

Recommendation n° 68

On Sustainable Fisheries in the European Union: state of play and guidelines for 2026

Considering the Communication from the European Commission (EC) to the European Parliament and the Council on Sustainable Fisheries in the European Union: State of Play and Guidelines for 2026 [COM(2025) 296]¹, the Outermost Regions Advisory Council (CCRUP) hereby expresses its opinion:

The European Outermost Regions (ORs) of Saint Martin, Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands, Mayotte and La Réunion, face particular challenges, notably climate change and the consequent loss of habitats and biodiversity. Most of the fishing in these regions is artisanal, using highly selective and sustainable fishing gear with a low impact on marine ecosystems, which is vital for the socioeconomic sustainability and food supply of their coastal communities.

1. Introduction

The structural constraints of the ORs emphasise the need to adapt public policies to their ecological, socio-economic and cultural specificities to guarantee clean, healthy and productive oceans. The **Common Fisheries Policy** (CFP) has contributed to promoting environmental sustainability and conserving marine resources. However, its application in the ORs continues to face significant challenges, since the legislation in force is often too generalised and poorly suited to the reality of these regions. In this context, it is important to remember that, according to Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, and as reaffirmed in Council Regulation (EU) 2025/202, *"the setting of total allowable catches (TACs) shall be based on available scientific advice, taking into account biological and socio-economic aspects, while ensuring fair treatment between fisheries sectors in the light of the views expressed during stakeholder consultation."*

¹ European Commission. (2025). Sustainable fisheries in the EU: state of play and guidelines for 2026.

The CCRUP therefore recommends that the European Commission introduce specific chapters for the ORs in its communications to the European Parliament and the Council, in particular on *Sustainable fisheries in the EU: state of play and guidelines*.

2. Progress towards achieving maximum sustainable yield

2.1. Fishing opportunities in 2025²

As far as the ORs are concerned, Council Regulation (EU) 2025/2026 establishes the TACs applicable to Union vessels in specific areas, by species and by geographical area, as defined in its Annex I. The main fishing zones of relevance to the ORs include:

- International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) sub-areas 1 to 10, which cover the north-east Atlantic, including the waters of the Azores (ICES 10);
- The CECAF zone, which covers the east-central Atlantic, with relevance to the Madeira and Canary archipelagos (CECAF 34.1.2), particularly in fisheries for migratory pelagic species;
- The waters of French Guiana, located in FAO zone 31 (Western Central Atlantic), where French Guiana's own fleets operate and specific TACs established within the framework of the EU and multilateral agreements apply.

Annex I.D of Regulation (EU) 2025/2026 refers to fishing opportunities: in the convention area of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), whose management measures are transposed into European Union legislation. In this context, the CCRUP adopted a [specific recommendation on the Conservation and Management of Species under ICCAT for 2025](#), which analyses the implications of the measures adopted by this regional fisheries organisation on the fleets of the ORs.

²COUNCIL REGULATION (EU) 2025/202 of 30 January 2025 fixing, for 2025 and 2026, at for certain fish stocks, the fishing opportunities applicable in Union waters and those applicable for Union fishing vessels in certain non-Union waters, and amending Regulation (EU) 2024/257 as regards fishing opportunities for 2025

Annex I.J of Regulation (EU) 2025/2026 establishes: the fishing opportunities for the area of competence of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), an area that is particularly relevant for the Indian Ocean ORs, namely *La Réunion* and *Mayotte*. The CCRUP adopted a specific recommendation on the Conservation and Management of Species within the IOTC for 2025, which analyses the impacts of the measures adopted by this regional fisheries management organisation on the Indian Ocean ORs.

In addition to commercial fishing, recreational fishing is also subject to management measures based on scientific advice. In the case of the *pollack* (*Pollachius pollachius*) "(...) recreational catches in ICES sub-areas 8, 9 and 10 and in Union waters of CECAF 34.1.1 are not insignificant. It is therefore appropriate to continue restricting recreational fishing for pollack in these areas. In order to protect spawning grounds and limit catches of juveniles, no pollack may be caught or retained in recreational fisheries during the period from 1 January to 30 April, although a maximum of two specimens may be authorised for the rest of the year."²

a) TACs applicable to Union fishing vessels in areas where TACs exist, by species and by area, according to Council Regulation (EU) 2025/2026:

