



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

UN  
environment  
programme



# COMMON OCEANS PROGRAM



PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND BIODIVERSITY  
IN THE OCEAN AREAS BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION

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## Sargasso Sea

The **Sargasso Sea** is a **unique and highly biodiverse** high seas ecosystem threatened by pressure from shipping, fishing, plastics and climate change. The **Common Oceans Sargasso Sea project** is committed to facilitating a collaborative, cross-sectoral and sustainable stewardship mechanism to put in place a comprehensive conservation framework to protect it.



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### WHAT WE DO

#### Improve knowledge of Sargasso Sea ecosystem

Conduct an ecosystem diagnostic analysis for the Sargasso Sea, the first ever on a high seas ecosystem, in order to provide a baseline to guide long-term collaborative monitoring and stewardship.

#### Set up a collaborative stewardship mechanism

Develop a strategic action programme to lay out how conservation aims can be achieved, including a budget to support an ecosystem-based governance approach in the Sargasso Sea.

#### Share knowledge

Capture and disseminate lessons learned to strengthen stewardship in other ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ).



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY  
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

Stretching over 5 million km<sup>2</sup>, the Sargasso Sea is a high seas ecosystem found within the North Atlantic subtropical gyre. The foundation of this unique ecosystem is the floating, golden Sargassum seaweed for which the sea is named.

Sargassum supports ten endemic species that have adapted to live their whole lives on the open sea. The seaweed also acts as a critical nursery habitat for many species of pelagic fish and all species of Atlantic Sea turtle.

Significantly, the Sargasso Sea is the only known spawning ground for

two species of endangered anguillid eel. Moreover, it serves as a migratory corridor for several species of sharks, rays and cetaceans.

The Sargasso Sea is threatened by various pressures – including impacts from shipping, fishing, plastic and other pollutants, and climate change. The Sargasso Sea project will demonstrate how cooperation and partnership can play a leading role in sustaining and restoring the productivity and health of the Sargasso Sea’s ecosystem.

## FACTS & FIGURES

Floating sargassum mats are recognized as essential fish habitats by the National Marine Fisheries Service, supporting

**145**  
invertebrate species and  
**127**  
species of fish

The global market for American and European glass eels is worth millions of dollars, and the Sargasso Sea is the only place they spawn

The Sargasso Sea supports breeding and feeding of many migratory species of sharks, rays, and cetaceans

The Sargasso Sea represents

**7%**  
of the global net ocean biological carbon pump



The Common Oceans Program is a global partnership funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), promoting sustainable fisheries and biodiversity conservation in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) with a particular focus on tuna and deep-sea fisheries, the Sargasso Sea and cross-sectoral cooperation. Led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Program brings together the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), regional fisheries management organizations, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia.

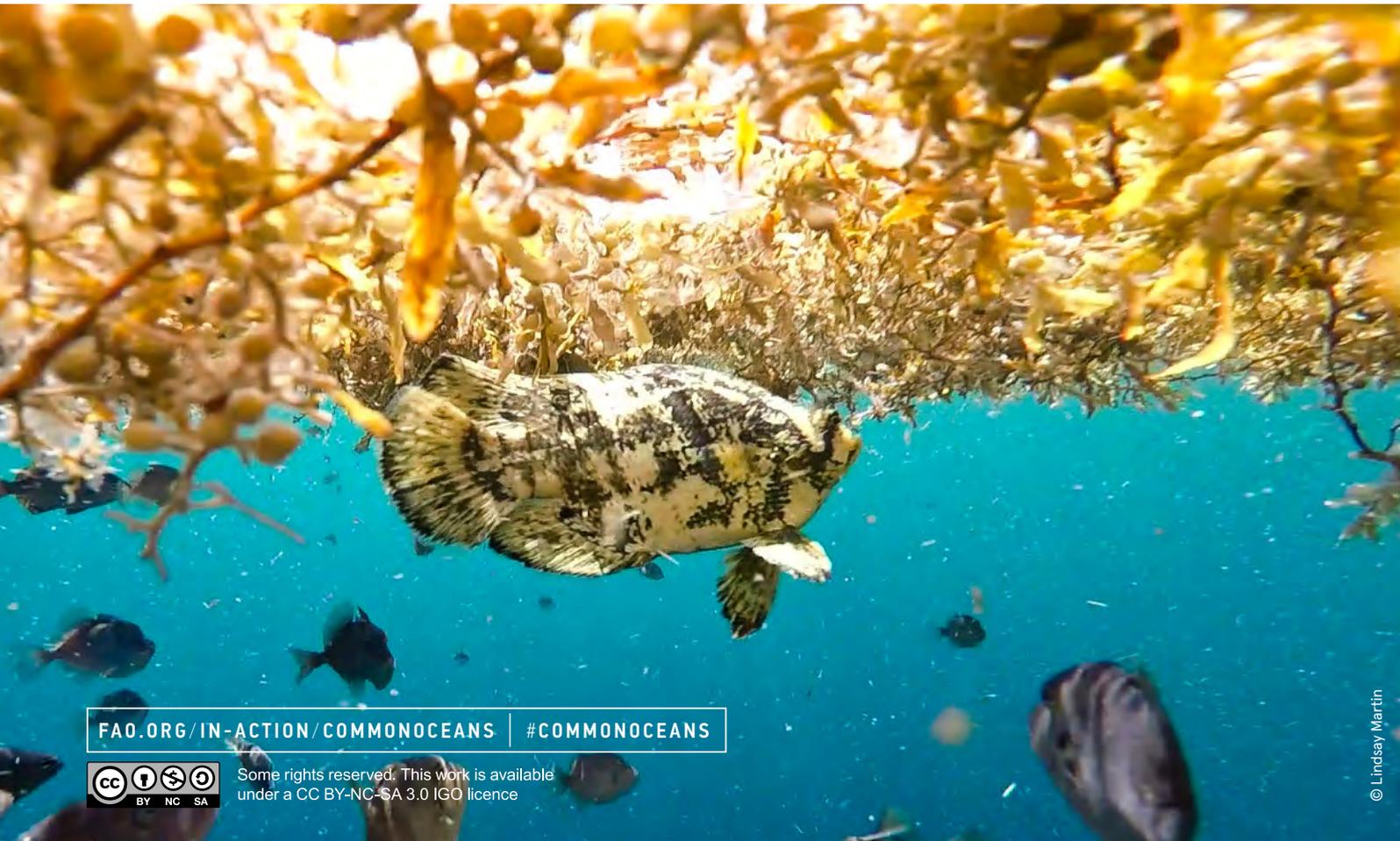
### COMMON OCEANS | Sargasso Sea project

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO)

Dr David Vousden, Chief Technical Advisor - davidvousden@ocean.gov.org  
common-oceans@fao.org



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