

# EC/Mauritania Fisheries Partnership Agreement: fishing opportunities and financial contribution from 18 November 2012 to 15 December 2014. Protocol

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Spain asked the Commission for a briefing on the state of play of the negotiations concerning the EU/Mauritania fisheries protocol.

Both fisheries partnership agreements are especially important to Spain and some other member states which supported these request.

Concerning Mauritania, on 3 December 2012 the Council decided to sign and provisionally apply the new protocol to the fisheries partnership agreement with Mauritania. **This decision was taken by qualified majority as some member states did not support the signing and provisional application.** Spain considered for example that the protocol did not provide for fishing opportunities for **cephalopods**.

The protocol contains a revision clause which would enable the joint EU/Mauritania committee to change the current fishing opportunities on the basis of scientific advice. The last meeting of this committee did not provide fishing opportunities for cephalopods but led to the convening of the EU/Mauritania joint scientific committee, which met from 2 to 5 April 2013. That committee envisaged possible adjustments of the protocol only for pelagic fishes and crustaceans.

The report by the Joint Scientific Committee EU/Mauritania confirms the simultaneous occurrence of several positive factors concerning octopus fishing:

- a constant reduction in the fishing effort, in particular since 2002;
- a substantial increase in catch per unit of effort (CPUE) since 1995, in particular in 2011 and 2012;
- a fishing mortality rate of octopus stock compatible with MSY.

These indicators provide a positive outlook for the development of octopus biomass and suggest that, in the short term, the European fleet will have a surplus, given that this resource was fully exploited in 2012.

The Scientific Committee has agreed to a study on a **management model based on closed areas/seasons** carried out by Spanish scientists. To implement this model, field research would be necessary to estimate the extent of recruitments and their spatial distribution. EU vessels could also participate in this research. To this end, the Committee has asked the Spanish Institute of Oceanography to cooperate.