

STUDY

Requested by the PECH committee



Research for PECH Committee – Fisheries in Mauritania and the European Union



Fisheries



Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies
Directorate General for Internal Policies of the Union
PE 617.458 - March 2018

EN

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES
Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies
FISHERIES

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Abstract

This information note on the fisheries sector in Mauritania was prepared for the delegation of the PECH Committee which will be carrying out a visit from 2 to 6 April 2018. This note provides a description of the fisheries in Mauritania's maritime areas and an analysis of the fisheries agreement with the European Union.

IP/B/PECH/NT/2018-01

March 2018

PE 617.458

EN

This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Fisheries.

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LINGUISTIC VERSIONS

Original: FR

Translations: EN ES

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

To contact the Policy Department or to subscribe to updates on our work for the PECH Committee please write to:

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Manuscript completed in March 2018

© European Union, 2018

Print ISBN 978-92-846-2697-7

doi:10.2861/57595

QA-01-18-232-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-846-2701-1

doi:10.2861/688858

QA-01-18-232-EN-N

This document is available on the internet in summary with option to download the full text at:

<http://bit.ly/2HvXXiz>

For full text download only:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU\(2018\)617458](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU(2018)617458)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
EC	European Communities
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
JC	Joint Committee
JSC	Joint Scientific Committee
CNROP	Centre National de Recherche Océanographique et des Pêches (Mauritanian Oceanographic and Fisheries Research Centre)
CECAF	Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic
SRCF	Sub-Regional Commission on Fisheries
DCP	Direction de la Commande des Pêches (Mauritanian Fisheries Control Department)
DSPCM	Délégation à la Surveillance des Pêches et au Contrôle en Mer (Delegation for Fisheries Surveillance and Maritime Control)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
EDF	European Development Fund
FITI	Fisheries Transparency Initiative
ICCAT	International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
IMROP	Institut Mauritanien de Recherches Océanographiques (Mauritanian Oceanographic Institute)
ORSTOM	Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique d'Outre (Office of Overseas Scientific and Technical Research)
PAN	Autonomous Port of Nouadhibou
PNBA	Banc d'Arguin National Park
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
SFPA	Sustainable Fishing Partnership Agreement
SMCP	Société Mauritanienne de Commercialisation des Produits de Pêche (Mauritanian Fish Marketing Corporation)
SNDP	Société Nationale de Distribution du Poisson (National Fish Distribution Company)
TACs	Total allowable catches
GRT	Gross registered tonnage
UMA	Arab Maghreb Union
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
VMS	Satellite-based Vessel Monitoring System
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone

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1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Geography and geopolitics

Mauritania's official name is the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. The country is one of two Islamic republics in Africa, the other being The Gambia. It is located in North-West Africa, in the **Sahel** (Map 1). It has a total area of 1 030 700 square kilometres.

Map 1: The Sahel



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Sahel (from the Arabic word meaning *flat land*) is the name given to a belt of land in Africa that marks the transition between the Sahara to the north, and the Sudanese Savannah, with its substantial levels of rainfall, to the south. It extends from *the Atlantic in the west to the Red Sea in the east*. The area defined as being part of the Sahel varies substantially, generally including the *land to the south of the Sahara*.

With a **754 km coastline**, the Atlantic Ocean forms Mauritania's western frontier. To the south-west, the Senegal River forms an 813 km border with Senegal. The country's longest border (2 237 km) separates it from Mali to the east and south-east. Mauritania also borders Algeria (a 463 km border) to the north-east and Western Sahara (a 1 561 km border) to the north and north-west (Map 2). In 1976, Mauritania occupied the southern third of Western Sahara but withdrew in 1979.

Map 2: Geography of Mauritania

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Precipitation is very low and generally does not exceed **100 millimetres per year**. The Sahara desert occupies **almost the whole country**, with the exception of a narrow coastal area. In spite of this, the coastal area is known as the Atlantic Coastal Desert. Rainfall is almost non-existent, but the **fog** brought about by the Canary Current in the Atlantic Ocean provides some moisture which allows lichen and other plants that require little water to grow. To the south of Mauritania, a savannah of acacia forest is the predominant ecosystem. Since the 1960s, **the Sahara desert has been spreading progressively**, due to intensive and recurrent droughts. These repeated droughts forced Mauritania to develop its interest in the fisheries sector from the 1970s onwards.

The country's highest point is **910 m above sea level**, at Kediet ej Jill, near to the border with Western Sahara and the lowest point is 5 m below sea level, at the salt pans of Sebkhet Te-n-Dghamcha to the north of Nouakchott.

Mauritania is part of the **Maghreb** ('land of the setting sun'), a region located in northern Africa and the western part of the Arab world corresponding to the **Arab-Berber cultural area** that lies between the Mediterranean Sea, the Sahel belt and Egypt (Map 3). In 1989 an attempt to bring about political and economic integration was initiated with the creation of the **Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)**.

Map 3: Maghreb



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Climate change

Like the rest of the Sahel region, Mauritania is part of the group of countries that have not contributed significantly to global CO₂ emissions, but will be hit very hard by the consequences. Rising temperatures in the Sahel will have devastating consequences if action is not taken.

Built in the 1950s to house 8 000 people, the city of **Nouakchott** now has over **one million inhabitants**. A combination of rising sea levels, the erosion of coastal areas, the destruction of mangrove swamps and flooding means that more than 80 % of the city could be under water within 10 to 20 years.

Oceanography

Order No 88/120 of 1988 defines the territorial waters, contiguous zone and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Mauritania. Mauritania's EEZ is bordered to the north by the waters of Western Sahara at Ras Nouadhibou (latitude 20° 36' N); to the south by the EEZ of Senegal (parallel 16° 04' N); and to the west by the EEZ of Cape Verde. These limits have not been contested. Mauritania's **EEZ** therefore covers an area of **234 000 km²**, of which around **16 % corresponds to the continental shelf**.

Between Ras Nouadhibou and Cap Timiris, the continental shelf extends 80 miles from the coast, whereas to the south it only extends 30 miles.

The **39 000 km²** continental shelf offers a *great diversity* of fishery resources. Approximately 600 species have been identified, 200 of which can be commercially exploited.

The Mauritanian waters are *highly productive* because they are very rich in fishery resources due to nutrients carried by the **Canary Current** and cold water upwelling.

Productivity varies over the course of the year. It is generally higher in May and June, and particularly in October and November. It remains at a higher and more constant level in the northern zone, from *Ras Nouadhibou* to *Cap Timiris*.

Other currents, such as the *Guinea Current*, are weaker than the Canary Current. However, they have an important role to play in the upwelling of water from the seabed. These upwellings are very important in terms of the productivity of Mauritanian waters and the abundance of the main target species. The offshore winds also have a considerable impact in terms of the intensity of the upwellings. As a result, there are significant **seasonal and year-to-year variations**, caused by the strength of the offshore winds, although the ocean currents also play a crucial role.

In Mauritania there are four Marine Protected Areas. Two of these, the **Banc d'Arguin National Park** and **Ras Nouadhibou**, are situated in the north on the coast, whereas Chat Tboul and Diawling are in the south, close to the border with Senegal.

Table 1: Marine Protected Areas

Designation of the Area	Type	Date of designation	Total surface area in km ²	Marine surface area in km ²	IUCN Category
Banc d'Arguin	National Park	24 June 1976	12 075	6 245	II
	Wetland (Ramsar Convention)	22 October 1982	11 730	6 000	VI
	World Heritage ²	1 January 1989	12 000	600	VI
Ras Nouadhibou	Satellite Reserve	2 April 1986	2 100	1 680	
Chat Tboul	Wetland (Ramsar Convention)	10 November 2000	155		
Diawling	National Park	1 January 1990	130		II

The **Banc d'Arguin National Park** (PNBA) is the main marine protected area in Mauritania. It has a high level of protection, and entry into the park is restricted, except for the hundred or so inhabitants of the **Imraguen tribe** and the transit of caravans.

The PNBA was created in 1976 to protect a breeding **area for endemic and migratory bird species**. At that time, protection of the marine ecosystems was not included. The PNBA has enabled the continued fishing activity of the Imraguen, who fish for *grey mullet* by standing in the water and interacting with dolphins.

The Fisheries Partnership Agreement signed between the European Community and Mauritania in 2006 provides that, from the total financial contribution paid by the European Union, **EUR 1 million** per year must be used for the Banc d'Arguin National Park. **Diawling National Park** consists of wetland areas in the Senegal River delta. The alternating freshwater and seawater encourages huge biodiversity, and plays an important role in the reproduction of fish in the Senegal River.

1.2 Population

Mauritania had an estimated population of over **3.5 million inhabitants** in 2013, with high annual demographic **growth** of **2.77 %**. In 2017, 61 % of the population lived in urban areas. At **3.4 inhabitants per km²**, population density is very low. Life expectancy is 63 years.

As the country is largely made up of desert, most of the population is concentrated in the south, where average precipitation is slightly higher. On the Atlantic coast, the capital *Nouakchott* is home to *one third* of the population.

Mauritanians share the same religion, **Islam**, but are divided into **three distinct ethnocultural groups**.

The Arab-Berber **Bidhan** (meaning 'white' or 'light skinned') constitute less than one third of the country's population, but dominate economically and politically. The **Haratin**, the largest group in the country, is made up of descendants of black Africans enslaved by the Bidhan. The **West Africans or Black Mauritians** make up the third group in the country. Slavery was abolished in **1981** and in **2007** prison sentences of five to six years were introduced to punish any form of slavery.

The Bidhan are the descendants of Arab tribes that migrated from the Arabian Peninsula and settled in northwest Africa. They intermingled with and asserted their linguistic and cultural hegemony over the **indigenous Berber** groups, and converted them to Islam. The new societies that emerged from this encounter engaged in commerce with their black neighbours to the south, but also led to wars of enslavement. The society that these groups established is highly hierarchical and tribal. The Bidhan of Mauritania are organised into around **150 different tribes** that are linked by a complex web of social relations, based on solidarities, alliances and rivalries that have helped them to remain a dominant force in all aspects of political and economic life in Mauritania.

The capital is Nouakchott, but a large part of the economic activity is concentrated in **Nouadhibou**.

Both cities are located on the Atlantic coast. In the country's interior, the main cities are Tidjikja, Atar and Chinguetti. The official language is **Arabic**, although other languages are also spoken. Fula, Soninké and Wolof are recognised as national languages. A large part of the population also speaks French.

Administratively, Mauritania is divided into **12 regions**, which are subdivided into **52 departments** (*moughataa*). The capital, Nouakchott, also has its own district (Map 4).

Map 4: Administrative set-up of Mauritania

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1.3 Political situation

After a period of political instability, with coups d'état in August 2005 and August 2008, the country has had a period of political stability, allowing the **June 2014 presidential elections** to take place peacefully and confirming the victory of Mr Aziz. The next presidential elections are scheduled for 2019.

Regionally, Mauritania is less integrated than several of its neighbours. Mauritania is not a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and left the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 2000. These decisions reflect the **Arab identity** of the ruling elite of the country, but whether this really serves its economic interests is questionable. Mauritania recently joined the **G5 Sahel**, which has helped to address its relatively isolated position in the region.

The G5 Sahel is an institutional framework for regional coordination and cooperation on development policies and security questions in **central Africa**. It was formed on 16 February 2014 in Nouakchott, Mauritania, at a summit of five Sahel countries: **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger**. It adopted an establishment agreement on 19 December **2014** and sits on a permanent basis in Mauritania. The G5 Sahel's aim is to strengthen the link between economic development and security and to come together to combat the threat of jihadist organisations in the region. Mauritania is **an important ally** for the European Union in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel region.

1.4 Economic Situation

Since the beginning of the current decade, Mauritania has been in a situation of financial and political instability. Even before 2000, the effects of repeated droughts and efforts to reduce poverty and improve basic services led to a huge increase in external debt, and Mauritania was classified as a **Heavily Indebted Poor Country** (HIPC).

According to the African Development Bank (AfDB), Mauritania's economy saw a **3.1 % growth in GDP in 2015**, down from 6.6 % in 2014. This decrease was mainly due to the drop in the world market price of **iron ore**, the country's main export article. Moreover, a reduction in mining production of more than 10 % slowed overall economic activity in 2015.

Macroeconomic data showed that **inflation** was down from 3.5 % in 2014 to **1.5 % in 2015** and the fiscal stance remains viable thanks to maintenance of the **deficit** at a reasonable **2.9 % of GDP**. At the end of 2015, official foreign exchange reserves were estimated at **USD 809 million**, or the equivalent of 5.5 months of imports. There are also some signs of *poverty* reduction, with poverty rates falling from 42 % in 2008 to **31 % in 2014**. The first Millennium Development Goal, which was supposed to reduce the poverty rate to 28 % by the end of 2015, was not reached, and despite the relatively low *unemployment rate* (**12.8 % in 2014**), the labour market remains highly precarious and informal, with a vulnerable employment rate of 55 % (see AfDB, 2015).

Since the 1990s, Mauritania's exports have been concentrated in the **mining** and **fisheries** sectors, which on average accounted for four-fifths of total exports between 1990 and 2000. Since then, apart from the appearance of **crude oil**, diversification has not increased. In fact, exports have become even more concentrated, with **iron ore** representing **more than 50 %** of total **exports** (World Bank, 2016).

The country's gross national income (**GNI**) amounts to **USD 1 270 per capita** (World Bank, 2016). This is mainly based on the country's wealth of natural resources. Mauritania is one of Africa's leading exporters of iron ore and also exports *gold* and *copper*. It is one of the latest countries in Africa to start producing **oil**, and possesses considerable **offshore natural gas** deposits.

Its **coastal waters and ocean territory** also have some of the most abundant fish stocks in the world. This is reflected in **the fishery sector**, a crucial sector for the Mauritanian economy in terms of its contribution to GDP, exports, income for the national budget and job creation. However, catches made by the Mauritanian fleet are very limited compared to those made by fleets from other countries, which have access to the fishery resources of the Mauritanian EEZ under fisheries agreements or fleet licences.

Despite some years of economic growth, Mauritania's **poverty rate** has remained high, particularly in rural areas due to low productivity in the farming sector. As a consequence, Mauritania ranks **156th of 188 countries** in the United Nations Human Development Index.

Most people are employed either in the agricultural or fishery sectors, which represent an under-utilised source of jobs. **Climate change** is a threat to Mauritania's human development and security.

2. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EU AND MAURITANIA

The European Development Fund (**EDF**) is the main financial tool in economic relations between the EU and Mauritania under the Cotonou Agreement. Each EDF is agreed for several years; the current agreement, the 11th EDF, covers the **2014-2020 period**. The total amount of EU allocations to Mauritania amounted to **EUR 195 million** for the 11th EDF.

Above and beyond the EDF, other projects are financed from other sources in the EU. Financing is also provided for projects by several **Member States** under their *international cooperation policy*.

Fishing

The current EU-Mauritania fishing protocol is an example of cooperation that is beneficial to both parties. After long negotiations, the new protocol was adopted in **July 2015**. It builds on the *first fisheries agreement*, concluded between the EU and Mauritania in 1987 as part of the arrangements concluded with Mauritania by Portugal and Spain before their accession.

This arrangement was reshaped as a *cooperation agreement* in 1996 before it became a fisheries *partnership agreement* in 2006, renewable for six-year periods, with the current period covering four years and expiring on 15 November 2019. Unlike most fisheries partnership agreements between the EU and third parties, which focus on tuna, the agreement between the EU and Mauritania provides access to a wide range of fish species. The protocol defines the fishing possibilities for EU vessels in Mauritanian waters and the financial contribution to be paid by the EU.

The EU-Mauritania fisheries agreement is the most expensive EU fisheries protocol, with an EU financial contribution of **EUR 59.125 million per year**, of which EUR 4.125 million provides support for the development of the Mauritanian fishery sector.

In addition, around **EUR 60 million** is paid in fees by shipowners for licences. Under this protocol, the European fleet is allowed a catch of **261 500 tonnes** of non-tuna species each year for up to **58 vessels**. **Spain** is allocated the majority of the *shrimp* quota and the entire allowed catch of *demersal* fish, including the *black hake* quota. **Italy and Portugal** hold the remaining *shrimp* quota. *Small pelagic fish*, which constitute the bulk of the total catch volume, are allocated mainly to the **Netherlands, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland**, with the rest distributed between **Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland and France**. The protocol also provides for *tuna* fishing possibilities for up to **40 vessels** from Spain and France. For this quota, the reference tonnage is **20 000 tonnes** per year. The protocol also includes measures to increase **transparency**.

