

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Some notes on the Turkish fishing fleet in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania

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Abstract

The Turkish fishing fleet started to catch fish in the fishing zones of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in Western Africa in 2015. At the moment (March 2017), there are 22 purse seiners and 2 trawlers fishing in the Mauritanian waters. Sustainable fisheries of mainly small pelagic fish species is important for both local people and the fishing industry in Mauritania.

Keywords: Mauritania, fishing fleet, Turkey, ocean fisheries, sustainability

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The water of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is one of the richest fishing grounds in the world due to its surplus production. This country has 720 km of coastline and has a 200 mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) with a surface area of 234,000 km² including a 39,000 km² continental shelf. Mauritania has significant amount of fisheries resources in Africa. Nearly 600 fish species have been identified of which over 200 can be commercially exploited (SPCSR 2016). The wealth of marine life can be explained by highly favourable hydro-climatic conditions, in particular, powerful cold water upwelling which is the source of the important primary production. Fisheries is one of the strategic sectors for the national industry of Mauritania. Access to the fishing zones of Mauritania by foreign fleet is subject of surplus production within the meaning of Article 62 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The first Turkish purse seiner went to Mauritania for the purpose of fishing small pelagic fish in 2015. Since then this number has increased and at the moment there are 22 purse seine and 2 trawling boats from Turkey that are

fishing in Mauritania (March 2017). Lengths of the purse seiners vary between 33 and 50 m (Table 1). Lengths of the trawlers are 34 m. Each fishing boat has a crew of 20 on average. Most catch are small pelagic species such as *Trachurus trachurus*, *Sardinella aurita*, *Sardinella maderensis*, *Sardina pilchardus*, *Scomber japonicus* and *Engraulis encrasicolus*. They catch fish outside the territorial water of Mauritania, depending on the size of the fishing vessel.

Table 1. Details of the Turkish fishing boats operating in Mauritania

Year	Name of the boat	Length (m)	Fishing type
2015	Cavit Pırlant	33	Purse seiner
2016	Oruç Reis Balıkçılık	47	Purse seiner
2016	İlhan Yılmaz 1	45	Purse seiner
2016	Habib Reis 4	49	Purse seiner
2016	Necati Reis 2	47	Purse seiner
2016	İlhan Yılmaz	46	Purse seiner
2016	Ahmet Ocak	44	Purse seiner
2016	Fırtına Balıkçılık	43	Purse seiner
2016	Mamati Orhan	46	Purse seiner
2016	Çınar İbrahim	50	Purse seiner
2016	Mamuli İsmail	49	Purse seiner
2016	Denizer	49	Purse seiner
2016	Çınarogulları	46	Purse seiner
2016	Hacı Erdoğan Sarı	34	Purse seiner
2016	Ayşe	36	Purse seiner
2016	Özlem	44	Purse seiner
2017	Aktaşlar C	49	Purse seiner
2017	Erdogan Usta	46	Purse seiner
2017	Kılıç 24	42	Purse seiner
2017	A. Mollaoglu	44	Purse seiner
2017	Başaran	42	Purse seiner
2017	Kavramış Mahmut	43	Purse seiner
2017	Kıyak kardeşler 1	34	Trawler
2017	Kıyak kardeşler	34	Trawler

Working arrangements of the Turkish fishermen in Mauritania are chartering of the boats, establishing a joint venture company and fishing based on private agreement with local companies. All Turkish companies and boats have fishing licences and quota given by local fisheries authorities. Main catch of small pelagic fish are used for fish meal. Some Turkish fishing vessels work also for Chinese companies which already have established over 10 fish meal factories in Mauritania.

Turkish companies generally contribute to the food security to local people because they have established three fish meal factories in Nouadhibou Region and one cold storage facility as added value investment. It is reported that over 300 local staff are working in these fish processing factories. Besides, at least 100 Mauritanian citizens also work on the Turkish fishing boats as fishermen or

skippers. Nevertheless, Turkish companies or boat owners should not make any mistakes as done previously by other nations who send all their catch to their own countries without contributing to the local economy or people. Any nation should contribute to the local economy and fish owner state to improve life standards in West Africa. In addition, Turkish boat owners and investors should take care of sustainability of resources by complying all national and international rules for transparency and by preventing overfishing of mainly small pelagic fishes, which are also substantially important for food security of Mauritania as well as neighbouring countries.

Mauritania has made some fisheries agreements mainly with China, Russia and European Union (EU). Most remarkable one is EU partnership agreement. In July 2015, EU and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania initialled a new 4-year protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement (FPA). According to this protocol, the EU fleet will be allowed to fish in the Mauritanian waters for shrimp, demersal fish, tuna and small pelagic fish, up to a total of 281,500 tonnes a year. In addition to catch paid for by the European Fleet, EU will pay a financial contribution of 59,125 million Euro per year to the partnership, out of which 4,125 million will be used to support local fishing communities in Mauritania (European Commission 2016). This protocol will expire on 15 November 2019. In fact, the first fishery agreement between EU and Mauritania dates back to 1987.

The Turkish and Mauritanian authorities are willing to cooperate with each other. In December 2016, Minister of Fisheries and Ocean Economy of Mauritania, Mr. Nani Ould Chrougha visited Turkey and negotiated for the bilateral agreement for the fisheries sector. This negotiation is continuing and hopefully better fishery management will be realized so that the sustainability of the fish stocks can be ensured. After this visit, on 22-23 February 2017, for the first time, a workshop was organized as “African Fisheries and Turkish Approach” by Faculty of Fisheries, Istanbul University, with the participation of several high level experts from Mauritania, Guinea, Gabon, Ivory Coast and ATLAFCO (Ministral Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean) as well as those from the Turkish universities and fisheries sector. During this workshop, sustainability of the West African fisheries, IUU fishing, transparency, bycatch, overfishing and capacity building issues were discussed. It is expected that, after bilateral partnership agreement, the management of fisheries resources in Mauritania can be better guaranteed. Ould Talep Ould Sidi (2001) reported that several foreign fishing fleet as trawlers and purse seiners are found in the Mauritanian EEZ from countries, such as ex-Soviet Union states (Russia, Ukraina, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia), members of EU like Holland, France, England, Germany and Sweden, as well as those from the other side of the Atlantic, like Panama, St. Vincent and Granada.

For Turkish fishing fleet, fishing in Mauritania is the first experience in ocean fisheries and all kinds of results should be carefully examined by scientists, stakeholders and fisheries authorities. Finally, precautionary approach should be considered for sustainable fisheries on the stocks.

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Moritanya İslam Cumhuriyeti'nde avcılık yapan Türk balıkçı filosu üzerine bazı notlar

Öz

Türk Balıkçı filosuna ait bazı tekneler Batı Afrika'da bulunan Moritanya'da 2015 yılından beri balık avlamaktadır. Halen 22 Gırgır ve 2 trol teknesi bu ülkede balık avlamaktadır. Özellikle küçük pelajik balıkların sürdürülebilirliği hem yerel halk hem de balıkçılık endüstrisi için önem arz etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Moritanya, balıkçılık filosu, Türkiye, okyanus balıkçılığı, sürdürülebilirlik

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