

Intl guidelines to ease impact of fishing in deep sea areas

Two years of negotiations have resulted in the adoption of new international guidelines to limit the impact of fishing on fragile deep sea fish species and habitats.

Making the announcement on Wednesday, 3 September, UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said managing deep sea fisheries in high seas areas outside of countries' exclusive economic zones has always been difficult.

According to FAO since it requires multilateral solutions involving not only nations whose vessels are engaged in deep sea fisheries but other interested countries as well.

“Until now, there really has not been an international framework for tackling this issue,” said Ichiro Nomura, Assistant Director General of FAO's Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

“These guidelines represent one of the few practical instruments of this nature, and are a breakthrough in that they address both environmental and fisheries management concerns in an integrated manner,” he added.

Stating that all fishing activity in deep sea areas should be “rigorously managed”, the guidelines contain measures to be taken to identify and protect vulnerable ecosystems and provide guidance on the sustainable use of marine living resources in deep-sea areas.

They also recommend that fishing nations assess the deep sea fishing being undertaken by their fleets to determine if any significant adverse impacts are involved, and if there are adverse impacts, the fishing activity should stop.

The guidelines also set out steps for improving information on the location and status of vulnerable marine ecosystems and deep sea fisheries.

Because deep sea fishing is a relatively new activity and requires considerable resources in terms of investment and technology, few countries have so far developed policies and plans specifically related to managing it, even in their own waters, according to FAO.

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