In 2016, the European Parliament voted for the fisheries agreement with Mauritania to serve as an example of transparency and enforcement. The relevant provisions included in the protocol in force provide for the **publication** of *all agreements with States or private entities* granting access to foreign vessels in the Mauritanian economic exclusion zone. Mauritania is therefore required to make public any agreement granting foreign vessels access to its waters. The protocol also grants the EU fleet priority access to available surpluses.

The new protocol has been welcomed within the EU, but there could be some stumbling blocks when the agreement is up for *renewal in 2019*. One such issue is the part of the agreement that stipulates that the EU fleets fishing in Mauritanian waters are required to *land all their catches in Mauritania*.

This provision is important for Mauritania, but it has also been argued that it has an adverse effect on employment in the Canary Islands' port of Las Palmas, with the argument that the *outermost regions* should benefit from fisheries partnership agreements with countries in their region.

3. THE MAURITANIAN FISHERIES SECTOR

3.1 Fishing activity

Fishing is very important to the Mauritanian economy. It accounts for between **4 % and 10 % of GDP**, depending on the year, and between 35 % and 50 % of Mauritanian exports. According to IMROP, fishing accounted for **6 %** of GDP in **2013**. It also provides 29 % of the income for the national budget. The bulk of the contribution to the Mauritanian budget comes from cephalopods (46 %), crustaceans (30 %) and small pelagic species (15 %). Other fishery products contribute to a lesser extent. This is the case with hake (7 %) and demersal species and tunas (2 %).

Fishing also generates around **55 000 direct and indirect jobs (2013/2014)**. This represents 40 % of jobs. It is estimated that 31 % of these jobs are generated by small-scale fishing, and 12 % by industrial fishing. The majority of jobs are on land, with 3 % in other secondary activities.

Despite its importance to the Mauritanian economy, the fisheries sector is relatively undeveloped. This is partly due to the lack of maritime tradition and the remoteness of Nouadhibou, which used to be the only landing point for the industrial fleet.

Catches in the Mauritanian EEZ totalled **800 000 tonnes in 2014** and **2015**. Total catches by the **4 000 national vessels** of the industrial and small-scale fishing fleets were 363 000 tonnes in 2014 and **389 000 tonnes in 2015**. Catches made by the Mauritanian fleet therefore remain limited. The remaining volumes of catches are by long-distance fleets or boats that have access through the open licence regime (*EU, Russia, Ukraine, China*).

Small pelagic species account for **90 %** of the **catch** volume of the Mauritanian fleet but just a little more than 40 % of the value of landings. Demersal species account for just over 20 % of the value of catches, and cephalopods around 30 % (mainly octopus), whereas crustaceans only account for 10 % of the value.

The **Mauritanian fishing fleet** is split into two distinct parts: the industrial fleet and the small-scale fleet. Although 90 % of the catch is made by the industrial fleet, its impact on job creation and added value is limited.

The **industrial** fleet is focused on bottom fishing: octopus, crustaceans and other demersal species. It consists of 140 vessels, of which 94 are freezer vessels, and 10 are involved in fishing for crustaceans. The Mauritanian fleet also includes 46 freezer trawlers. The Mauritanian industrial fleet is not involved in pelagic fishing.

Non-industrial fishing can be divided into two parts: **small-scale and inshore** fishing. The vessels involved in **small-scale fishing** are uncovered and can be up to 14 metres in length, and their tonnage ranges between one and five tonnes of gross registered tonnage (GRT). They use manual gear or purse seines.

The vessels involved in **inshore fishing** may or may not be covered and are *up to 26 metres* in length. They do not use trawls or drag nets and do not have freezing facilities. As a general rule, the inshore and small-scale fleets operate in waters *less than 20 metres deep and less than six miles from the coast*. These fleets have expanded considerably: in 1986 there were only 500 vessels, whereas in 2007 there were **4 200**. It is estimated that 3 200 vessels are currently operational. Of those, 110 are **sailing vessels** that operate in the vicinity of the Banc d'Arguin.

In general, the smaller craft have **outboard engines**. Half of the vessels in the inshore and small-scale fleets have wooden hulls. The other half have a hull made of materials such as polyester, aluminium or steel. IMROP estimates that around **62 % of the catch** of the small-scale fleet is landed in Nouadhibou and **35 %** in Nouakchott. Another **2 %** is landed in Banc d'Arguin by the Imraguen.

The **fish processing industry** is underdeveloped and under-utilised.

Some facilities are out of date and still have sanitation issues. There are around 80 processing facilities, mainly involved in storage and freezing. Of those, 66 have been recognised as complying with European Union standards. However, the number of compliant facilities that are currently operational is closer to **50**. Their freezing capacity is around 700 tonnes/day, but the usage rate is low, at around 30 %. The most recently constructed processing facilities turn out products with a high degree of preparation, such as tinned sardines, mackerel and tuna, and prepared food.

Mauritania only has two fishing ports, at **Nouakchott and Nouadhibou**. The port of Nouadhibou has better infrastructure, deals with more fishing activity and has an area reserved for the small-scale fleet. All the catches of the industrial fleet are sold there, together with 20 % of those of the inshore and small-scale fleets. It is the main centre for the export of **frozen and refrigerated fish**. However, Nouakchott does not have a fishing port, properly speaking: fishing activity is based at the fish market, in a landing area to the north of the port. A high percentage of fresh fish exports is sent from Nouakchott. **Some 20 %** of the catches of the inshore and small-scale fleets are sold there.

The lack of port infrastructure limits landing opportunities and the irregularity and inadequacy of air transport hinders exports, although **fresh products are exported** from Nouadhibou by air to the Iberian peninsula. Most of the **exports** are handled by the *Société Mauritanienne de Commercialisation des Produits de Pêche* (SMCP), which has a monopoly on frozen products. Most of the exports are of **frozen octopus**, which are sent to the **Japanese market**, which offers higher prices than the European market. The export value of fishery products was estimated at **USD 380 million in 2014**.

There is also a very advanced plan for a development pole with a small-scale fishing port at **Tanit**, around 70 km north of Nouakchott.

3.2 Consumption of fishery products

The consumption of fishery products in Mauritania is very limited. Average consumption per inhabitant is estimated at **8 to 10 kg/year**, rising to 20 kg/year in urban coastal areas. Demand for fish has not increased despite the fall in livestock production and the rural exodus to the coastal areas as a result of droughts. This is due to the lack of a tradition of consuming fish, limited purchasing power, and the fact that people have not learned how to conserve and prepare fish.

Three years after coming into existence, the **Société Nationale de Distribution du Poisson** (SNDP - National Fish Distribution Company) has assumed a role as a structure **enhancing public solidarity** through its positive contributions to food security policy. Launched to continue the work of informal organisations of fish sellers, the SNDP has extended its networks to consumers located throughout the territory. It has strengthened refrigeration infrastructure and improved fish distribution operations in a transparent and equitable fashion, adding value to the product. The SNDP has worked in close cooperation with the Spanish cooperation authorities.

3.3 Fisheries management

3.3.1 Institutional framework

Mauritanian fisheries come under the regulatory authority of a ministerial department. The Ministry of **Fisheries and the Maritime Economy (MPEM)** has the overall remit of designing, coordinating, promoting and monitoring the implementation of government policy in the *areas of fishing, oceanography, the merchant navy and maritime training*. It is the competent **national authority** for monitoring the quality, hygiene and sanitation of establishments, products and fishing production areas. The laws and regulations pertaining to fishing are contained in the **Fisheries Code of 29 July 2015** and the decree implementing the legislation.

This ministerial department is responsible for the development and use of living marine resources, and brackish and inland waters. The conservation, preservation and exploitation of fishing resources are an integral part of its remit. The same is true for research into fisheries-related activities, oceanography, aquaculture, the social economics of fisheries and related activities. Monitoring and surveillance of fisheries in the waters under national jurisdiction also fall under the authority of this ministry.

3.3.2 Fisheries policy

Mauritania began to develop its fisheries policy in 1979. Since then, there have been **six phases**: 1979 to 1987, 1994 to 1998, 2001 to 2005, 2006 to 2008, 2008 to 2015 and finally 2015 to 2019. All six phases have had three objectives in common: **sustainable conservation of marine resources; integration of fishing into the economy to maximise jobs; and added value.**

This policy led to a strengthening of the management system, the marketing of a maximum of catches in Mauritania, the promotion of a *small-scale national fleet* to supply onshore industries and the creation of *public-private companies* with foreign partners. It was accompanied by the suspension of licences for foreign vessels.

From 1992 import duties were replaced by an access fee and licences were once again granted to foreign vessels.

In 1996 a change was introduced with the integration of the fisheries policy into other programmes, such as the *Strategic Framework for the Fight against Poverty* and the *integrated management of the coastline*. Technical measures were also put into place. In addition, the **increased distance from the coast** of the authorised zones for **industrial fishing**, with the waters **less than 20 metres deep being reserved for small-scale fishing**, has allowed the small-scale fleet to become more and more profitable since 2002.

Traditionally, the management system in Mauritania has been based on **controlling fishing effort** through a **system of licences** and by applying **technical measures**. This system has not kept the overexploitation of resources under control. The **technical measures** have gradually developed. These include the introduction of **biological recovery periods**, resulting in a reduction in fishing effort. In 1991 a two month biological recovery period was introduced for August and September, to which an additional month, May, was added from 2004. In addition, since 1998 the **fishing effort for demersal species has been frozen** and a **minimum mesh of 70 millimetres for bottom trawling** has been set. Furthermore, a ban on trawling, particularly at depths of less than 20 metres, has been introduced to protect breeding areas. Finally, **minimum catch sizes** have been set.

Fishing effort is controlled and fishing opportunities granted by means of a licence system. The licences are generally annual, and an access fee must be paid to obtain a licence.

For *pelagic fishing*, a total allowable catch (TAC) system was already being used. TACs are set every five years by assessment groups set up by the *Institut Mauritanien de Recherches Océanographiques et des Pêches* (IMROP). Management plans for *cephalopods* and for small-scale and inshore fishing have been adopted. These involve managing capacity through *fishing effort*.

In order to adopt a management system that prevents the *overexploitation of resources*, the Mauritanian authorities have moved from a licence-based system to a **system of transferable quotas** based on scientific assessments.

The government has thus put into place the Strategy for the Management and Sustainable Development of the Fisheries Sector and the Maritime Economy, which contains the **2015-2019** action plan and targets six strategic objectives:

1. Improving understanding of fishery resources and their environment
2. Optimising the management of resources
3. Strengthening the integration of the sector with the national economy
4. Promoting inland fishing and aquaculture
5. Developing business
6. Strengthening governance

This new national management strategy implements a profound reform of the management system through the introduction of *quotas for fisheries management*. The legal and regulatory basis for this is the new fisheries code of 2015 and its implementing legislation.

The new system for the management of fisheries resources is based on fishery development plans. To this effect, it provides for two operating schemes:

- **national scheme**
- **international scheme**

The *national scheme* regulates access to fishing by means of **quotas** granted as part of the allocation of **rights of use** to legal or natural persons, on the basis of inland or offshore investment. Operation of a quota is subject to the payment of an access fee for the resource, which includes a direct access fee, a fixed fee and a licence fee. This fee takes into account the value of the product. Access to the resources under the *international scheme* is provided under agreements or conventions with third-party states or private entities.

4. EU-MAURITANIA FISHING AGREEMENT

4.1 2015-2019 Protocol

The evolution of the 1987 fisheries agreement into the partnership agreement of 2006 has resulted in the strengthening of aspects related to the conservation of fisheries resources, contribution to development, the development of a fisheries policy, scientific and technical assistance, and business cooperation.

Under successive agreements, fishing opportunities have been reduced, but the financial contributions and fees to be paid by shipowners have increased. The EU-Mauritania agreement is hugely important, particularly for trawlers fishing for cephalopods and crustaceans, as they have no alternative fishing grounds except for Guinea-Bissau. Most of the EU vessels operating in Mauritanian waters are *Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, French, German, Latvian, Lithuanian, Dutch, Polish, British and Irish*.

In some fishing categories, only a small proportion of opportunities are being used, due to problems relating to technical measures, high fees and the issue of boarding of vessels.

The authorised **fishing zones** have gradually been moved further away from the coast. This is not only to encourage the development of the small-scale fleet, by reserving an exclusive zone for it and reducing interactions with the industrial fleet, but also to reduce fishing for *octopus*.

Although the **technical measures** have gradually been clarified in successive agreements, they still create problems in terms of discriminatory treatment for the European Union fleets.

The agreement provides for **transshipments** of catches and landings in Community ports. It also provides for boarding by **Mauritanian crew and observers** on Community vessels.

To ensure the correct application of the agreement, two bodies have been set up: the **Joint Committee (JC)** and the Independent **Joint Scientific Committee (JSC)**.

This committee, bringing together scientists from both parties, is a *consultative body* of the Joint Committee, tasked with monitoring the fish stock levels under this agreement and more generally issuing scientific opinions on the basis of the best available information, with a view to sustainably managing these resources. To this end, the JSC holds at least one ordinary meeting a year.

4.2 Development of fisheries

The main outcomes of the eighth JSC meeting, which was held in **Nouakchott** in September **2016**, and the ninth meeting, held in **Santa Cruz de Tenerife** in October **2017**, are referred to below. The protocol in force for the 2015-2019 period lays down the fishing opportunities for the eight categories set out in Table 2.

The current protocol sets out fishing opportunities, defined as catch limits. These limits, applied in the **demersal fisheries**, allow catches of **14 000 tonnes per year**, including 5 000 tonnes for trawlers fishing for *shrimp* (Category 1), 6 000 tonnes for trawlers and *bottom longliners* fishing for hake (Category 2) and 3 000 tonnes for longliners fishing for other demersal species (Category 3). These possibilities were **revised upwards** by the Joint Committee at the meeting of 15 and 16 November 2016 through the creation of **Category 2a (freezer trawlers** fishing for **black hake**). These changes allocate 3 500 tonnes of black hake to this new category, as

well as 1 450 tonnes of squid and 600 tonnes of cuttlefish as secondary target species, which takes the level of *total annual catches* of authorised demersal species to **19 550 tonnes**.

Table 2: Categories of fisheries and EU codes

N°	Catégories UE	Espèces	Engins
1	MRT_CRU	Crustacés, exceptés langouste et crabes	Chalut
2	MRT_HKM	Merlu noir	Chalut et palangre de fond
3	MRT_NTO_DEM	Démersaux autres que le merlu noir	Autres que le chalut
4	MRT_SP	Thonidés	Senne
5	MRT_LP	Thonidés	Canne et Palangre
6	MRT_PEL_Congelé	Petits pélagiques	Chalut (pêche congélatrice)
7	MRT_PEL_Frais	Petits pélagiques	Chalut (pêche fraîche)
8	MRT_CEPH	Céphalopodes	Chalut

An annual reference tonnage of **20 000 tonnes** for the resources of **highly migratory species** (tuna, tuna-like species and related species) is shared between seine net fishing (12 500 tonnes, Category 4) and hook fishing (rod and line – 7 500 tonnes, Category 5).

Finally, an annual reference tonnage of **225 000 tonnes** is allocated for **freezer trawlers** targeting **small pelagic species** (Categories 6 and 7), of which 15 000 tonnes can be reserved for wet fish vessels without a reference tonnage excess of more than 10 % being permitted (Category 6).

As with the previous protocol, **no fishing opportunities** are currently available for European trawlers in Category 8 (**cephalopods**). The category is still provided for under the protocol, but potential catches are exclusively reserved for Mauritanian national fleets without any surplus in excess of the potential MSY accessible to fleets flying a foreign flag, including those of EU Member States.

The number of vessels present, the allowable effort and the catches made in the fishery categories in *2014 and 2015 are difficult to analyse*. These two pivotal years between the 2012-2014 and 2015-2019 protocols were above all marked by interruptions in access to the Mauritanian fishery zone for ships flying the EU flag.

The JSC analyses the data **for the whole of 2016** and, where available, for the **first half of 2017**.

Fishing opportunities authorised since 2008 are given in terms of maximum catches (tonnes/year, Table 3), allowable effort (kW/month, Table 4) and quantities produced (in tonnes of live weight equivalent, Table 5). Table 3.1 also shows the usage rates (%) in 2014 (partial year, see above) for the 2012-2014 protocol as well as the potential catches in the protocol underway and their use rates in 2016 and the first half of 2017.

