

“ISTAM”

Laying the scientific foundation for Fisheries Agreements with third countries

An important part of the European fishing fleet depends on access to non-EU fish resources, either in waters under the jurisdiction of third countries, with which the EU has signed Fisheries Agreements, or in international waters. The European Union wishes to improve these fishery agreements concluded with third countries, particularly developing coastal states, through the concept of partnership agreements.

These partnership agreements aim to ensure responsible and sustainable fishing in the interests of all concerned. This requires that resources and ecosystems are monitored on the basis of the best available information and exploited at levels compatible with their conservation. This also involves developing data and resource management training programmes with third-party coastal states.

To implement this new approach, the Commission proposed a **Strategy for European distant water fisheries** as part of its Communication “Towards a global partnership for sustainable development” (COM(2002) 82 final). Two elements of this approach have already been launched within the framework of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (Council Regulation (EC) No. 2371/2002), i.e. an Action Plan to eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries (IUU, COM (2002) 180 final) and an Integrated Framework for Partnership Agreements with Third Countries (COM(2002) 637 final). A further step still to come will complete the Strategy by an **Action Plan to improve stock assessments outside Community waters**.

This action will demonstrate the Community’s commitment to contribute to responsible fisheries through its participation in stock evaluation, for the mutual benefit of Community’s fishermen and the third countries involved. The Community will take initiatives through the relevant regional fisheries organisations and through the UN’s Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). The first such initiative will be undertaken in West African waters. In this way, the Community will aim to obtain better scientific advice on the state of the stocks before concluding new partnership agreements with the third countries concerned.

To support this initiative, the Commission has funded the **ISTAM** project. This project aims at **coordinating scientific and technical activities in order to strengthen fisheries information systems within the CECAF region, i.e. the region of the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic**. Only a limited numbers of the CECAF region are involved in the project i.e. Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal and Guinea. However, ISTAM activities will be advertised and disseminated at the regional level through its website.

Project acronym:

ISTAM

Full title of Project:

Improve scientific and technical advice for fisheries management.

EU contract number:

022774

Web-site:

www.istam-project.org

Coordinator

Mr. Nicolas Bez
Institut de Recherche pour le
Développement (IRD)
Observatoires et Systèmes
d'Information des Pêches
Tropicales
Rue Jean Monnet BP171
34203 Sète Cedex
France

Phone: +33 (0) 4 99 57 32 04

Fax: +33 (0) 4 99 57 32 95

Email: nicolas.bez@mpl.ird.fr

ISTAM is working closely together with the abovementioned states, and in connection with the FAO and regional organisations, to develop training systems that strengthen the basis for fishery assessment, management and conservation by:

- improving the quality and the quantity of the data that are or will be used for evaluation and the diagnosis of the fishery sector;
- improving the evaluations and diagnoses with the particular aim of enhancing the use of suitable methods at appropriate spatial scales;
- improving the availability of validated and documented data; and by
- establishing a dialogue for the identification of future research needs in order to improve information that supports fishery management.

This way, ISTAM will help the EU and its Member States meet their international obligations for sustainable fisheries and environmental protection as set out in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the Johannesburg declaration on sustainable fisheries. In addition, the training programmes will help provide more robust scientific foundations for fishery agreements that the EU negotiates with third country coastal states.

“THE TRAINING PROGRAMMES DEVELOPED IN ISTAM WILL HELP PROVIDE MORE ROBUST SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS FOR FISHERY AGREEMENTS THAT THE EU NEGOTIATES WITH THIRD COUNTRY COASTAL STATES“