



Press release

For immediate release

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Fisheries agreements: “generally well managed but weaknesses must be addressed”, say EU auditors

Weaknesses in the management of EU fisheries agreements with third countries in Africa and the Indian Ocean are leading to higher prices for some of the fish caught, according to a new report from the European Court of Auditors. At the same time, a lack of reliable data is hampering the European Commission’s efforts to ensure that EU vessels fish only the surplus resources of partner countries, says the report.

Under the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements, the EU pays to obtain access for its external fleet to other countries’ fishing grounds. The agreements aim to promote sustainable fish stocks, provide a stable framework for the EU fleet to access fishing grounds and support fisheries governance in partner countries. The European Commission negotiates the fishing stocks and quantities accessible, the payments made by the EU, and the conditions applicable. The EU’s auditors assessed the negotiation and the implementation of the agreements, the Commission’s monitoring of catches and the selection and control of the actions funded.

The auditors found that although the agreements were generally well managed, the tonnage negotiated was often higher than the catches reported from previous periods. This leads to regular underuse. Because the EU pays in full regardless of the amount of fishing actually done, the real cost paid was frequently higher than the price negotiated. In Mozambique, the real cost per tonne of tuna in 2013 was about six times higher than the price which had been negotiated.

The agreements are supposed to ensure the sustainability of the fisheries concerned by allowing the EU vessels to fish only the surplus resources of partner countries. But the auditors have doubts that the so-called “surplus” can be calculated in a reliable manner, due to a lack of reliable information on fish stocks.

There was also a lack of reliable, consistent and complete data on actual fish catches made by the EU fleet, with significant differences among the data provided by Member States, the Commission and the evaluations of the agreements. The Commission had limited control over the activities actually implemented by the partner countries under the sectorial support, which were,

The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors. The full report can be found at www.eca.europa.eu

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in some cases, different to those agreed at the start.

“These weaknesses can and must be addressed if we want the fisheries partnership agreements to contribute effectively towards sustainable fisheries in our partners’ countries, while ensuring the activity of our fishing fleet”, said **Mr Jan Kinšt, the Member of the Court of Auditors responsible for the report.**

The report recommends, among other things, that the Commission should:

- consider previous levels of use when negotiating new arrangements and endeavour to link payments for access rights more closely to actual catches, while ensuring that fishing is not disrupted;
- ensure that the new catch database is fully used by flag Member States and provides reliable catch data which can be monitored and kept up to date;
- propose eligibility requirements for new agreements to assess actions being considered for funding.

Special Report No 11/2015: Are the Fisheries Partnership Agreements well managed by the Commission? is currently available in English, French, German and Spanish (other languages to follow shortly).