

# The small pelagics value chain in Mauritania – Recent changes and food security impacts

Gregoire Touron-Gardic<sup>1\*</sup>, Øystein Hermansen<sup>2</sup>, Pierre Failler<sup>1</sup>, Abdou Daïm Dia<sup>3</sup>, Mohamed Ould Lemine Tarbia<sup>4</sup>, Khallahi Brahim<sup>3</sup>, Andy Thorpe<sup>1</sup>, El Hadj Bara Dème<sup>1</sup>, Eli Beibou<sup>3</sup>, Elimane Abou Kane<sup>3</sup>, Moustapha Bouzouma<sup>3</sup> and Juliana Arias-Hansen<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Centre for Blue Governance, University of Portsmouth, UK

<sup>2</sup> Norwegian Institute of Food, Fisheries and Aquaculture Research (Nofima) AS, Muninbakken 9-13, Breivika, Postboks 6122, Tromsø, Norway

<sup>3</sup> Institut mauritanien de recherche océanographiques et des pêches (IMROP), Nouadhibou, Mauritania

<sup>4</sup> Ministère des Pêches et de l'économie maritime (MPEM), B.P. 137, Nouakchott, Mauritania

<sup>5</sup> Sjøkovin Blue Resource, Bryggjan 6, FO-520 Leirvík, Faroe Islands

\* Corresponding author [gregoire.touron-gardic@port.ac.uk](mailto:gregoire.touron-gardic@port.ac.uk)

## Abstract

This paper identifies the effect of Mauritanian regulation changes on EU industrial vessels' fishing activities and their implications for food security. The rich resources of Mauritanian waters have historically been utilized by large foreign trawlers, creating small ripple effects and jobs in Mauritania. However, in 2012, Mauritanian authorities introduced new restrictive access conditions; a 20 nautical mile limit and an obligation to land fish caught in this area in Mauritania, so as the national fishing industry to play a more important role. This resulted in significant changes to vessel fishing strategies and distribution channels. For instance, EU vessels that had supplied markets in the Gulf of Guinea, providing a low-cost source of protein to populations, were now unable to exploit the important sardinella resources that migrate along the coast for such purposes. Instead, these resources are now harvested by Turkish coastal vessels, supplying a very recent large fishmeal and oil industry based in Mauritania. Large quantities of small pelagics have thus been redirected from being valuable food products to creating fishmeal aimed at non-human uses. Moreover, this change has put the small pelagics stocks under pressure and most species are currently overexploited. Mauritania, under its current 2021-25 policy, is presently implementing measures to develop a fish processing industry aimed at human consumption, to which European vessels can supply fish. Yet, further improvements are still required in the business environment, such as transparency, regulatory framework and fiscal issues, to enhance regional food security.

## Keywords

West Africa; Trawlers; Industrial Fisheries; Supply Chain; Food Security; Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA)

