

Recommendation N° 31

Socio-economic impacts on fishing communities in the Outermost Regions

The Outermost Regions (ORs) of Europe have in common their isolated nature and dependence on ocean resources. The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) was developed to regulate fishing in European Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and international fishing by European Union (EU) fleets. It aims to provide a set of management frameworks for a sustainable fishing sector which accounts for the rights and needs of all stakeholders and parties equally, when it refers to common and often shared resources at the international level. Article 349 of the CFP predicts that fisheries policies should “contribute to a fair standard of living for those who depend on fishing activities, bearing in mind coastal fisheries and socioeconomic impacts on their communities”. However, the specific needs of small-scale fisheries in the outermost regions are often not adequately considered and the non-compliance with art. 2 of the CFP means that communities in the outermost regions face serious social and economic issues.

Fishing practices in the outermost regions contribute greatly to the economy and livelihoods of their communities. In fact, considering several territories, fishing is an essential source of income, which many families are dependent. Fishing plays an important role in raising the standard of living and providing adequate nutrition, particularly for less fortunate communities. Additionally, the traditionally fishing methods used in the ORs hold an important generational and cultural value. The CFP is an opportunity to support the livelihoods and cultures of coastal communities in the outermost regions. However, currently, it is possible to observe discrepancies between a fisheries policy based on experience on the European continent, which is very different from the realities in the outermost regions, for example, in terms of knowledge of resources or infrastructure at sea and on land.

Inequitable distribution catch allocation hinders the development of small-scale fisheries

Across European Union (EU) Member States, some stakeholders of some Member States consider that the distribution of fishing opportunities is concentrated to certain fleets. This is the case of Spain, where the outermost regions and the mainland share part of the pelagic resources. A [2019 European Commission report](#) shows that some tuna quotas are not equitably distributed among different communities. For example, the distribution of the Spanish quota for the Bluefin Tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) is inequitable between the continental fleet (272 vessels, with 3,313 tons) and the Canary fleet (286 vessels, with 249 tons). Furthermore, the Gini coefficient concerning the mainland fleet quota distribution of the Bluefin Tuna is 0.74, displaying an emphasized inequality, while for the Canary Islands fleet it is 0.25. This fact prejudicing small-scale fleets of the outermost regions, that use small-scale fishing gears that generally take relatively small volumes but maximize the socio-economic benefits per unit of harvest. Much of the time, small-scale fleets do not receive quotas proportional to their value and there is an evident and unquestionable need to improve the equity of distribution in various regions.

In addition, it is important to highlight that pelagic stocks migrate with warm water currents. Therefore, overfishing, particularly of juveniles, with drifting fish aggregation devices (drifting DCPs) can have a direct impact on the availability of these distributed stocks for small-scale fleets in the ORs.

It is necessary a greater transparency on the distribution of the quotas among Member States, to promote equality and ensure that the CFP is a system based on criteria that support the environmental and social value of traditional and small-scale fisheries. Finally, unfair, and illegal competition for access to stocks by foreign fleets, hinders the development of fisheries in the outermost regions of Europe.

In this framework, the **CCRUP recommends the specific separation and maintenance of a sufficiently large proportion of the quotas to ensure that the fundamental needs of the fishing fleets, particularly those for tuna in the ORs, are supported and prioritized in the future.**

*Opinion of the *Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins* (CNPMEM) :

The CNPMEM considers that, in the context of pelagic fishing, it is not appropriate to contrast the various existing fisheries in terms of their activities and fishing gears. Member States should be encouraged to work internally on the distribution of fishing opportunities, so that the level of regional discussion matches the reality on the field, because the methods of allocations are not the same in all the outermost regions.

Overfishing puts nutrition and livelihoods at risk

The ocean is a fundamental nutrition source for many communities of the outermost regions, as the ocean is one of their primary resources, allowing them to fulfill their daily needs. It is important that this food source is sustained to ensure that future generations of communities in the outermost regions continue to have a healthy and reliable source of animal protein that is harvested with a low carbon footprint. The regulation should ensure that the needs of coastal communities and their fishing fleets in terms of fisheries for pelagic species are not compromised.

