

## Deal with Mauritania produces 'bittersweet' feelings to Spanish fishing sector

The new fisheries protocol agreed between the European Union (EU) and the Government of Mauritania produces "bittersweet" feelings to the Spanish fishing sector, expressed the [Spanish Fisheries Confederation](#) (CEPESCA) after settling the negotiations early today.

The new agreement signed in Nouakchott will last four years and before the end of this year it will authorise over 50 Spanish fishing vessels that had been performing fishing activities in Mauritanian fishing grounds until 2014 to return there.

The [Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment](#) noted that the shellfish fleet has recovered one of the two fishing areas that had been closed in the previous protocol. Furthermore, given the good status of shellfish resources, both parties have decided to eliminate the biological stoppages for this mode, which will allow the fleet to fish all the year round.

CEPESCA recognizes that the new protocol incorporates some technical improvements in various fishing modes, but it stresses that it does not consider a number of "duly argued" petitions that had been made by the Spanish chiefs, particularly in the categories of shellfish capture and that of trawlers and longliners targeting demersal species.

The association also regrets that once again the cephalopod fleet has been excluded from the agreement even though the Spanish ship owners had presented "a very reasonable alternative proposal" for the assumption that Mauritians do not want, for political reasons, to grant access to the Community fleet to catch the octopus surplus.

Mauritania do not accept the inclusion of a new category for freezer trawling for demersal species, which are under-captured, taking into account recent scientific reports.

With regard to Senegalese hake trawling and bottom longline fleets for species rather than hake, the possibilities were increased to 6,000 and 3,000 tonnes, respectively, which will increase the number of vessels.

As for tuna, the new protocol allows the fleet catching highly migratory species to return to one of the best fishing grounds in the Atlantic, MAGRAMA reported. The purse seine, longline and pole-and-line fleets will be allowed to operate under similar conditions as those of other agreements for highly migratory species, since the control measures have been harmonized as well as the access with this new protocol with those of the other tuna agreements.

The new agreement was signed by two chief negotiators: the counselor of the Mauritanian Minister of Fisheries and Maritime Economy, Cheikh Ould Baya; and Director of International Affairs at the General Directorate of Fisheries of the European Commission, Stephaan Depypere.

The parties agreed on a reduction of the financial fee to EUR 55 million annually (against EUR 67 million of the previous agreement) and aid to develop the Mauritanian fisheries sector amounting to EUR 4 million annually.