Shown by category for the **demersal fisheries** (Figure 1. top and Table 3.2), the allowable effort and landings for 2016 and 2017 (1st quarter) are similar to those for 2013 to 2015. In particular, the **lack** of opportunities for **Category 8 (cephalopods)** and **crabs from 2012** should be noted.

Table 3: Allowable catches (tonnage and maximum live weight) and rates of use by EU vessels

Catégories	Espèces	Engins	t max /an 2012-2014	Utilisation 2014*	t max /an 2015-2019	Utilisation 2016	Utilisation 2017*
1 MRT_CRU	Crustacés, exceptés langouste et crabes	Chalut	5 000	35%	5 000	19%	12%
2 MRT_HKM	Merlus noirs	Chalut et palangre de fond	4 000	76%	6 000	101%	57%
2 bis (2017)	Merlus noirs	Chalut (pêche congélatrice)			3 500	-	
3 MRT_NTO_DEM	Démersaux autres que le merlu noir	Autres que le chalut	2 500	64%	3 000	93%	36%
4 MRT_SP	Thonidés	Senne	5 000	225%	12 500	44%	2%
5 MRT_LP	Thonidés	Canne et Palangre	10 000	22%	7 500	44%	26%
6 MRT_PEL_Congelé	Petits pélagiques	Chalut (pêche congélatrice)	300 000	73%	225 000	60%	9%
7 MRT_PEL_Frais	Petits pélagiques	Chalut (pêche fraîche)	15 000	0%	15 000	0%	0%
8 MRT_CEPH	Céphalopodes	Chalut	0	-	0	-	-

Table 4: Allowable fishing opportunities (kW) for EU vessels

Catégories	2008*	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*	2015*	2016	2017*
1 MRT_CRU	46 443	117 540	85 211	39 883	25 914	15 562	58 442	2 013	27 985	12 337
2 MRT_HKM	1 222	29 015	30 112	8 477	5 282	2 119	7 066	2 165	20 515	5 449
3 MRT_NTO_DEM	9 994	15 887	14 207	12 452	10 541	12 424	4 343	1 615	17 616	3 044
4 MRT_SP	71 650	123 684	0	240 433	248 717	683 280	353 711	0	729 585	66 674
5 MRT_LP	18 782	40 061	22 021	22 021	35 881	59 892	32 928	0	61 958	5 450
6 MRT_PEL_Congelé	267 705	1 022 325	1 214 576	1 164 137	378 323	565 670	909 396	15 596	684 750	241 710
7 MRT_PEL_Frais	4 372	0	1 788	7 542	0	5 210	0	-	-	-
8 MRT_CEPH	44 132	202 416	153 123	156 747	90 820	0	0	-	-	-

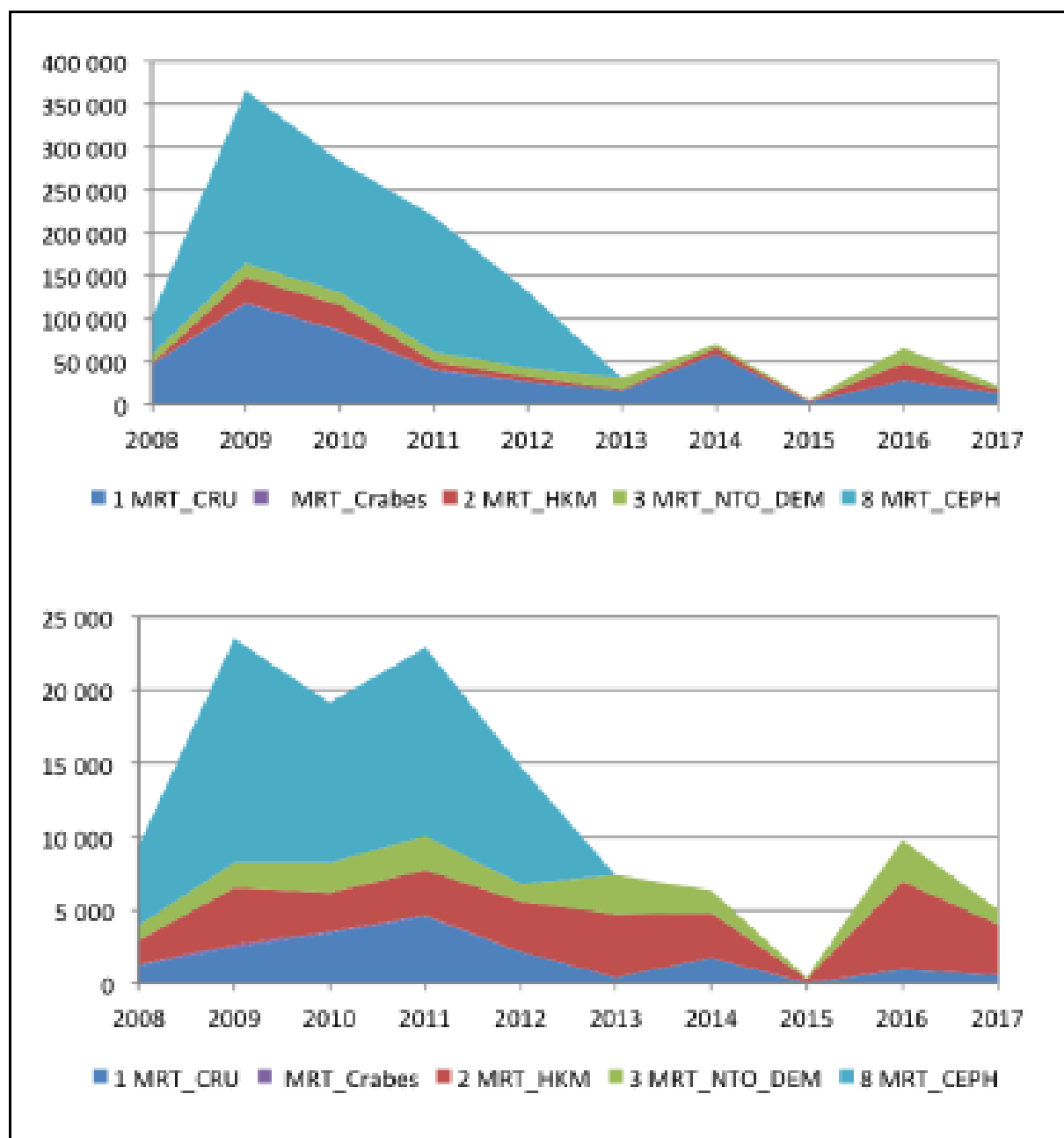
Table 5: Total landings (tonnes of live weight) by EU vessels

Catégories	2008*	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*	2015*	2016	2017*
1 MRT_CRU	(1 207)	2 458	3 404	4 512	2 108	378	1 741	86	937	581
2 MRT_HKM	1 614	3 892	2 678	3 127	3 467	4 303	3 027	246	6 032	3 434
3 MRT_NTO_DEM	1 112	1 716	2 028	2 331	1 184	2 682	1 592	63	2 788	1 075
4 MRT_SP	163	0	0	0	21 665	27 739	11 260	0	5 560	232
5 MRT_LP	2 756	6 264	8 940	10 249	9 781	5 799	2 178	0	3 288	1 939
6 MRT_PEL_Congelé	86 592	296 129	326 765	341 987	127 958	162 003	220 217	2 159	135 967	20 117
7 MRT_PEL_Frais***	1 168	0	5 590	557	0	167	0	0	-	-
8 MRT_CEPH	5 413	15 286	10 939	12 870	8 029	0	0	0	-	-

Source: European Commission

For **demersal fisheries**, the allowable effort (kW per month) in 2016 is shared in almost equal parts between Categories 1 (shrimp vessels), 2 (hake vessels) and 3 (fresh fish other than hake). Since 2013, the largest tonnages landed by the demersal fisheries (Figure 1 bottom and Table 5) are for fish, black hake (Category 2), other fish (Category 3) and then shrimp (Category 1).

Figure 1: Total allowable effort (kW per month, top) and landings (tonnes, bottom) for the demersal categories (1 to 3 and 8) 2008-2017

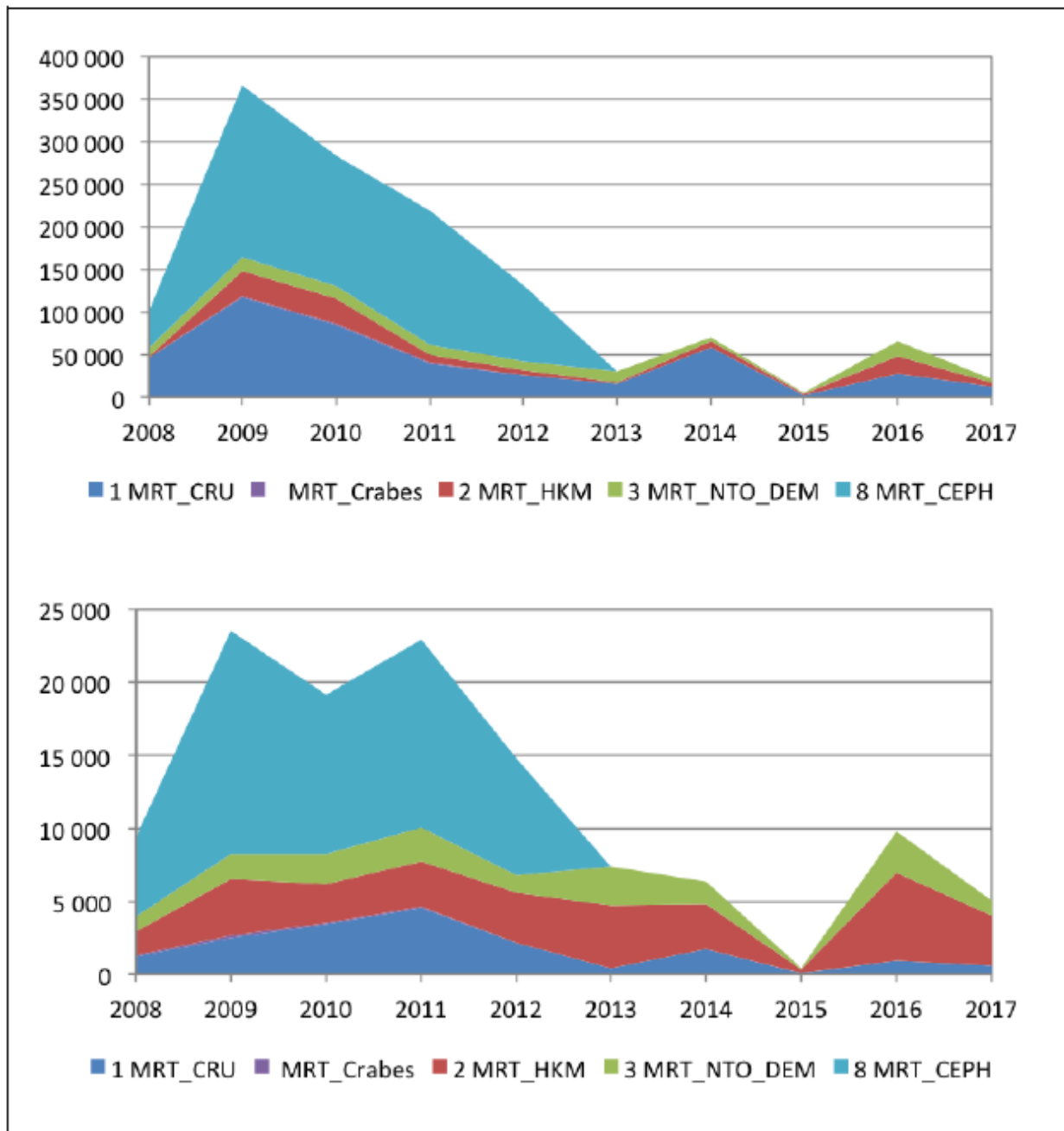


Sources: Data on fishing capacities and catches - European Commission

The authorised capacities (Figure 2) and the tonnages landed of **small pelagic** species are essentially from large freezer trawlers fishing for small pelagic species (Category 6). However, totals in this category as well as its production fell in 2012 following a change in the zoning. Note also the lack of **wet fish** in small pelagic species (Category 7) since 2013 (Table 3.1).

If the interruptions in access to certain fisheries in 2008, 2014 and 2015, and the data for 2017, which are only reported for the first half of the year, are taken into account for **highly migratory species**, an increase in the allowable effort for EU seiners (_SP) can be seen in the Mauritanian fishing zone in 2013 and 2016 (Category 4, Figure 2 top). As already noted last year (JSC, 2016), this increase is thought to correspond to a change in fishing strategies of part of the EU tuna fleet, which is reported to be spending considerably more time in the tuna fisheries off Mauritania, Senegal and Cape Verde.

Figure 2: Total allowable effort (kW per month, top) and landings (tonnes) for pelagic categories (4 to 7) 2008-2017



Sources: Data on fishing capacities and catches - European Commission

In 2014, seiner catches (Category 4, Figure 2 bottom and Table 3.3) exceeded the limits of allowable catches, set at 12 500 tonnes/year in the new protocol from 2015-2019 (Table 3.1). These multiyear variations in the availability of the resource in the Mauritanian fishing zone have doubtless had an impact on fishing strategies.

Protocol revised in March 2017

Some of the terms of the 2015-2019 protocol were approved by the European Commission, in Decision (EU) 2017/451 of 14 March 2017. This decision followed an extraordinary meeting of the Joint Committee held in Nouakchott on 15 and 16 November 2016, to adopt amendments to the fishing opportunities and the applicable conditions for fishing activities, as well as the financial contribution, taking into account the EU's request to create a new fishing category for freezer trawlers fishing for black hake. **Category 2a** allocates EU freezer trawlers fishing for *black hake* as 'main target species', a potential of **3 500 tonnes** (Table 3.1.), as well as **1 450 tonnes** of *squid* and **600 tonnes** of *cuttlefish* as secondary target species.

4.3 Environmental data

The Mauritanian waters are characterised by a very dynamic marine ecosystem, resulting from significant large scale variability in upwelling on the northwest African coast, which is very exposed to changes in climatic conditions.

The 2016 EU-Mauritania Joint Scientific Committee recommendations highlighted the interest of research projects on the analysis of the link that may exist between *environmental conditions*, such as hydrological parameters, and the population trends of certain fish stocks such as shrimp and small pelagic species.

4.4 JSC recommendations 2017

The JSC has reviewed the recommendations in the 2016 report and has established new recommendations for each fishery category on the basis of analyses and discussions that took place during the meeting.

Description and specific recommendations by category

4.4.1. Shrimp fisheries (Category 1)

Description

The protocol in force provides for a maximum of 5 000 tonnes allocated to EU vessels in the Mauritanian fishing zone for this category. The activity zone for these vessels authorised to fish in Category 1 is defined under the protocol. During the period 2013 to 2016 and the first half of 2017, EU vessels were the only foreign vessels granted access to the Mauritanian fishing zone in this category. All these vessels were Spanish. In 2016, only six of the eight licences granted were used. In 2017, the same six vessels licensed to fish for shrimp were in operation in Mauritania.

During the same period, two vessels flying the Mauritanian flag also carried out this activity.

JSC recommendations

In view of the available data on the state of stocks, fishing strategies and the current state of the fishery, it is **not recommended** that the **catch limit set in the 2015-2019 protocol be modified**.

Other actions to be undertaken:

- Analyse the specific composition of **total** catches made by the EU shrimp fleet in the Mauritanian fishing zone, catches kept on board for subsequent landings, as well as any **discards**.

- Analysis of the existing **on-board observer** data covering the years 2010 and 2014, and *harmonisation* of the data collection strategies between the two parties through the definition of a **joint protocol** on the carrying of observers on board and the analysis of data.
- Research projects to analyse the potential relationship between *environmental conditions and the state of shrimp populations* in the Mauritanian fishing zone, which are of interest both for the assessment of stocks and to define management measures.

4.4.2. Black hake fisheries (Category 2)

Description

This category authorises the fishing of two species of hake found in Mauritania. They are *Merluccius senegalensis* and *Merluccius polli*, which are sold under the generic name of black hake. The EU **wet fish trawler** fleet flying the Spanish flag in the largest size categories over the 2013-2017 period shows that *M. polli* makes up more than 90 % of production from the Spanish hake vessels.

In accordance with the technical measures provided for Category 2, the fishing of black hake is limited to '**black hake (non-freezer) trawlers**' and '**bottom longliners**'. The mesh size of the fishing gear authorised for trawls is 70 mm, and doubling the codend is prohibited. Total allowable catches for hake were fixed at **6 000 tonnes** per year for EU fleets, with a maximum percentage in weight of *by-catches* of **50 % of various fish species** for longliners and **25 %** for trawlers. By-catches of cephalopods and crustaceans are prohibited. The production of vessels carrying out this type of fishing must be kept fresh as freezing on board is prohibited. The number of **vessels** allowed to fish at the same time is **limited to six**, but during the current Fishing Agreement only three trawlers, flying the Spanish flag, have used the licences in this category each year, corresponding to an average **use** rate of **50 %** of fishing possibilities. **Bottom longliners** have not been used since 2009. During the previous fishing agreements (from 2008 to 2014) and currently, EU fishing vessels are the only vessels authorised to fish for black hake in the Mauritanian fishing zone.

Moreover, in 2017 the fishing possibilities provided for under the 2015-2019 protocol were **revised upwards**, with **3 500 additional tonnes** of black hake granted to EU freezer trawlers fishing for black hake (**Category 2a**) under the same conditions as the wet fish segment, in particular in terms of meshes and zones. Moreover, this new fleet benefits from a specific licence that allows it to fish for and land **squid and cuttlefish** (1 450 and 600 tonnes respectively) as '**secondary target species**'.

JSC recommendations

In view of the state of black hake stocks in the sub-region, an **increase in effort** and **catches cannot be envisaged** in the fisheries developed on this resource in Mauritania.

Other actions to be undertaken:

- Close monitoring of the pelagic fishery (observations at sea and sampling of landings) in order to provide more detail on its impact on stocks of black hake, catches of which are much higher than those of the hake fleet.
- Development and implementation of a **sampling protocol** allowing catches of the two species of black hake to be differentiated, to provide a *separate assessment* for each of the two stocks.

- Derogation on by-catches for the whole black hake trawler fleet, namely **redefining Category 2 to include 2a**, in view of the authorisation of a new *category – 2a* (since the second half of 2017) for *freezer trawlers fishing for black hake* with a derogation for cephalopod fishing, but in the same fishing zone and with the same mesh sizes as wet trawlers.
- Analysis and assessment of cephalopod catches made by the two black hake trawler fleets to define **common conditions** in the technical specifications.
- Research and analysis of the impact of **environmental variability** on black hake stocks in Mauritanian waters and in the sub-region.

4.4.3. Fishing for cephalopods by hake freezer trawlers (Category 2a)

Access to fisheries targeting mainly **cephalopods** (Category 8) is not discussed in the 2015-2019 protocol. However, in response to a request from EU fleets, a new fishing category was introduced in 2017. This category, which targets hake, has been authorised to catch cuttlefish and squid.

Since January 2016, following the implementation of the new fishing management strategy in 2015, the Mauritanian Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Economy has introduced a new management system based on a system of limiting catches (quotas).

Thus, an **overall TAC** was suggested for the three main **cephalopod species (octopus, cuttlefish and squid)**. This new management paradigm should help reduce fishing mortalities to sustainable levels. Under the new Mauritanian Maritime Fishing Code, this fishery is divided into three segments. They are *high-sea fishing* (trawlers), *coastal fishing* (mainly in pots) and *small-scale fishing* (mainly pots and longline). These segments generally catch octopus and, very rarely, cuttlefish, where pots are used.

In March 2017, a new fishing Category (**Category 2a**) was introduced for **trawlers fishing for black hake to be kept fresh** (Category 2) as part of the current protocol and taking into consideration the frozen storage of these species. This category allows a maximum of **six EU vessels** access to *1 450 tonnes of squid* and *600 tonnes of cuttlefish* as well as *3 500 tonnes of black hake*. Some EU boats involved began operating in July 2017.

Certain members of the JSC consider that these fishing possibilities (1 450 tonnes of squid and 600 tonnes of cuttlefish) will not really be used by the vessels in this new category because the *technical measures* in force in terms of zoning deprive this segment of essential elements of these two groups of species.

JSC recommendations

See those given for black hake (4.4.2)

4.4.4 Fisheries of other demersal fish (Category 3)

Description

This is demersal fishing defined for gear other than trawlers and species other than black hake.

Demersal fish are made up of coastal species of very high market value, fished by *small-scale and industrial, national and international fleets*. **Small-scale** open craft are less than 14 m long (12 m for those with decks). They are equipped with passive gear, in particular gillnets (mesh size of 120 mm) and drift nets (mesh size of 50 mm). **Coastal fishing** corresponds to 26 m

craft all working with passive gear. Generally speaking, **high-sea** fishing uses fine gillnets (120 mm mesh), fixed nets and traditional trawls for fish (70 mm mesh in the codend).

Moreover, **demersal fish** are often caught as **by-catches** in cephalopod, shrimp and hake fisheries. These fish mainly belong to the *Sparidae*, *Sciaenidae*, *Serranidae*, *Lutjanidae*, *Soleidae*, *Cynoglossidae*, etc. families. More recently, the Spanish bottom longliners have declared that they only catch *Brama brama* breem.

JSC recommendations

- Improve data collection for demersal fish by separating catches and efforts more effectively and taking **species targets or related species** into account as well as the **different fishing methods** used in the fishery.
- Do not increase fishing capacities relating to vessels fishing specifically for demersal fish other than hake, whatever the gear used, beyond the **current level** recorded in the fishery.

4.4.5 Tuna fisheries (Categories 4 and 5)

Description

The 2015-2019 protocol defines fishing possibilities and technical measures for the management of fishing activities for Categories 4 and 5, concerning **tuna seiners** and **pole and line tuna vessels and longliners**.

The EU **seiner** vessels (Category 4) fishing for tuna and tuna-like and related species which are authorised in the Mauritanian fishing zone cannot carry out their activity **more than 30 miles away** from the baseline. No more than **25 vessels** are permitted and the projected annual reference catches for the Mauritania fishing zone for EU seiners has been estimated at **12 500 tonnes**. Equally the EU **longliners** (Category 5) fishing for tuna and tuna-like and related species which are authorised in the Mauritanian fishing zone may only carry out their activity more than 30 miles away from the baseline.

However, **pole-and-line vessels**, which are also included in Category 5, are authorised **as of 15 miles** to the north of latitude 19° 21' 00" N and 12 miles south of the same latitude. Pole-and-line vessels are authorised for live-bait fishing from three miles, calculated on the basis of the baseline. The authorised gear is the trawl (mesh of 16 mm). No more than **15 vessels** are permitted and the annual reference catch level for the Mauritania fishing zone for these vessels has been set at **7 500 tonnes**.

The technical measures for conservation and any applicable catch limits for the types of vessels classified in Categories 4 and 5 of the protocol are decided on each year by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), of which the EU and Mauritania are contracting parties.

JSC recommendations

The research recommendations are common to all exploited tropical tuna stocks:

- Support the joint work of the Institute for Research and Development (IRD) and Ghanaian scientists regarding the reconstruction of historical catch series;
- Revise the historical catch series, bringing together data relating to fleets from Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and France;

- Collect and process data on fishing activities, applying the ‘directives’ on minimal specifications that have been harmonised regarding:
 - EMS (Electronic Monitoring Systems)
 - Fishing with FAD (fish aggregating devices)
 - Adopt definitions on: non-tangling and biodegradable FADs
 - Launch a management system evaluation (MSE) for stocks of tropical tuna from 2019, perhaps beginning with the bigeye tuna (BET), which could be a good ‘first’ candidate;
 - Promote a multispecies approach.

4.4.6 Small pelagic species fisheries (Categories 6 and 7)

Description

The small pelagic species targeted by pelagic trawlers in Mauritania are part of the **resources shared with several countries in the sub-region**, particularly Senegal and Gambia to the south and Morocco to the north. The assessment of these stocks is carried out by the ‘FAO working group on the assessment of small pelagic species off northwest Africa’ a CECAF working group organised under the auspices of the FAO.

Small pelagic species make up the largest part of tonnages fished in the Mauritanian zone. Out of an average of a million tonnes fished annually, **more than 98 % are from small pelagic species**. Mauritania has put in place a management policy that aims to increase the socio-economic benefits and ensure the conservation of these vulnerable resources. The development of a **national fishery** targeting small pelagic species is also one of the objectives of the different sectoral strategies.