The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) should adhere to scientific advices. By other hand, the European Commission (EC) should ensure that its global quota and catches are in line with these advices. Additionally, in the Outermost Regions waters, biodiversity hotspots are a key source of dwindling food for their communities, so illegal fishing (IUU) should be better controlled to protect marine life and livelihoods of local fishing communities.

IUU fishing is the main threat to the sustainability of stocks and the protection of the marine ecosystem. In this regard, the European Commission should find a legitimate place in fisheries management forums, particularly in South America and East Africa, to defend the interests of the fishermen from the outermost regions and the sustainability of stocks. It should also be empathized that, in cases of fishing in environments that are particularly sensitive to terrestrial pollution, ecosystem management of lagoons and coastal strips is preferable to fisheries management based on stocks. Before determining an effective overfishing, it would be appropriate, in particular, about pelagic stocks, to carry out an effort for international investigation, coordinated by the RFMOs.

The CCRUP recommends that the EC take proactive measures to support an increase in the proportion of tuna quota that can be harvested using sustainable fishing methods and more aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Employment

Small-scale fisheries are an essential source of employment in coastal communities around the world, particularly in the outermost regions. Internationally, small-scale fisheries employ many people per unit of harvest and, for this reason, should be valued to contribute to the socio-economic livelihoods of local communities. Concerning the EU fleet in particular, small-scale fisheries in the ORs represent more than half of employment, however, small-scale fisheries receive an unequal support from EC for market access and subsidies. Fishing traditions and activities are different from actions in the European continent and therefore current CFP instruments are inadequate and should, on the contrary, invest more in supporting small-scale fisheries. **The CCRUP recommends the European Commission to review the limits on the use of aid, considering the specific nature of the outermost regions.** In particular, this is the case of the renewal of the fishing fleet, which is currently not applicable, although it is essential for the survival of fisheries in the outermost regions.

It is essential that subsidies are distributed equitably to give all the fishermen equal opportunities and let them benefit from fisheries in the long term. Subsidies can be redistributed to better support small-scale fisheries in the ORs and, in this process, harness their cultural and social value to engage and support future generations of fishermen.

The CCRUP recommends that the EC supports further research about the socio-economic benefits of tuna fishing in the ORs and use the outcomes to better support and promote these small-scale fisheries in the future.

Regionalization

Due to the unique challenges faced by fisheries and fishing communities in the outermost regions, an effective regionalization process is essential in engaging all fisheries activities in fisheries management.

Without regionalization, the needs of many fishing activities, particularly the small-scale fisheries in the outermost regions, would not be held. In this regard, the EC has taken important measures in the last years to consider the operations and specific needs of Member

States. However, challenges remain, such as the translation of EC documents into different languages and the lack of interpretation (including portuguese, spanish and french) at some meetings. Not all documents are distributed with translations into these native languages (note, in particular, the working document about fishing opportunities for 2023, which is only available in English) and, as many fisheries in the ORs are small, local organizations with few administrative staff, who may not understand english and this undermines their involvement and the implementation of a full regionalization process. Thus, once again, the **CCRUP recommends that all documentation (work documents, regulations proposal, etc.) and stakeholder’s meetings be translated and interpreted into Portuguese, Spanish and French**, at least, to facilitate the engagement of fishermen of the ORs, so that the EC can full acknowledge the opinion of these stakeholders during the consultation processes that can determine huge changes in their practices.

- Opinion of the *Asociación Tinerfeña de Amigos de la Naturaleza* (ATAN)

ATAN considers that almost none of the points included have a relation between the title and the recommendation stated in the end. In addition, it is incompletely justified, and data was not provided to validate the statements included and, when provided, the source is not cited, neither the source of citations made by others. Regarding fleet renewal, which will be focus group’s subject of further analysis, next year, they consider that it is not well justified and that it would be better to eliminate it.