

FAO calls on all countries to join PSMA, crack down on illegal fishing

To ensure that the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), aimed at cracking down on illegal fishing, succeed all countries should join the landmark treaty, said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva. "We need all countries around the world to be part of the PSMA for it to be highly effective," Graziano da Silva said at the OurOcean Conference, hosted this year by the European Union in Malta. So far around 50 countries are party to the agreement "but we need many more."



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FAO is doubling down on its commitment to implement the PSMA and has committed hefty budgetary resources of its own support poorer countries to develop the technical, scientific and legal capacity required. That should be seen as "seed money" to be increased by voluntary contributions, Graziano da Silva said.

The PSMA, which requires rigorous inspections of vessels by port rather than flag states, is the "main tool" to tackle illegal fishing and "also helps to tackle other serious problems such as the traffic of drugs and human beings," he added.

Sustainably blue

Graziano da Silva also announced FAO pledges of \$41.9m in funding initiatives for programmes aimed at the fisheries sector, including improving fisheries management and livelihoods around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

"Healthy oceans are a vital condition for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and are particularly crucial for some of the poorest communities in the world who rely on small-scale fishing activities, Graziano da Silva said.

FAO's longstanding contribution to the sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources - which provide animal protein for more than three billion people and are the base on which some 300 million people pursue their livelihoods - has intensified in recent years with its introduction.

Securing sustainable small-scale fisheries

Alongside the PSMA, FAO has mustered international approval of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.

Small-scale fisheries play a significant social, cultural and economic role around the Mediterranean and Black Sea region constituting more than 80 percent of the official fishing fleet and a quarter of all fish landed. However, that role is at risk as 85 percent of local fish stocks are now being fished at levels assessed as biologically unsustainable.

Graziano da Silva announced that FAO's General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) is committing €200 million to help reverse the trend of overexploitation of fish stocks in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and strengthen the livelihoods of coastal communities along their coasts.

FAO is also allocating extra funds to the Blue Hope initiative, which seeks to transform Southern Mediterranean coastal zone communities - currently heavily affected by cross-border migration trends - into engines of stability and growth, Graziano Silva said.

FAO also reaffirmed its commitment to spend more than \$1m to assist small island developing states through its Blue Growth Initiative, which is geared to providing developing countries with a framework allowing them to rebuild and grow their aquaculture economies in a sustainable ecological manner while benefitting coastal communities. A particular focus will be making sure that fish trade contributes towards hunger-eradication goals. Maximizing benefits - both economic and in terms of resilience from aquaculture opportunities will also be a focus.

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