



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 10.9.2026
SWD(2026) 273 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION

**of the 2023-2027 Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and its implementing
Protocol between the European Union and the Republic of Madagascar**

accompanying the document

Recommendation for a

COUNCIL DECISION

**authorising the opening of negotiations on a Sustainable Fisheries Partnership
Agreement and its implementing Protocol between the Union and the Republic of
Madagascar**

{COM(2026) 465 final} - {SWD(2026) 272 final}

The EU negotiates and implements Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) with third countries as foreseen by the common fisheries policy's¹ external dimension. The EU uses SFPAs to create a legal, environmental, economic, and social governance framework for fishing activities of EU fishing fleets in third-country waters. In return, the EU gives the partner country both financial compensation for that access and financial support for implementing national policies on sustainable fisheries and blue economy. The EU's contribution is supplemented by fees paid by EU vessel owners.

In accordance with Article 31(10) of the CFP Basic Regulation, the European Commission must ensure independent *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluations of each protocol to a sustainable fisheries partnership agreement, before submitting a recommendation to the Council to authorise the opening of negotiations for a new implementing protocol.

This Staff Working Document provides:

- an evaluation of the protocol's application between July 2023 and May 2026 (although the SFPA will end in June 2027) focusing on effectiveness, efficiency and coherence, relevance, and added value. It examines whether the initiative has met its objectives in terms of environmental sustainability, economic benefits for the EU fleet, and support for the development of Madagascar's fisheries sector;
- an *ex ante* evaluation, which considers options for a possible new SFPA and implementing protocol.

Both evaluations are based on findings of an independent evaluation study by an external consultant².

The SFPA has generally succeeded in effectively providing fishing opportunities for EU fishing vessels in important fishing areas while ensuring the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fishery resources; while in return giving Madagascar the financial means for its own actions.

EU fishing activities were subject to an appropriate framework of reporting obligations, including fishing logbooks, vessel monitoring systems and on-board observers.

Access to Madagascar's fishing zone has been particularly important for two categories of vessels: purse seiners (flying the flag of France, Spain and Italy) and surface longliners based in La Réunion (France). However, the available fishing opportunities appear too high for the number of vessels authorised, with an average utilisation rate of 48%, suggesting a gap between the fleet's actual needs and the expectations reflected in the implementing protocol.

The conditions imposed on the EU tuna fleet largely converge with those Madagascar imposes on other foreign operators. The EU fleet is nevertheless subject to a shark catch limit not imposed on other foreign fleets which is discriminatory.

The evaluation also finds that the implementing protocol supports market supply and economic interaction. The activity of EU tuna vessels in Madagascar's fishing zone creates a business climate

¹ [Regulation \(EU\) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy](#)

² <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b64227c7-7105-11f1-9800-01aa75ed71a1/language-fr>

conducive to economic exchanges between those vessels and Madagascar's fisheries sector, generating indirect economic benefits for the country.

In terms of efficiency, the evaluation judges the protocol to provide good value for money for the EU. Because catches in 2024 and 2025 exceeded the reference tonnage, the EU financial contribution for access was exactly proportionate to the cost foreseen in the protocol at the time of the evaluation, thereby making the public contribution for access profitable.

The EU's contribution, particularly for sectoral support, is also considered aligned with Madagascar's needs and absorption capacity. For EU shipowners, the protocol is likewise seen as cost-effective, since their financial contribution is proportionate to effective catches and benefits compared with operating costs and total revenues. Compared with the previous protocol, the current one introduced a new source of funding for ecosystem protection activities, although its use should be more closely aligned with that purpose.

As regards coherence, the evaluation finds the agreement and protocol broadly consistent with the EU's common fisheries policy and its external dimension. They contribute to the regional network of sustainable fisheries agreements in the Indian Ocean (with Mauritius and Seychelles), as well as with other EU actions and those of Member States at bilateral and regional levels, particularly the ongoing regional ocean cooperation programme.

In terms of relevance, the evaluation also finds that the protocol broadly corresponds to the needs of both the EU fleet and of Madagascar. The species covered are of interest to the EU fleet and the available fishing opportunities are acceptable when considering all fleets active in the same waters at national and regional level. However, the level of authorised fishing opportunities in vessel numbers appears higher than actual use would justify.

Finally, concerning EU added value, the evaluation states that EU intervention through the conclusion of the agreement and its 2023-2027 protocol generates added value compared with the situation in the absence of such an agreement and protocol, where it would not have been possible to secure common access for Member States' fleets.

For Madagascar, the EU contributes to raising governance standards through the good practices implemented under the protocol. More generally, the agreement delivers benefits in terms of access, governance, support to sectoral policies and regional fisheries cooperation that could not have been achieved with the same efficiency without EU-level intervention

The *ex ante* evaluation analyses the relevant objectives of a possible new agreement and implementing protocol, considering the current and future needs of this intervention. It examines the lessons learned and the results of the *ex post* evaluation of the current implementing protocol. Based on this analysis, it examines three options:

- no negotiation with a view to concluding a new SFPA and implementing protocol
- negotiation of an identical SFPA and implementing protocol (status quo)
- negotiation of a new SFPA and implementing protocol with some amended provisions (evolution).

According to the *ex ante* evaluation, the preferred option is the negotiation of a new Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and implementing protocol eliminating some elements which did not prove to meet parties and stakeholders' needs.

As regards access and the technical component, the new protocol would aim to align negotiated fishing opportunities with current capacities and to better protect fishers on board the fishing vessels by updating the social clause and reducing constraints on their employment.

As regards the sectoral support component, the emphasis would be placed on supporting the implementation of Madagascar fisheries policy to improve impact for coastal communities and food security, to reinforce scientific capacity, as well as monitoring, control and surveillance needed to combat illegal fishing.