International Area	OR affected	Common name	Scientific name	TAC (tonnes)
Sub-areas 9N and 10 ICES, CECAF 34.1.1	Azores	Anchovy	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i> *	23450
Sub-area 8c, 9, 10 ICES, Union waters of CECAF 34.1.1	Azores	Megrim	<i>Lepidorhombus spp</i>	4270
Sub-area 8c, 9, 10 ICES, CECAF 34.1.1	Azores	Anglerfish	<i>Lophiidae</i>	5208
Subarea 8c, 9, 10 ICES, CECAF 34.1.1	Azores	European hake	<i>Merluccius merluccius</i> *	17115
Sub-area 9, 10 ICES, CECAF 34.1.1	Azores	Norway lobster	<i>Nephrops norvegicus</i> *	7958

Subarea 9, 10 ICES, CECAF 34.1.1	Azores	Pollack	<i>Pollachius pollachius*</i>	959
Subarea 10 ICES, CECAF adjacent to the Azores	Azores	Horse mackerel	<i>Trachurus spp.</i>	56694

*Although a TAC exists for the species in ICES area 10, it is not caught by Azorean fishers

b) Delegated TACs established in the ORs under Article 6 of Regulation (EU)

2025/2026:

International Area	OR affected	Common name	Scientific name	TAC (tonnes)
French Guiana waters (FAO 31)	French Guiana	Shrimps of the genus <i>Penaeus</i>	<i>Penaeus spp.</i>	To be fixed
Sub-area 10 ICES, CECAF adjacent	Azores	Atlantic Horse mackerel	<i>Trachurus trachurus*</i>	To be fixed

*Although a TAC exists for the species in ICES area 10, it is not caught by Azorean fishers

The CCRUP therefore recommends that the Member States ensure the public availability of the documents relating to the allocation of quotas for delegated TAC of Shrimps of the genus *Penaeus*, affecting French Guiana, to allow access to information on the quotas allocated, with a view to enabling a more informed defence of our interests.

2.2 Agreements with Norway, the United Kingdom and other coastal states

According to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Sustainable fisheries in the EU: state of play and 2026 guidelines ‘In 2024, the Union and the United Kingdom held bilateral consultations on setting a large number of TACs for 2025 for the fish stocks listed in Annex 35 of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (...)’.

Examples of these bilateral agreements include the reciprocal authorisation for directed fishing of an initial total of 280 tonnes of Albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*) in the

exclusive economic zones of the Member States and the United Kingdom, which excludes access to the zones covered by Article 5(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013.

In addition to this example, several other TACs have also been set within the framework of the EU-UK negotiations, which affect the ORs:

International area/OR affected	OR affected	Common name	Scientific name	AC European Union (tonnes)
Sub-area ICES 10	Azores	Red seabream	<i>Pagellus bogaraveo</i>	278
ICES sub-areas 3-10, 12, 14	Azores	Alfonsinos	<i>Beryx spp.</i>	174
ICES sub-areas 8-10	Azores	Black scabbardfish	<i>Aphanopus carbo</i>	2327

a) Red seabream (*Pagellus bogaraveo*)

In the Azores, located in the waters of the north-east Atlantic, the red seabream fishery remains under a quota management plan, which includes limits per vessel and the distribution of quotas between the different islands of the archipelago.

It should be noted that in 2024, the ICES assessment for red seabream in the Azores was suspended due to a lack of sufficient scientific data, leading to an application of the precautionary principle to the quota allocated. In light of this, during negotiations in the EU Council of Ministers, Portugal undertook to submit new scientific data by April 2025, with a view to allowing a reassessment of the quota for the second half of 2025 and for 2026. As a result, a provisional TAC of 280 tonnes was set for the first half of 2025. Subsequently, in June 2025, a new assessment was carried out by ICES, which reduced the quota for the rest of the year to 395 tonnes due to a lack of data. This situation illustrates that, in the absence of up-to-date scientific data, the precautionary principle continues to apply, constraining fishing opportunities - but it also demonstrates the positive impact that the availability of new scientific information can have on the definition of TACs.

Considering that the allocated quotas have been decreasing, partly due to the scarcity of available scientific data, **the CCRUP recommends that the Portuguese Member State strengthen and improve the mechanisms for collecting and transmitting scientific data to ICES, in order to allow a more robust assessment of**

the state of the fish stocks, informing future management decisions.

b) Alfonsinos (*Beryx splendens* and *Beryx decadactylus*)

Beryx spp. are exploited in the Azores exclusively by hook and line gear and are one of the 8 most important species for this OR, accounting for around 71% of all landings of demersal and deep-sea species. According to our fishermen, the stocks of this species are in a good state, even showing a progressive increase in this stock, which is thought to be related to the almost zero fishing effort in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and limited in the waters of the Azores.

