IUU fishing.

This harmonisation will contribute towards the management of sustainable fisheries, to establish a framework that promotes compliant fishers and legal fishing vessels, resulting in improved economic and social benefits to the wider West African Region.

### FCWC activities:

- Collating information on national legislation related to fisheries and on regulations applicable to the fishing activities including the registration of vessels, MCS and enforcement.
- Reviewing national fisheries legal frameworks to ascertain the baseline, identify gaps in legislation and provide recommendations on how to strengthen legislation to best reflect international and regional commitments.
- Reviewing the status of FCWC member's accession to relevant international instruments to identify areas for priority support.
- Supporting Member States develop and implement National Plans of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (NPOA-IUU).
- Supporting implementation of existing national plans (NPOA-IUU) of Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Liberia
- Updating the FCWC Regional Plans of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (RPOA-IUU) to ensure cohesion with the FCWC Regional Fisheries Management Plan.



## Supporting effective cooperation

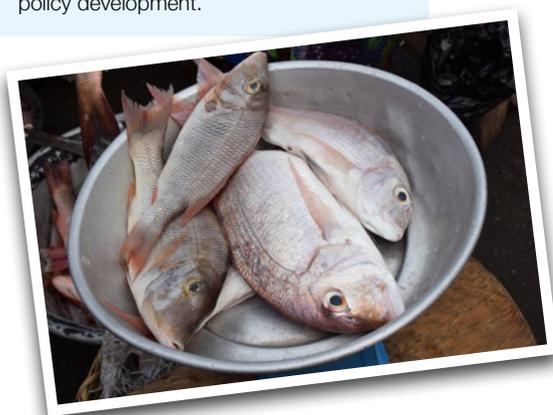
Cooperation is required at the national, regional and international level to effectively manage fisheries resources and fight IUU fishing. Multiple national agencies are involved in decision-making and operations linked to the licensing, flagging, control and port access of fishing vessels. Regional information sharing between neighbouring coastal and port States and operational cooperation is vital for effective MCS. At the international level, cooperation with relevant flag States and inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations facilitates information exchange and sharing.

PESCAO is helping to strengthen national, regional and international cooperation between countries, administrations and organisations involved in the fight against IUU fishing and related criminal activities. Stronger links will also be developed through enhanced collaboration between the FCWC, SRFC and ECOWAS.

Regional cooperation is at the heart of the FCWC's mandate, and in synergy with the WATF a strong cooperative platform has been developed. PESCAO support will provide additional backing to the WATF, through regular Task Force meetings, training events, and regional MCS initiatives such as the Vessel Monitoring Centre.

### FCWC activities:

- Supporting national interagency working group meetings to develop cooperation in fighting IUU fishing.
- Contributing to regular WATF meetings to build knowledge, understanding and trust between personnel.
- Advancing cooperation between FCWC and regional maritime security organisations.
- Progressing regional initiatives that will advance cooperative action, such as the FCWC Regional Strategy on Transshipment.
- Establishing institutional linkages with SRFC and ECOWAS for preparation and implementation ECOWAS regional fisheries policy development.



## Establishing a Regional Vessel Monitoring Centre

Current capacity to monitor fishing related activity in national exclusive economic zones is limited. Tracking of vessels on vessel monitoring systems (VMS), through automatic identification system (AIS) signals or earth observation data (EOD) can help to identify when vessels are operating without authorisation, are operating in prohibited areas, or are conducting unauthorised transshipment.

PESCAO is working to develop an FCWC Regional Vessel Monitoring Centre (RVMC) with strong linkages to and between national MCS structures.

The establishment of the RVMC will provide improved regional monitoring of the activity of fishing vessels, reefers and support vessels in West Africa. The target is to monitor the movements of 90 percent of industrial fishing vessels within the region.

### FCWC activities:

- Consulting with FCWC Member States regarding their VMS requirements.
- Establishing the RVMC, which is anticipated to become functional in early 2020.
- Developing guidelines for the legal and practical operations of the RVMC.
- Ongoing information sharing on fishing vessels flagged or licensed within the region.

## Undertaking joint regional fisheries patrols

The need to have oversight of fishing vessels and the activities they are conducting whilst at sea is essential to ensure compliance with laws and regulations. However, the ability to undertake at-sea patrols is often limited by a lack of capacity and resources as at-sea operations are expensive and require high levels of expertise.

Joint and regional at-sea fisheries patrols provide many advantages, from the sharing of resources and expertise, to the ability to follow vessels across national boundaries into neighbouring exclusive economic zones. PESCAO is providing support to the development, planning and operation of region-wide joint patrols to stop IUU fishing.

Cooperation and information sharing between FCWC Members, regional maritime security agencies as well as national agencies will provide effective operational targeting and provide a basis that will enable the best use of resources for fisheries patrols.

