



More fish for tomorrow

## **Massive arrival of Chinese and Turkish boats:**

### **Threat to resources and artisanal fishing communities**

**While the country and the artisanal fishing sector are facing the coronavirus crisis, the authorities are preparing to issue 54 licences for industrial fishing – mainly for small pelagic and hake fishing - including 52 licences for vessels of Chinese origin, and two licences for Turkish seiners. All these vessels are new to Senegal's waters, and a number have a history of non-compliance with the laws in other African countries where they have operated. The granting of these licences would increase the fishing pressure on already fragile resources, **threatening the sustainability of the resources and the artisanal fishing communities that depend on them for their livelihoods.****

#### **Coastal pelagic licence applications**

For coastal pelagic species, licence applications have been submitted for some 15 Chinese vessels and two Turkish seiners. The situation of coastal pelagic, in particular sardinella, is extremely worrying. These resources, shared with neighbouring countries, are considered over-exploited by CECAF scientists.

In Senegal, due to lack of means, the CRODT has not been able to carry out an assessment of these resources since 2015, but all signs show a deterioration of the situation. Senegal is forced to negotiate with its neighbours to go and get sardinella from there. Under these conditions, how can we imagine increasing the pressure on the few resources that remain and which are the food safety net of our populations?



Two offshore pelagic licences are requested for Turkish seiners. These boats, which ten years ago were involved in the plundering of Bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean, arrived in Mauritania in 2017 to fish small pelagic for supplying fishmeal factories. After experiencing difficulties in Mauritania, some of them moved to Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea Bissau and now they are trying to come to Senegal. Recently, they have been transhipping to a Chinese factory boat, the TIAN YI HE 6, which makes fishmeal on board. The small pelagic caught by the Turkish seiners are pumped on board this factory boat, processed into fishmeal and then the bags of fishmeal are transferred to a bulk carrier which takes them to port. In Guinea Bissau, some 30 such transhipments (prohibited under Guinea Bissau law) have taken place between this Chinese vessel and the Turkish seiners.

If this same model develops in Senegalese waters, not only will it help to transform into fishmeal our sardinella, which the population is in great need of, but this system of transhipments at sea and production of fishmeal on board will make these operators escape all control: an open door for illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

It is not only these vessels that make us fear an increase in illegal fishing. Chinese RUIHUN vessels have a history of non-compliance. This fleet has previously been expelled from Madagascar, including for illegal fishing in the coastal zone.

What will become of our brave women fish processors and fish merchants? Already, a kilo of sardinella is traded for more than 1000 CFA francs (and that is if you are lucky enough to see it on the market). The elders still remember the tears of late Arona Diagne, president of the CNPS in the 1990s, in front of the people and on television when Senegal sold off our sardinella resources to the Russians.

### **Application for a deep-sea demersal fishing licence (hake)**

All hake fishing licences applications have been submitted for Chinese vessels. Most of these boats belong to companies that already have boats in Senegalese waters,



such as the group of FU YUAN YU. An attempt is therefore being made to re-group in Senegal. What are the reasons for this? Access to the port of Dakar? Or the ease with which Senegal proposes to welcome them?

The stock of black hake for which these boats are applying for a licence, shared between Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia, is today considered overexploited: there are 17,000 tonnes of catches in the whole sub-region for a potential of 10,900 tonnes.

For this reason, under the agreement between Senegal and the European Union, scientists have recommended a reduction in the quota for the 2 licences taken by Europeans, which was introduced in the last fisheries protocol for the 2 European vessels.

Under these circumstances, how could it be acceptable to give hake fishing licences to 36 additional Chinese vessels? Have any guarantees been given regarding the evaluation of data from experimental fishing on this stock, decided in the last Senegal/EU protocol of agreement?

What concerns us is that the hake fisheries are very close to the areas where the deep-water shrimp are found, a resource for which there is a transparent management plan and which limits access for sustainable exploitation.

Our fear is that a number of these licensed hake vessels will also fish for deep-water shrimp, thus undermining Senegal's efforts with this management plan.

## **Conclusion**

First of all, we have no doubt about the true nationality of these boats, which we consider to be **foreign boats**. On the applications sent we do not find their nationality or registration number, nor do the characteristics and nature of the fishing gear (Article 15 of the Fisheries Code). Article 9 of the same law specifies that "any vessel not having Senegalese nationality shall be considered a foreign vessel". All the vessels listed in the documents are "in the process of senegalization", which also means 51% of the capital will have to be held by a Senegalese national.



Before thinking of granting so many licences at once, we believe that the Commission should apply Article 13 Chapter IV of the Enforcement Decree No. 216-1804 of 22 November 2016: "the Commission shall examine once a year, on the basis of the report of the Maritime Fisheries Directorate, the general situation of the licensing programme. This examination is made in consideration of the fisheries management plans in force and the report of the CRODT on the situation of the main fish stocks".

**APRAPAM considers that the licence applications of Chinese and Turkish vessels, whether for small pelagic or deep-sea demersal species, are in contradiction with Senegal's commitments to promote sustainable fisheries and good governance in the sector. The granting of these licences will jeopardise the activities and the future of the small-scale fisheries sector, which is so important at this time of crisis to ensure food security for our populations.**

APRAPAM, 17 April 2020