

Regional bodies managing bottom fisheries 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 regional body exists, States nevertheless have a duty to cooperate in the conservation and management of marine living resources of the high seas, including the application of national measures for their flagged fishing vessels.

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World's Oceans

ABNJ

62% of the world's oceans are ABNJ

Regional bodies

77% of the ABNJ is managed by regional bodies regulating deep-sea bottom fisheries

5% of this managed ABNJ is "potentially fishable"* for bottom fishing

76% of these potentially fishable areas are either closed to bottom fishing or subject to other access regulations**

* Potentially fishable areas include all areas that are shallower than 2 000m depth (2 000m is considered the lower limit of commercial bottom fishing).

** Many regional bodies have closed certain areas to fishing with bottom contact gear (e.g. bottom trawls) to protect VMEs. Other access regulated areas include those where fishing is not authorized unless specific permission is granted (e.g. upon consideration of impact assessments). The remaining potentially fishable areas are also subject to fishing regulations, as defined by the regional bodies responsible.

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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 in ABNJ was around 150 000 tonnes (excluding the Mediterranean), comprising of about 50 species in reported catches, and involved less than 11 flag States.

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 AROUND 150 000 TONNES.

25%

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



- 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 400m, mostly on the Patagonian Shelf and the Grand Banks of Newfoundland.

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

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

General observations



Bottom trawl gear on deck
(Photo courtesy of Graham Patchell, New Zealand.)

- 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 fishing, no commercial vessel has directed fishing deeper than 2 000m**.
- 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.

** Only three fisheries (two in the Northwest Atlantic and one in the Southern Hemisphere) have routinely fished below 1 500m depth and even for those, 2 000m is a limit rarely reached.

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 – 800m depths.

Red shrimps are mainly caught by trawlers larger than 12m 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 around 1990.

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