

Mauritania small pelagic FIP: Donor report 2024

Jo Gascoigne, 28 January 2025

1. Introduction

In this report we summarise briefly the status, finances and activities of the Mauritania small pelagic FIP, and other relevant information from the fishery, for 2024, for the information of FIP participants and contributors.

2. Summary situation of the FIP - environmental

In 2024 there were two reviews of the fishery / FIP (both available on the FIP websites):

- MarinTrust version 3: (internal by Jo Gascoigne) as part of the MarinTrust IP extension request (to Dec. 2028 – extension accorded).
- MSC: External review of FIP including MSC scoring, by Global Trust Certification (GTC), as a requirement of FisheryProgress every three years.

The MSC scoring update on FisheryProgress (Year 6) is based on the external evaluation by GTC and demonstrates considerable progress in scoring of MSC Performance Indicators since the start of the FIP (compared to Y3 which was date of previous pre-assessment: 3 green, 10 orange, 15 red → 6 green, 17 orange, 5 red).

The conclusions of the two assessments largely agree about what remains to be done as summarised below. This forms the basis of the 2025-6 workplan, which was discussed by the Comité de Pilotage on January 23 and will be finalised in the next few days.

- More evidence of compliance
- Better data and traceability from vessels to factories
- Better recording of bycatch and ETP interactions by the vessels
- Management framework: mechanism to control mortality more directly (foreseen in management plan), limit reference point, more transparency
- Improved stock status of all the sardine and round and flat sardinella stocks
- Incorporating the requirements of the ecosystem into management

3. Summary situation of the FIP - social

We now have two social workplans for the FIP which can be approximately considered as the factory workplan and the vessel workplan. The factory workplan was prepared by IMROP based on the scoping by PartnerAfrica, and is now being reviewed by PartnerAfrica prior to completion. The vessel workplan was prepared by a team from LRQA, in a project facilitated by Cargill and Skretting, for which a big thank you. We hope to have a concrete plan to start implementation of these workplans in the next few weeks.

4. Factories – participation and certifications

The Ministry of Fisheries circulated a note requesting FMFO factories to sign up to the FIP, since when we have 18 factories participating¹. Currently, however, only two are accepted into the

¹ Possibly 19

MarinTrust IP (i.e. they source raw material from a MarinTrust IP approved Fishery Improvement Project and are active member of the FIP), since MT version 3 is a significant leap. Olvea and the FIP are planning a technical workshop in Nouadhibou in February to push forward with further audits and certifications.

5. Main activities of the FIP in 2024

Monitoring and stock assessment

FIP activities remain the same as in previous years (see 2023 report). In terms of landings in 2024, IMROP collected 877 samples from 87 pirogues and 41 seiners, covering in total 103 310 tonnes of landings going to both FMFO and human consumption, and measuring 69 533 individual fish of 13 species. This is a sample rate of 8.5 samples per 1000 t compared to the FAO minimum of one / 1000t, and a big improvement on previous years. Compared to previous years there seems to be more round sardinella (potentially a good sign for that stock) but less flat sardinella. Sardine was present for a shorter time period, which might be a consequence of warming waters. (2023 recorded the warmest sea temperatures on record by a large margin, but 2024 was closer to normal.)

In terms of factory sampling, IMROP covered 12 factories (39 241 t). With increased FIP participants in 2025, we hope to improve this further.

The FIP provided lab equipment (otolith saw and related consumables) to obtain more data from these samples, and the enumerators are now collecting otoliths as needed.

FAO provided training to IMROP on Stock Synthesis (a stock assessment modelling framework) with the aim of making best use of the increasing quality and quantity of information. However, Stock Synthesis is very complex and IMROP feel they need additional support to make best use of it. We hope to address this in 2025.

Ecosystem assessment

The MSC project (which runs to end 2025) has continued to fund observer deployments on board the coastal seiners. The FIP has been supporting IMROP to produce 'observer kits' with which each observer can be equipped; so far we have purchased fish measuring boards, and IMROP are providing safety equipment and tablets; this is ongoing. Also under the MSC project, some preliminary work has been carried out evaluating the role of small pelagics in the ecosystem as prey for fish predators (stomach content analysis); it is proposed to continue this work in 2025.

