



## CC3-INFO-03

The Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Compliance Committee

27-29 June 2019

Mauritius

### Combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing: where should further effort be directed?

*Relates to agenda item: 5*

Proposal  Working Document  Other Document  Info Paper

Proposals and Working Documents are decision making documents and should be provided no later than 30 days in advance of the relevant meeting.

Other Documents and Info Papers should be provided no later than 14 days in advance of the relevant meeting.

## SIOFA Secretariat

### OECD Information Paper

---

#### Abstract

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a serious threat to fisheries and fisheries dependent communities, the ocean ecosystem, and societies.

Considerable progress has been made by governments over the last decade in implementing internationally-recognised best policies and practices against IUU fishing.

Stronger sanctions, comprehensive control along the value chain, and more co-operation among fisheries stakeholders are the top priorities for continued improvement.

---



# Combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing: where should further effort be directed?

February 2019

- Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a serious threat to fisheries and fisheries-dependent communities, the ocean ecosystem, and societies.
- Considerable progress has been made by governments over the last decade in implementing internationally-recognised best policies and practices against IUU fishing.
- Stronger sanctions, comprehensive control along the value chain, and more co-operation among fisheries stakeholders are the top priorities for continued improvement.

## What's the issue?

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing harms law-abiding fishers by creating unfair competition and cutting profitability and employment opportunities, while weakening food security in countries that depend on local seafood. IUU fishing also undermines governments' capacity to manage fish stocks sustainably by adding pressure that is difficult to quantify when setting catch limits. It further threatens the ocean ecosystems when it makes use of damaging harvest methods and targets species that are already endangered.

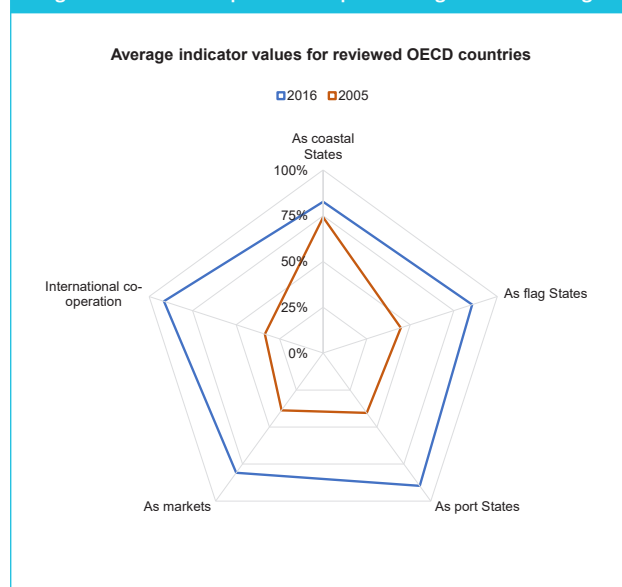
IUU fishing is a global problem: seafood is one of the most traded food commodities and illegal products can end on consumer plates anywhere. IUU fishers also move from one area to another in search of higher profits, targeting locations where governance is weak.

Greater awareness of the seriousness of the issue has brought consensus on the need for coordinated action. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, sets objectives to end IUU fishing and eliminate subsidies contributing to it by 2020. Members of the World Trade Organization also discuss disciplines on such subsidies.

A recent study by the OECD, *Closing gaps in national regulations against IUU fishing*, offers a suite of policy indicators that investigate the extent to which countries meet their responsibilities in the most important dimensions of government intervention in relation to IUU fishing:

- as coastal States, to regulate vessels in their domestic exclusive economic zone (EEZ);
- as flag States, to regulate domestically-flagged vessels fishing in areas beyond their national jurisdiction and in foreign EEZs;
- as port States, to apply port controls and regulate the flow of products to the market;
- as markets, to economically discourage IUU fishing and to detect illegal seafood moving along the supply chain; and
- as members of the international community, to engage in co-operation and cross-country initiatives against IUU fishing.

### Progress in use of best policies and practices against IUU fishing





The indicators show considerable improvement in fighting IUU fishing over the last decade (see Figure), in line with international treaties and voluntary agreements. For example, nearly all OECD countries surveyed established comprehensive registration and authorisation regimes, which allow countries to better monitor vessels. A decade ago, this was true for only about half of them. Port State measures have also become common, reducing the ability of vessel operators involved in IUU fishing to sell their catches in official offloading areas. New measures – like catch documentation and certification schemes designed to prevent IUU fishing products from entering markets – are now required in most OECD countries. Indicators also show good performance in some countries outside the OECD, such as Thailand. However, more will be required to individually and collectively work towards eliminating IUU fishing.

### How Regional Fisheries Management Organisations can help

Regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) are the primary mechanism for co-operation between fishing countries and coastal states to ensure sustainable fishing globally. The role of RFMOs is particularly important for the conservation of fish stocks, which migrate through or occur in multiple jurisdictions, and protection of resources in the high seas.

*Intensifying the fight against IUU fishing at the regional level* offers another set of indicators that reflect the most important management tools at the disposal of RFMOs. These include: minimum standards for monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS); mechanisms for listing an IUU fishing vessel; decision-making procedures; information exchange with other RFMOs; and review of members' compliance with adopted conservation and management measures (CMMs).

On the whole, indicators show that RFMOs are making progress. Recently adopted CMMs introduce more comprehensive MCS minimum standards and rigorous IUU vessel listing mechanisms. Co-operation between RFMOs is improving, and most RFMOs now regularly and transparently review compliance with obligations arising from membership. However, huge discrepancy remains across RFMOs, as shown by the wide range of results. This suggests scope for improvement by learning from best performers.

### What should policy makers do?

While governments and stakeholders will find targeted recommendations specific to the situation of each country and RFMO covered in the reports, the following recommendations respond to the most commonly identified gaps:

#### At the national level

- Strengthen regulations on fishing-related activities, such as transshipment of catch between vessels, and increase reporting requirement of such activities, to levels comparable to those governing fishing.

- Reinforce oversight of foreign private companies chartering vessels from coastal countries' companies to access their marine resources.
- Facilitate the detection of illegal activities by publicising records of fishing authorisations; strategically selecting vessels for inspections; tracking IUU fishing products along the value chain; and requesting information about the beneficial owners of vessels.
- Use tougher sanctions and cut access to public support for fishers who do not abide by the law;
- Co-ordinate and share information between fisheries agencies and tax authorities to facilitate prosecution of IUU fishing violations.

#### At the regional level

- Publish lists of all vessels authorised to fish in the area of RFMO's competence.
- Maintain lists of IUU vessels against which vessels requesting authorisation can be checked.
- Mutually recognize IUU vessel lists across RFMOs.
- Make authorised and IUU vessels lists as information-rich as possible – e.g. include International Maritime Organization (IMO) identification numbers and the identity of beneficial owners.
- Adopt catch documentation schemes that certify legal catches in a standardized way.
- Regularly and transparently review the compliance of RFMO member countries with agreed management measures.
- Create strict and transparent sanctioning mechanisms for countries that fail to fulfil their obligations as RFMO members.



#### Further reading

- Hutniczak, B., C. Delpuech, and A. Leroy (2019), Closing gaps in national regulations against IUU fishing, *OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers*, OECD Publishing, Paris (forthcoming).
- Hutniczak, B., C. Delpuech, and A. Leroy (2019), Intensifying the fight against IUU fishing at the regional level, *OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Papers*, OECD Publishing, Paris (forthcoming).

