

PRESS RELEASE

4 October 2024

PFA responds to Court of Justice of the European Union decision on EU-Morocco fisheries agreement

Today, the Court of Justice of the European Union issued a ruling that confirmed the invalidity of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and Morocco. This outcome has a significant impact on the future fishing activities of the EU pelagic freezer trawler sector.

Fishing activity under subsequent EU-Morocco agreements has been hugely important for sustainable and science-based utilisation of high-volume pelagic fish such as sardine and (horse) mackerel. These fisheries have been essential for bringing millions of meals a day to places around the world where there is the greatest demand for healthy and affordable food.

While the PFA respects the decision of the Court, we are disappointed that the ruling means that effectively managed fishing activities, in line with EU sustainability standards, are no longer possible for the time being in this specific part of West African waters. We wish to discuss within the EU, as a matter of urgency, what future options are available.

PFA president Tim Heddema commented:

“We will evaluate the impact of this final ruling with our members. Our top priority is to continue to provide healthy, affordable meals of pelagic fish in a responsible and sustainable manner. The EU-Mauritania Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement will now be an even more important alternative to EU pelagic fishing, but only if it becomes commercially viable. For example, a rapid recovery of stocks overfished by non-EU fleets will be key to a return of more PFA members to Mauritanian waters. This requires appropriate action by the Mauritanian government. It is good news that first steps are taken on the basis of a new management plan.”

The PFA continues to actively engage on EU-Morocco and EU-Mauritania fisheries relations, together with other stakeholders, in the Long Distance Advisory Council. This official advisory body to the European Commission delivers recommendations regarding the EU's Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to which the EU is a signatory or partner, and other matters in the context of the EU's international fisheries relations.

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For more additional questions or more information, please contact info@pelagicfish.eu