Management plan

There was a review of progress in implementation of the small pelagic management plan by a consultant (Dr Diop) at the end of 2024. This was reportedly presented to stakeholders in a meeting held on 30 December (! and for that reason, not well attended one would assume). I have a copy of the draft report which makes a number of significant recommendations for improving implementation; to be incorporated into FIP actions as far as possible in 2025.

Social workplans

The FIP project to prepare a social workplan (with IMROP and PartnerAfrica, funding from SFF) kicked off in January 2024, and in March PartnerAfrica provided a scoping document (outline workplan) as planned. The expert put forward by IMROP (a retired staff member) unfortunately turned out not to be reliable, so their planned input (stakeholder consultations, preparation of a

costed workplan based on the scoping) was much delayed, but has now been received through another IMROP team. The last element of this work is a review by PartnerAfrica which is currently underway.

As noted above, we are also receiving a workplan specifically for the vessels, based on fieldwork conducted by LRQA on the vessels in November. Again, we are awaiting the final version with great interest.

6. FIP meetings and workshops

The following FIP events took place in Mauritania during 2024 (and to date):

- Plenary meetings and steering committee meetings, May 2024 and January 2025
- Kick-off meeting for social workplan, January 2024
- Training for factories and ONISPA on MarinTrust v3 with invited expert from Peru (organised and funded by Olvea), May 2024
- Workshop with seiner vessel crew and skippers, and the NGO Najah, on monk seals – how and why to protect them, July 2024
- Participation and presentation by Cheikh-Baye at IFFO annual meeting, October 2024
- Consultation workshop with participating factories on the social workplan, November 2024
- Social fieldwork on the vessels (LRQA-IMROP), November 2024

7. MarinTrust IP and FisheryProgress

We retain an A grade ('advanced progress') on FisheryProgress, and the external review by MarinTrust noted that we can demonstrate consistent progress. The end date of our MarinTrust IP has been extended by the IPAC to end 2028; however, they are clear that it will not be extended again.

8. FIP budget in 2024

A summary of operational spending in 2024 by IMROP is given in the table below (€1 = 42 MRU approx).

Date invoice received	Amount		Activity
	MRU	€ (approx.)	
16/4/24	14,000	333	Data entry – paper logbooks etc.
16/4/24	70,500	1679	Data collection, factories and landings, Jan-March
16/4/24	116,000	2762	Data analysis and reporting, Jan-March
14/5/24	288,500	6869	Plenary and steering committee meetings, May
21/6/24	172,550	4108	Data collection, factories and landings, April-June
21/6/24	116,000	2762	Data analysis and reporting, April-June
8/10/24	195,000	4643	Data collection, factories and landings, July-Sept
8/10/24	177,000	4214	Data analysis and reporting, July-Sept
10/10/24	88,200	2100	Participation at IFFO
8/11/24	72,000	1714	Social workplan – stakeholder consultation meeting
18/12/24	157,000	3738	Social workplan drafting and finalisation
19/12/24	186,500	4440	Data collection, factories and landings, Oct-Dec

19/12/24	191,000	4548	Data analysis and reporting, Oct-Dec
19/12/24	297,500	7083	Plenary and steering committee meetings, Dec
Total	2,141,750	50,993	

In addition to this, there was some operational spending from the FIP budget directly in Europe:

- otolith saw (Struers Minitom): € 10,033
- consumables for the saw (Metprep): UK£ 924.60 (€ 1090)
- fish measuring boards (for observer kits): UK£ 8040 (€ 9490)
- computer suitable for running Stock Synthesis and related assessment models: UK£ 2442.54 (€ 2880)

Total operational spending by the FIP in 2024: **€ 74,486 (USD 77,500 approx.)** (estimated FIP budget at start of year: € 66,500)

Note: The number of factories participating in the FIP increased to 18 in the course of 2024, and since each new factory made a modest contribution to IMROP (€3-5000), the budget at IMROP was slightly larger than foreseen at the start of the year.