



WWF

Factsheet

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PORT STATE MEASURES AGREEMENT

WWF: A huge step towards curbing illegal fishing

The fisheries crisis

Global demand for seafood is increasing due to more people, increasingly urban and affluent populations and improved global distribution channels. By 2030 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that we will need an additional 45 million tonnes of seafood to meet demand. This unprecedented consumption pressure to produce is one of the substantial reasons for the over-exploitation of fish stocks worldwide. With the FAO reporting that 28 percent of world fisheries are overfished, and over 60 percent fished to their limits, it has never been more important to make a global shift towards well-managed, sustainable fisheries.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing - a global problem

IUU fishing is a major global problem and threatens the long-term health of our oceans and the livelihoods they support. While governments, NGOs, and the fishing industry have made some progress combatting illegal fishing through government-led and voluntary programs like Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification, the problem is far from solved. The FAO reports that IUU fishing continues to have a devastating impact and the financial value of IUU fishing is estimated at 10-23 billion USD per year¹. Therefore, combating IUU fishing is key to improve food security worldwide.

The FAO Port State Measures Agreement – a major step against illegal fishing

WWF welcomes the entry into force of the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) on 5 June 2016. This is the first international binding treaty specifically aimed at preventing illegally caught fish from entering the markets through ports around the world. The PSMA was brokered between 92 nations by FAO and was opened for signature on 23 November 2009. The full name of the agreement is: The Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.

With 60 countries -- including the EU Member States -- on board and more expected in coming months, we are witnessing a global movement to closing all ports to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) actors. The more countries that join the Agreement and effectively implement it, the better the chances of keeping illegal products out of global markets.

The Agreement sets minimum standards for what every member state must do to prevent illegally caught fish from being offloaded at its ports and reaching global markets:

- It sets a minimum standard for the information port states must solicit and receive from fishing vessels prior to granting them port entry, including basic information about the vessel itself and the total catch on board.
- It requires governments to carry out inspections of vessels entering their ports with fish products, and sets out minimum standards and guidelines for such inspections.
- It covers fishing vessels as well as fishing support vessels (e.g., refrigerator, resupply, or refuelling vessels) and all vessels carrying fish products in trade (e.g., container vessels).
- It requires states to deny offloading or other port facilities whenever there are clear grounds for believing a vessel has engaged in or supported IUU activities, or ask all vessels in for inspection..
- It promotes international cooperation by encouraging the use of electronic catch documentation and requiring port state governments to share information with states under whose jurisdiction IUU activity is believed to have occurred.

These measures are essential for:

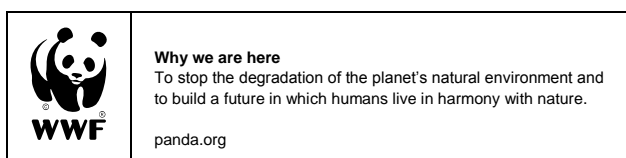
- proper control of fishing activities, ensuring good information flow where fish products reach the land;
- regulation of seafood trade, providing a key lever for verifying the legality seafood sources;
- transparent market chains and traceable seafood products, connecting responsible fishing activities to reputable merchants and informed consumers; and
- improved maritime and coastal security, closing the loophole that today allows thousands of fishing vessels to approach ports with little or no monitoring.

PSMA is also highly cost-effective. Although these measures cannot fully replace electronic monitoring systems and catch documentation schemes, they provide a highly efficient and less expensive means for ensuring compliance with national law and regional conservation and management measures. Applying the Agreement, governments can improve the use of port inspectors while reducing the time, effort, and resources needed for monitoring, pursuing and inspecting vessels at sea or conducting air patrols. Enforcing control measures in port are cheaper and safer than conventional air, sea and surface patrols.

¹ FAO 2014. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2014

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