

Current multi-lateral bodies for bottom fishing in the ABNJ



- **NAFO**
Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
- **NEAFC**
North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission
- **SEAFO**
South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation
- **GFCM**
General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean
- **SIOFA**
Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement
- **NPFC**
North Pacific Fisheries Commission
- **SPRFMO**
South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
- **CCAMLR**
Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources

Across the Central Atlantic, two regional fishery bodies, the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC) and the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF) exist with advisory roles.

Some gaps in coverage remain, such as in the South West Atlantic where no multi-lateral arrangement exists.

Where no multi-lateral arrangement exists, States nevertheless have a duty to cooperate in the conservation and management of living resources of the high seas, including taking measures with respect to their nationals and for their fishing vessels.

62%
of the world's ocean is ABNJ

77%
of the ABNJ is managed by 7 RFMO/As and CCAMLR

4%
of the ABNJ has depths shallower than 2 000 m*

*2 000 m is the lower limit of commercial bottom fishing.

1%
of the ABNJ is designated existing bottom fishing area by RFMO/As

FAO is currently preparing two publications for 2016:

- An updated *Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas*, and
- A publication on *VME Processes and Practices in the High Seas*.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.commonoceans.org
<http://www.fao.org/fishery/deepsea-highseas/en>



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

BOTTOM FISHERIES in areas beyond NATIONAL JURISDICTION



Fishing with bottom-contact gear in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) occurs on continental shelves, slopes or isolated oceanic topographic structures such as seamounts, ridge systems and banks.

FAO estimates that the total global catch in 2014 caught by bottom-contact fishing gear was less than 150 000 tonnes, comprising of more than 50 species in reported catches, and involved at least 11 flag States.

Regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements (RFMO/As) and other multi-lateral bodies with a fisheries management mandate are managing these bottom fisheries in the ABNJ. Currently, there are eight of these bodies, three of which were created in the last five years.



Known ABNJ bottom fisheries in 2014

excluding the Mediterranean*

THE TOTAL KNOWN CATCH IN 2014 WAS LESS THAN 150 000 TONNES.

25%
of the total known catch from all regions was taken below 400 m



- Grand Banks: Greenland halibut and thorny skate
- Emperor Seamounts: mixed species
- Rockall Plateau and Mid-Atlantic Ridge: mixed species
- Southern Ocean: Antarctic toothfish
- SW Pacific and SW Indian Ocean: orange roughy
- Other species

75%

of the total known catch was taken in the Atlantic Ocean at depths above 400 m, mostly on the Patagonian Shelf and the Grand Banks of Newfoundland.

- Typical continental-shelf species (cods, hakes, flounders, squids, shrimps, crabs)
- Notothenid rockcods
- Sebastinid redfishes

Bottom fisheries above 400 m outside the Atlantic is very small.

MIXED SPECIES:

Emperor Seamounts: alfonsino, armourhead, mirror dory, oreo, and Sebastinid rockfishes

Rockall Plateau: roundnose grenadier, ling, blue ling, tusk, longnose velvet dogfish, black scabbardfish

Mid-Atlantic Ridge: roundnose grenadier, roughhead grenadier, orange roughy.

Other species include Atlantic halibut, white hake, anglerfish, wolffish, assorted dogfishes, skates, alfonsino, armourhead, pink ling, sablefish, and some Southern Ocean grenadier species.

★ MEDITERRANEAN FISHERIES

The main deep-sea fishery in the Mediterranean is for deepwater red shrimp (*Aristaeomorpha foliacea* and *Aristeus antennatus*) which are harvested at 400 – 800 m depths.

Red shrimps are mainly caught by trawlers larger than 12 m in length. Declared landing in 2014 was around 5 330 tonnes.

Fisheries development

Bottom fisheries in the ABNJ are a long-established part of the world's fisheries and its history can be traced back 450 years. Major expansion, both outwards and downwards, began with the advent of factory-freezer trawlers in the mid-1950s.

This expansion had slowed down by 1980, and only three major developments have taken place since. Orange roughy trawling began in 1979 in New Zealand waters and expanded through the next twenty years, including onto seamounts in the ABNJ in the 1990s. Toothfish longlining was developed in Chile in the 1980s and is still slowly expanding in the ABNJ. Deep-trawling for Greenland halibut in the Northwest Atlantic began in 1990.

There have been no new departures in ABNJ bottom fisheries in the last two decades, and fishing for resources deeper than 400 m have been slowing down since 2000.

General facts

- Most ABNJ bottom fishing is not deep, and most deep-sea fishing is not in the ABNJ.
- Most ABNJ bottom fishing is on the smooth seabeds of continental shelves, while most fished seamounts are in areas under national jurisdiction.
- With the exception of some exploratory fisheries, no commercial vessel has directed fishing deeper than 2 000 m**.
- The majority of bottom fisheries catch in the ABNJ is taken by bottom trawls, towed over smooth sandy or silty seabeds. Tow duration ranges from a few minutes to several hours at a time, depending on the fishery.



Bottom trawl gear on deck

** Only three fisheries (two in the Northwest Atlantic and one in the Southern Hemisphere) have routinely reached 2 000 m depth, and this was the limit for those fisheries.