Considering [the ICES advice on Alfonsim in sub-areas 1 to 10, 12 and 14 of the North-East Atlantic](#), it was noted that since 2023 the quota allocated has been extremely low, due to the persistent lack of reliable scientific data on the stock.

Therefore, **the CCRUP recommends that the Portuguese Member State intensify the collection and processing of data in order to increase the quota for these species.**

3. Balancing the fishing capacity of Member States' fleets with their fishing opportunities

According to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Sustainable fisheries in the EU: state of play and guidelines for 2026 "*Under Article 22 of the CFP Regulation, Member States 'shall establish and implement measures to adapt the fishing capacity of their fleets to their fishing opportunities over time, taking account of trends and on the basis of the best scientific advice, in order to achieve a stable and lasting balance between them*".

Considering the above, the criteria currently used to assess the balance between fleet capacity and fishing opportunities are not adapted to the reality of the ORs. Although there are some exceptions, the annual fleet capacity balance reports continue to be based on indicators developed for contexts of overcapacity and overfishing in continental European waters. This approach does not reflect the reality of the OR fleets, where there is generally no overfishing or overcapacity.

We therefore recommend to the Member States that, with the support of the ORs' organisations, a study be carried out on the assessment of the balance between fleet capacity and fishing opportunities in the ORs, in order to adapt the analysis

criteria³.

6. Guidelines for Fishing Opportunities 2026¹

a) Data collection

The collection of scientific data is essential for the sustainable use of fishing opportunities, making it possible to know the real state of marine resources, inform management decisions, plan fishing activity more safely and respond more effectively to environmental, economic and social challenges. In addition, the availability of robust data facilitates access to financial support and strengthens the ORs' ability to defend their interests with the European institutions, promoting the exploitation of marine resources that is both sustainable and competitive.

The [Specialised Working Group EWG 24-06⁴](#) of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) identified the small number of stock assessments in the ORs as the main limitation to the effective implementation of the balance indicators, in particular the Sustainable Catch Indicator (SHI) and the Stock at Risk Indicator (SAR)¹. This limitation jeopardises the ability to guarantee the sector's long-term viability. To this end, the group recommended a review of the national stock assessments, with a view to increasing the number of assessments available and thus improving the reliability of the calculation of these indicators.

The CCRUP therefore recommends that the Portuguese, Spanish and French Member States urgently step up data collection in order to fill the information gaps that currently exist and allow the definition of reference points for Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) or suitable equivalents, in accordance with the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks⁵, ensuring the sustainable exploitation of the resources in our waters.

³CCRUP Recommendation No 63 on the [Evaluation of Regulation \(EU\) No 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy for the waters of the Outermost Regions](#).

⁴Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) - EWG Outermost Regions (STECF-24-06). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024. Edited by Borges, L., Jung, A., Gras, M. JRC Science for Policy Report. ISSN 1831-9424.

b) Fishing agreements with third countries

According to Regulation (EU) 2025/2026 "*Pursuant to the Union declaration to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela concerning the granting of fishing opportunities in Union waters to fishing vessels flying the flag of Venezuela in the exclusive economic zone off the coast of French Guiana, approved on behalf of the Union by Council Decision (EU) 2015/1565, it is necessary to fix the maximum number of fishing authorisations for lutjanids available to that country in Union waters.*" In this context, the CCRUP adopted a recommendation on "*Access by fishing vessels flying the flag of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the exclusive economic zone off the coast of the French department of French Guiana*".

Also in the context of agreements between the European Union and third countries, the CCRUP adopted a recommendation on "*Agreements between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles on access by Seychelles fishing vessels to Mayotte waters*".

a) Ecosystem approach

Considering that it is essential to take into account not only extraction, but also interactions between species, such as predation, competition, mutualism, parasitism, among others, which directly influence the abundance and distribution of stocks, thus affecting the viability of their economic exploitation.

With a view to ensuring the sustainability of marine ecosystems and the responsible management of fisheries resources, **the CCRUP recommends that the European Commission:**

1 - Base the definitions of TACs on scientific advice that integrates ecosystem considerations, including, among other aspects, interactions between predators and prey, that considers the sustainability of the fishing gear used and that considers the socioeconomics of the populations dependent on marine resources;

⁵United Nations Organisation(1995). Agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. (A/CONF.164/37).

2 - Request the development of scientific advice that includes an ecosystem approach, whenever existing advice does not;

3 - Adopt a precautionary approach in the TAC definition process if this information cannot be ascertained.

The President of the Executive Committee of the CCRUP,

(Ruben Farias)