



# FCWC

Fisheries Committee for  
the West Central Gulf of Guinea



FCWC  
Factsheet 03  
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## SHARED INFORMATION ON LICENSED VESSELS

Licences, issued by national fishing authorities, provide vessels with authorisation to fish. Historically licensing information has been seen as confidential and sharing, even amongst members of the same department was restricted. The value of sharing licence information nationally, regionally and publicly has been widely recognized in recent years, and the benefits to improved monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) are well documented.



The countries of the Fisheries Committee of the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) share common fisheries. This results in small scale and industrial fishing vessels migrating through the waters of different countries to follow the fish and they may off-load their catch in a range of ports across the region. To improve national and regional efforts to stop illegal fishing the West Africa Task Force (WATF) was established as the FCWC's monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) mechanism in 2015.

The WATF has facilitated the sharing of licence lists between the FCWC Member States, in order to:

- Identify which fishing vessels are licensed to fish, and where, in the region.
- Make it easier to identify unlicensed vessels.
- Enable effective MCS of fishing vessels.
- Make the best use of time and resources.

# ISSUING FISHING LICENCES

Fishing licences are issued by coastal States to provide authorisation for vessels to fish, and sometimes also for vessels such as reefers or supply vessels that support the activity of fishing vessels. National regulations determine who needs a licence, and the terms and conditions of the licence. These may relate to fishing areas, closed seasons, gear type, reporting requirements and mandatory vessel identification such as an IMO number, or use of electronic monitoring through AIS, and national or regional VMS.

Nationally flagged vessels, particularly industrial and semi-industrial may need to apply for a licence, and when coastal States can't utilise all their fisheries resources nationally they may choose to give access for foreign-flagged vessels to fish. The licensing process is the primary means of checking the credentials of the vessel, its owner and operator. Careful checks of registration, identity and safety documents can help identify high-risk vessels, and provide grounds for declining licence requests.



## WHY SHARE INFORMATION ON LICENSED VESSELS?

Awareness of the value of organising and sharing information on licensed vessels has increased in recent years, and the move towards greater transparency is leading to increased expectation for public sharing of licence lists. The systematic sharing of information supports the African Union Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa call for countries to:

- Develop and share registers of authorized and illegal fishing vessels.
- Establish mechanisms for efficient and effective regional cooperation in MCS and enforcement.

The sharing of licence lists provides the basis for regional cooperation and information sharing to support joint actions against illegal operators in the fisheries sector.

## LICENCE

Issued by the national fisheries authority in response to an application, usually submitted by the vessel's agent.

### WHY?

- To control fishing effort, generate revenue and regulate activity.

### BENEFITS

- Licensing checks identify high risk vessels and operators and provide an opportunity to cross-check and verify information submitted.

## NATIONAL LICENCE LIST

Developed and maintained by the national fisheries authority.

### WHY?

- Provides an overview of all vessels that have been licensed.

### BENEFITS

- Provides a practical and useful tool for routine MCS work and inspections.

Some FCWC Members States are already sharing national licence lists publicly.

## WHO SHOULD WE SHARE WITH?

### FLAG STATES AND RFMOS

#### WHY?

- To allow for appropriate monitoring and control to take place.

### NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

#### WHY?

- To enable due diligence and enhanced cross-checking.

#### BENEFITS

- Improved targeting of surveillance and operations.

### FCWC MEMBER STATES

#### WHY?

- To develop regional oversight of active fishing vessels.

#### BENEFITS

- Sharing of information and intelligence to inform licensing decisions.
- Improved maritime domain awareness.

### PUBLIC

#### WHY?

- Increase transparency and accountability.
- Enhanced reporting of illegal activity.

#### BENEFITS

- Improved market access potential.
- Build reputation of FCWC fisheries.
- Develop complaint and sustainable fisheries.
- Develop trust.
- Improved accountability.
- Allows others to provide support in monitoring your EEZ.

## HOW SHOULD WE SHARE LICENCE LISTS?

### FCWC COMBINED LIST

#### WHY?

- To help spot identity fraud.
- To identify activity trends and potential risk areas.

#### BENEFITS

- Improved monitoring, control and surveillance.
- Improved cross-checking.
- Identification of dual flagged vessels.

### FCWC REGIONAL VESSEL REGISTER

#### WHY?

- To provide up-to-date and easy to access information.
- Increase ability of non-fisheries agencies to check vessel authorisation and licence status.

#### BENEFITS

- Improved cross-checking.
- Improve capacity to implement port State measures.
- Bespoke reporting.

### KEY

■ Current activity

■ Potential future activity

## THE FISHERIES COMMITTEE OF THE WEST CENTRAL GULF OF GUINEA

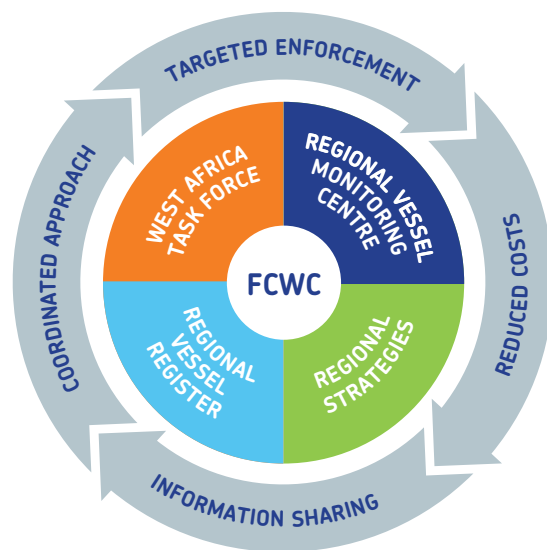
WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2007 TO FACILITATE COOPERATION IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BETWEEN THE MEMBER COUNTRIES: BENIN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, GHANA, LIBERIA, NIGERIA AND TOGO. THE COUNTRIES HAVE SEVERAL SHARED FISH STOCKS AND IDENTIFIED A NEED FOR COOPERATION AND GUIDANCE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THESE RESOURCES.

The FCWC process focuses on the coordination, development and support to implementation of national and regional fisheries plans that are coherent with the African Union's integration agenda and support the objectives of the United Nations sustainable development goals.

The sharing of information on vessels licensed to operate within the FCWC region is a key element in **fighting illegal fishing** and increasing transparency in the fisheries sector.

FCWC member States will benefit from sharing licence lists and the development of a Regional Register of Vessels through:

- Increased oversight of vessel activity.
- Reduced costs.
- Greater regional information sharing.
- Coordinated approaches to joint action.



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