



UNOC3 Conference Side Event

**Sustainable fisheries: The role of trade from oceans to plate
13 June 2025 from 8:45 to 10:00 am in Room 5**

**Organized by the WTO in collaboration with Costa Rica and
France and in partnership with FAO and UNCTAD**

Background on the event (one paragraph)

This side event showcased the role of trade, trade policies, and a rules-based global trading system in the sustainable fisheries value chain. International trade rules are relevant at every step of the value chain of marine fisheries catch, trade and consumption. The side event navigated through the relevant international trade rules and global initiatives, to highlight their importance for ocean sustainability and food security.

Key Issues discussed (5-8 bullet points)

- How trade and a rules-based global trading system can contribute to sustainable fisheries by serving as guiding forces for a more integrated and economically efficient marketplace, but also for better science- and sustainability-based policy decisions.
- The importance for WTO Members to ratify the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS), including banning subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing and fishing related activities, the biggest changes on the ground that the AFS will bring about, and how the WTO Fish Fund can support members in implementing the Agreement.
- Potential repurposing of funds currently being allocated to harmful fisheries subsidies, which could be redirected towards sustainable fisheries in developing countries, in particular for SIDS and coastal communities.

- Key trade and sustainability challenges facing WTO Members, including coastal economies, SIDS and LDCs, to ensure food security as regards fisheries products. The contribution of South-South trade, which has outpaced global trade.
- Evolution of policies to fight IUU fishing across all steps of the value chain and its effectiveness. The role of domestic policies and international agreements and guidelines, such as catch certification schemes, the FAO Port State Measures Agreement, and the AFS.
- The issue of compliance with conservation and management measures in the framework of combatting IUU fishing, not only at international, regional or country level, but also at the company level.
- The impact of climate change, marine pollution and other environmental challenges on fish, including the carbon value of fish and the release of carbon through fishing activity. The balancing of the negative impacts of marine fishing – which should be compared with other forms of food production – with food security with the increase in world population.

Key recommendations for action / voluntary commitments (5-6 bullet points)

- Accelerate the swift ratification and effective implementation of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, which could unlock resources to be redirected to promote and support more sustainable fisheries management programmes and practices.
- Intensify the focus on compliance to combat IUU fishing, taking into account that this need not only be done at sea but also using trade tools across the whole value chain.
- Explore more digital tools for traceability in fisheries and across the whole value chain of the trade of fish and fish products, using examples from other sectors.
- Reflect and have a holistic view on all the issues that are related to fishing and trade of fisheries products, including public policies regarding fish consumption, food security needs and the ecological impact of fish production such as carbon value.
- Continue the work on reinforcing international agreements, considering that with the AFS, the High Seas Treaty on Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), and others, we have the most comprehensive ocean governance framework ever, but more needs to be done.