### FCWC activities:

- Lesson-learning from other regions including the Indian Ocean Commission's Regional Fisheries Surveillance Plan (PRSP), Sea Shepherd operations in Benin, Liberia, Namibia and Tanzania, and the SRFC regional patrol.
- Participating in the first regional patrol organized by SRFC, held in Guinea Bissau.
- Developing cooperation with maritime centres and fisheries authorities.
- Coordinating with the Support to West Africa Integrated Maritime Security (SWAIMS) project for potential joint activities in combat IUU fishing.
- Collaborating with the ECOWAS Maritime Agencies Regional Centre for Maritime Security of West Africa (CRESMAO) and the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC) to explore the feasibility of joint at sea patrols in the sub-region.



## Building capacity of competent national and regional authorities

Human and institutional capacity is critical for implementation of all elements of MCS and to ensure that enforcement takes place, including identifying illegal operators and successful taking enforcement action against them.

PESCAO will help to build the human and institutional MCS capacity through a programme of training and expert support.

In the FCWC region capacity building, targeted at the institutional and individual level is designed to:

- Build and strengthen a pool of fisheries personnel trainers in each FCWC member country, ensuring the continuity of the capacity building outcomes of the region, through a 'train the trainers' programme.
- Provide specific trainings and workshops to develop practical and operational expertise for fisheries enforcement officers and National Working Group members from e.g. Navy or port authorities.
- Provide resources for training and development to build fisheries inspectors and other MCS personnel's the skills base.

### FCWC activities:

- Assessing human and institutional capacity needs, across the FCWC region.
- Establishing a 'train the trainers' programme on fisheries control and inspection procedures, and to build a pool of specialist trainers within the region.
- Developing partnerships with national training institutions to support and engage in training activity.
- Establishing links with relevant academic institutions in the region e.g. the Regional Maritime University of Ghana and the Maritime Academy in Cote d'Ivoire.
- Organising joint training in collaboration with regional centres of excellence, such as the Regional Academy of Science and Techniques of the Sea (ARSTM) and the Inter-regional Maritime Security Institute (ISMI).
- Providing access to the EFCA e-learning platform which hosts a range of practical training resources.



## Establishing a network of regional fisheries observers

At-sea fisheries observers, working from fishing vessels licensed to fish in the region or flagged by a country from the region, can provide important information for biological monitoring of the fish stocks, on compliance with conservation and management measures, as well as fisheries regulations and laws. At-sea fisheries observers also offer oversight for activity that takes place on fishing vessels to indicate when regulations are not adhered to and to document violations.

The role of the at-sea fisheries observer can be dangerous and the environment that the observers work in is highly open to nurturing corruption. The development of a pool of regional Fisheries Observers may provide many benefits. These include improved training and training material for observers, a regional minimum standard for observer skills and conduct, and a regional minimum standard for the treatment for observers by the captain and crew of fishing vessels.

PECSAO is building the capacity of national fisheries observer programmes in order to develop a network of well-trained regional observers. This will build a pool of Fisheries Observers that will span the SRFC and the FCWC regions. Taking a regional approach to at-sea observers is hoped to develop improved neutrality, to build professionalism and expertise, and to provide better systems and protections to support their important work.

### FCWC activities:

- Assessing existing observer programmes in the FCWC region.
- Developing a pilot project for the implementation of the Regional Fisheries Observer Programme.
- Identifying areas for development of the operational and legal framework required for Regional Fisheries Observer standards.
- Conducting harmonized MCS training for national fisheries observers.

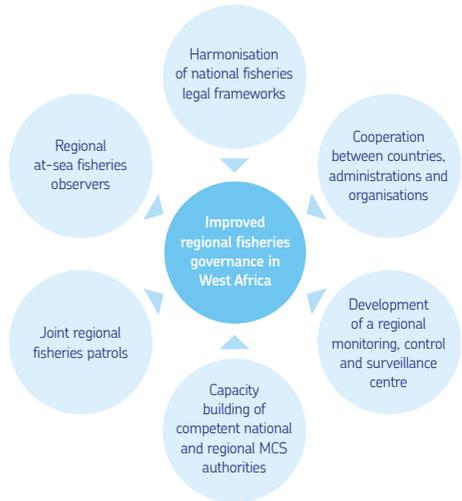




The objective of PESCAO is to enhance the contribution of fisheries resources to sustainable development, food security and poverty alleviation in West Africa.

This will be achieved by improving regional fisheries governance in Western Africa through better coordination of national fisheries policies.

By working with PESCAO, the FCWC is contributing to the progressive achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 – zero hunger, 12 – responsible consumption and production and 14 – life below water.



**The PESCAO support to FCWC will further develop the activities of its MCS arm, the West Africa Task Force, and will provide improved opportunity for capacity building, cooperation and coordinated region-wide MCS activity.**



Find out more about PESCAO on the FCWC website: [www.fcwc-fish.org](http://www.fcwc-fish.org)

Our partners:

