

EU-Senegal Fisheries Agreement: we need to ask ourselves the right questions

This week, the European Parliament gave its approval to the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPA) protocol which will run until 2024¹. With the exception of two trawlers fishing for hake², all the vessels that will be fishing through this SFPA are tuna vessels: 28 tuna seiners, 10 pole-and-line tuna vessels and 5 longliners (Spanish, French and Portuguese).

In the wake of the approval of the agreement protocol by the European Parliament, numerous articles have appeared in the Senegalese press crying out for scandal: the agreement would allow European vessels to plunder thousands of tonnes of resources belonging to Senegal, endangering small-scale fishing, while paying a very modest compensation: 1,700,000 euros per year³.

Tuna are highly migratory fish species that travel throughout the Atlantic, in the high seas, but also through the Exclusive Economic Zones of African countries bordering the Atlantic, including Senegal. These tunas are managed by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). One of ICCAT's roles is to set catch limits for a series of tuna species (such as swordfish, bigeye tuna, etc.), and then sharing these tuna resources among its members who have an interest in these fisheries through quotas, and to make recommendations for the sustainable management for other tuna species (like setting up a TAC for yellowfin tuna) without issuing quotas. For all species, member countries wishing to develop their fisheries must submit a sustainable development plan to ICCAT.

Access to tuna under quotas from Senegal and the EU ⁴

Species	Total Allowable Catches	EU quota (in tonnes)	Senegal quota (in tonnes)
Bigeye tuna	65.000 t	16.989 t	0 t
North Atlantic Swordfish	13.200 t	6.718 t	250 t ⁵
South Atlantic Swordfish	14.000 t	4.824 t	417 t
Blue marlin	1670 t	403 t	150 t

Source: *Compendium of management recommendations and related resolutions adopted by ICCAT for the conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic 2020*
https://www.iccat.int/Documents/Recs/COMPENDIUM_ACTIVE_ENG.pdf

¹ Protocol on the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Senegal [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22019A1120\(02\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22019A1120(02)&from=EN)

² APRAPAM denounced Senegal's opening up to these two hake trawlers in its document 'Priorities for artisanal fisheries' <https://aprapam.org/storage/articles/April2020/8eeNG4sgtpjTUpeb5roK.pdf>.

³ To this will be added a maximum amount of EUR 1 350 750 per year, corresponding to the fees due by shipowners if all the tuna vessels come to fish in Senegalese waters.

⁴ Under the SFPA, the tunas caught by EU vessels are yellowfin tuna, skipjack tuna, bigeye tuna, swordfish and blue shark. For yellowfin and skipjack tuna, there is no quota system in ICCAT.

⁵ The transfer of 125 tonnes from Senegal to Canada and 25 tonnes to Mauritania (provided that Mauritania submits a development plan) is authorised.

Tunas that pass through Senegalese waters at any time of the year do **not belong to Senegal**. For those species that are managed by quotas, they 'belong' to the countries that have received quotas from ICCAT. For the others, they belong to the countries that fish them.

As tuna does not belong to Senegal, the EU, under the SFPFA, simply asks Senegal, for a fee, to enter its waters - the EU does not pay to catch Senegalese fish, as it does for example in Mauritania or Guinea Bissau. It is also for this reason that the compensation for a tuna agreement is lower than for a 'mixed' agreement, where European vessels come to fish resources that belong to the coastal country.

If there was no agreement with Senegal, European boats would continue to fish this tuna outside Senegalese waters, when they swim on the high seas or in the EEZs of neighbouring countries with which the EU has an agreement, and Senegal would not receive any financial compensation.

This raises the question as to why Senegal shows nowadays little interest in developing a strong local tuna fishing sector, including artisanal fishing, like in the 70', with the development of the SOSAP fleet (Société Sénégalaise d'Armement à la Pêche). Senegal has not submitted an ambitious plan for the development of a Senegalese tuna fleet at ICCAT level. For species under quota, Senegal receives only crumbs at ICCAT level.

This is all the more astonishing given that Senegal has been present at the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) since 2006,⁶ and also sends Senegalese tuna vessels to fish in Liberia. Wouldn't it be better for Senegal to focus on developing sustainable tuna fishing, including artisanal fishing, in its own waters, rather than leaving tuna fishing largely in the hands of foreign actors, with little benefit to local fisheries?

We therefore request that Senegal, in consultation with the actors of the fishing sector, draw up a sustainable development plan for Senegalese tuna fishing, including artisanal fishing, and submit this plan to ICCAT in order to have better access to the resources and quotas to match.

The EU, for its part, should encourage this reflection at the regional level for the development of an artisanal tuna fishery (as is already the case today in Ghana) and encourage Senegal to submit sustainable development plans for such a fishery to ICCAT.

⁶ As a non-contracting cooperating party <https://iotc.org/fr/apropos/structure-de-la-commission>