Fishing for small pelagic species involves three main fishing segments (**small-scale, coastal and high-seas vessels**). There are four coexisting fishing strategies for small pelagic species.

A segment of small-scale fishing primarily targeting sardinellas (*Sardinella aurita* and *Sardinella maderensis*) and secondarily bonga shad (*Ethmalosa fimbriata*); a coastal fishing segment targeting sardinellas and sardines (*Sardina pilchardus*); a high-seas fishing segment targeting bluefin tuna (*Trachurus trachurus* and *Trachurus trecae*) and mackerel (*Scomber colias*) (fleet strategy known as ‘Russian’ type strategy); and a high-seas fishing segment primarily targeting sardinellas and secondarily sardines (fleet strategy known as ‘Dutch’ type strategy).

To ensure the distribution of the available fishing potential, Mauritania has applied a system of **collective and individual quotas** since 2016. The fishing agreement protocol allocates an annual quota of **225 000 tonnes** of *small pelagic species*, all species together, to EU fleets for the 2015-2019 period.

Recent developments

Since the effective application of the new fishing strategy for the 2015-2019 period, the employment of foreigners, who previously predominated on board small-scale seiners, has been stopped. At the end of 2016, all the **Senegalese fishermen** involved in small-scale fishing in Nouadhibou **returned to Senegal**. To ensure their **supply, the reduction plants** have taken on **high-capacity Turkish seiners**. These seiners began their activity in the final quarter of 2016 and supplied large catches during this quarter. In May 2017, these vessels were temporarily immobilised due to infractions, but they resumed activity in August 2017. This is why most of the reduction plants supplied by **Senegalese type canoe seiners** saw their

activity fall during 2017. With an annual quota of **10 000 tonnes of fish per reduction plant**, or more, with the exception of round sardinella, the reduction plant companies began to diversify their activities in 2016 by developing **freezer capacity**.

The **EU trawlers** that arrived in Mauritania at the beginning of 2017 came across large quantities of mackerel and sardinella juveniles. As the **minimum size** for these species in Mauritania was relatively **large**, with a low tolerance level, several EU trawlers decided to **leave the zone**. Although the Mauritanian authorities introduced a **tolerance level** of 10 % in March 2017, most of the EU vessels in the small pelagic fishery did not return to the Mauritanian fishing zone.

JSC recommendations

It is vital that data on the activities of **all the segments and all the fleets** in the Mauritanian fishing zone be supplied to the FAO working group to allow it to carry out stock assessments.

Other actions required:

- **Observers:** Oblige EU trawlers to take on board observers at the request of IMROP. The importance of having a mechanism in place allowing the effective implementation of the programme for placing observers on board all the high-seas trawlers fishing for small pelagic species, whether EU or non-EU vessels.
- **Reduction plants:** obligation to facilitate **access to the IMROP investigators** for them to carry out a representative sample of catches destined for processing.
- **Panel of Experts:** discussion of appropriate models for the assessment of stocks of sardinellas with the FAO working group. As an initial step, and **in cooperation with Senegal** in a regional project on sardinella stock identity in the fishing zones of both countries.
- **New studies** on stock identity (in particular sardinella stocks), growth and age estimation, and the effects of the environment on trends in stocks.
- **Availability of data:** characterise the environmental conditions in the Mauritanian fishing zone, as well as the relationship between changes in the environmental conditions and recruitment trends in small pelagic fish stocks.
- **Different minimum sizes for mackerel** in the SFPAs for **Morocco (20 cm)** and **Mauritania (25 cm)**. In view of the fact that the minimum size for catches in the Mauritanian fishing zone is derived from knowledge on the **lifecycle of mackerel** in the **sub-region**.
- **Anchovies:** assessment campaign to estimate available **anchovy** biomass in the Mauritanian fishing zone and assessment of the production potential of this resource.

5. The Joint Committee

Since 2006, the joint committee has taken on a key role in the proper functioning of the agreement and its functions have been set out in detail. Today it is responsible for:

- supervising the implementation, interpretation and proper functioning of the agreement, and the settlement of disputes;
- ensuring the monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the contribution provided for in the agreement to the implementation of Mauritanian fishing policy;
- providing coordination on matters of common interest in fisheries;
- constituting a forum for the amicable resolution of disputes resulting from the interpretation or application of the agreement;
- reassessing, where necessary, the level of fishing possibilities and, consequently, of the financial contribution;
- determining the practical provisions relating to administrative cooperation;
- carrying out the monitoring and evaluation of cooperation between economic agents and suggesting, where appropriate, ways and means to help promote this.

The last Joint Committee was held in Brussels in September 2017. Among the principal areas examined, the following should be noted:

Sectoral support

The goal of sectoral support in fishing agreements is to contribute to the development of the sector by **setting aside** part of the amounts generated by the agreements. The implementation of this support has helped improve performance in the sector, support institutions, improve landing conditions and product quality, render research and monitoring of fishing more effective, and so on.

The amount of sectoral support already allocated since 2008 totals **EUR 71 million**, made up of the support for 2008-2012 (65M) and 2013-2014 (6M).

One of the priorities for Mauritania for the funds for the 2015-2019 period is the completion of the construction of the **port of Tanit**, which was begun thanks to sectoral support in 2013-2014.

It should be noted that support from the EU is not limited to sectoral support alone. Support also comes from the **EDF**, which has financed the removal of wrecks, the GIZ (Germany) and the IDC (International Development Corporation). **Spanish Cooperation** has projects underway totalling EUR 24 million. **France** and **Germany** are also leading fishing-related development support initiatives.

Transparency of fishing activities in the Mauritanian fishing zone

This is a subject of great importance for the EU and Mauritania wishes to place itself at the forefront of transparency in the extractive fishing industry, through the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FITI). Data on the fishing activities of all fleets in operation must be transmitted. This data is indispensable for the implementation of sustainable fishing and the scientific assessment of stocks.

The activities of **fishing vessels from third-party countries** fishing for **small pelagic species** in Mauritanian territorial waters, including the coastal zone between 0 and 20 miles offshore, where European vessels have been prohibited from gaining access since 2015, are drastically increasing the fishing effort, to the detriment of the state of resources and the catches of EU vessels. These catches are also mainly destined for the production of fish meal.

The fleet targeting small pelagic species is rapidly increasing due to the chartering of **vessels** on a **bareboat basis** by private Mauritanian operators. Currently, the chartering of foreign vessels in Mauritania is assimilated to national vessels. Thus a fleet of 45 vessels flying the **Turkish flag** was operating under the national Mauritanian regime in 2015. In March 2017, the Turkish fleet was composed of 22 seiners and two trawlers.

The Mauritanian government has adopted measures to discourage **industrial** production (intensive industrial-scale production designed to supply the fish industry with small pelagic fish that are transformed into fish meal and oils mainly for aquaculture and animal production) and **progressively eliminate** meal production between now and 2020, by **increasing export taxes (from 1 % to 8%)** and putting stronger verification procedures into place and promoting fish processing for human consumption. In **2017**, by designating **between 0 % and 15 %** for human consumption until this reaches **60 % in 2020**. The aim is to increase the value of catches and bolster food security.

Other countries with which Mauritania does not have fishing agreements and whose ships use the private chartering system for tuna fishing are **Russia, El Salvador and St Kitts and Nevis**.

The ships flying the **Chinese** flag operate in the same way, under the national regime by means of Mauritanian operators, because China does not have a fishing agreement with Mauritania.

Experimental anchovy fishing

There is an interest on the part of EU operators to explore the possibility of harvesting the stock of anchovies in the Mauritanian fishing zone in the framework of the agreement. The Joint Scientific Committee recently recommended that a campaign to assess the biomass of anchovies be launched.

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This information note on the fisheries sector in Mauritania was prepared for the delegation of the PECH Committee, which will be carrying out a visit from 2 to 6 April 2018. This note provides a description of the fisheries in Mauritania's maritime areas and an analysis of the fisheries agreement with the European Union.

PE 617.458

IP/B/PECH/NT/2018-01

Print ISBN 978-92-846-2697-7 | doi:10.2861/57595 | QA-01-18-232-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-846-2701-1 | doi:10.2861/688858 | QA-01-18-232-EN-N