

It is difficult to indicate the quantity of fish to be under sustainable management by The Gambia. The fisheries resources can be largely subdivided into two groups: pelagic and demersal fisheries resources. In the case of The Gambia the pelagic fish species are very important. There are large pelagics (many tuna species, marlins and sailfish, etc.) and small pelagic fish species (two *Sardinella* species, *Ethmalosa* (=bonga), horse mackerels, certain mackerels, anchovies, sardines and others). Also important are certain demersal species, mainly "bottom-dwelling" organisms (groupers, sea breams, rays, solefish, but also octopus, shrimp and lobsters). According to the FAO/CECAF Scientific Working Group the fishing effort (=fishing intensity) for the small pelagics in the West-African region should be reduced. Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) recommends that the fishing effort for bonga should be reduced to a level of catch that guarantees the sustainability of the fish stock. The pelagic fish species occur on the Senegambian part of the continental shelf and both countries harvest from this resource. Therefore it is hard to indicate the biomass of fish that is under sustainable management by The Gambia. Fishermen may fish in each others' waters and therefore also catch statistics are the best possible estimates. The annual fish harvest is not necessarily an index of abundance of the fish as the fish migrate following waters of different temperatures, so part of the year fish occur in abundance while they occur in other countries' waters during the remaining months. On top of that the recruitment of new fish is subjected to natural fluctuations. So-called hydro-acoustic resource surveys, measuring the relative fish abundance through echo-integration of echoes reflected by fish, show strong fluctuations in fish abundance over the years. In 1995, the Senegambian Round *Sardinella* stock was estimated at approximately 700,000 tonnes. It peaked in 1999 to more than 1.4 million tonnes, coming down strongly to 300,000 tonnes in 2000. Since then the biomass continued to show a fluctuation trend around 700,000 tonnes (between 500,000 and 1,000,000 tonnes). The Round *Sardinella* migrates along the West-African coast from North to South and back, following the cold waters, thus this species is in abundance in Senegambia from January to April and then migrates northbound to Mauritania and beyond, returning to Senegambia in November. In other words, several countries are responsible for the optimal and rational harvest of the species.

As regards demersal fish species, the highly valued grouper is under considerable pressure and FAO/CECAF recommends a reduction in fishing mortality of this species as it is overexploited. Also many other demersal fish species are overexploited or close to full exploitation. The same is valid for Octopus and shrimp, overexploited, although a deepwater shrimp species may not yet be fully exploited, although it is recommended not to increase fishing effort for this species.

Currently the total fish harvest from Gambian waters is close to 80,000 tonnes, pelagics and demersals combined. It could be possible to bring the demersal fisheries resources under sustainable management, but there is still the risk of IUU fishing (Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated) fishing. The project will strengthen the capability of the fisheries department to undertake appropriate fisheries management measures, but this is beyond the scope of the present FP. Other organizations through FAO will further assist the Gambian Fisheries

Department with fisheries governance projects (it too early a state to request co-financing), addressing fisheries patrols, Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), obviously, due to the shared-resources character, in close collaboration with Senegal, etc.

The FP, when implemented, will contribute to the rational management of the fisheries resources, including co-management, but it will not lead to sustainably managed fisheries resources.

(source: FAO, 2016. TWENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE FISHERY COMMITTEE FOR THE EASTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC).