

**Hoping for government aid to develop fishing**

2021.11

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HOPING FOR GOVERNMENT AID TO DEVELOP FISHING

While the government of Cape Verde has been taking measures to incentivise artisanal fishing, owners of vessels in the semi-industrial sector complain that they have been receiving little support, and a lack of credit and technology prevents them from further develop their operations.

Eduardo Campos Lima

Industrial fishing vessels currently operating in Cape Verde's waters come mostly from Spain, Portugal, and France, besides China and other Asian nations. In contrast, the local fleet consists mainly of artisanal boats, but there is a significant number of semi-industrial vessels operating mainly from the island of São Vicente.

'We used to have an industrial fleet between the 1960s and the 1980s, which operated beyond our territorial waters and went as far as the Azores,' said Ilidio Araújo, a shipbuilder and one of the directors of the semi-industrial fleet association (APESC).

'That fleet showed positive results. Now, it's like we are going backwards,' he added.



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One of the larger Cape Verde seiners. Image: Idilio Araújo / Uno de los mayores cerqueros de Cabo Verde

Idilio Araújo and other shipowners are aware of the fishing effort of the seiners which intercept tuna outside the Cape Verdean exclusive economic zone.

‘Those species do not enter our waters any more,’ he said.

What is left for Cape Verdean fishermen are mainly the stocks of mackerel scad and frigate tuna, explained Susano Vicente, APESC’s Vice-President.



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Sorting the catch on deck. Image: APESC / Clasificación de las capturas en cubierta

‘We have a fleet of relatively small, 20-metre boats. With larger vessels, we could benefit from the large fish stocks in Guinea-Bissau and Mauritania,’ he said.

Although local shipyards have been remodelling part of the existing fleet and even building brand new vessels, the Cape Verdean fishing business does not have the capacity to build larger boats.

‘There are no lines of credit to support fleet renewal in Cape Verde. We lack the due financial structure of guarantees, and interest rates are too high. International institutions that operate in Africa cannot help us either, because they usually work with significantly larger sums,’ he said.



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A fishing vessel renovated by Idilio Araújo. Image: Idilio Araújo / Barco pesquero tras ser renovado por Idilio Araújo

Most boats do not have fishfinders. They operate with rather limited autonomy and do not have freezing capacity.

The co-operation between Cape Verde and the European Union (EU) includes fishing permits for 69 vessels in exchange for annual financial aid of €750,000. Part of that money is intended for a fund for the development of the Cape Verdean fishing industry. The government claims that it has been investing on several improvements in the fishing segment, but the APESC members claim that only artisanal fishermen have been assisted.

‘I do not know how that fund is managed and it really is no help for us,’ Susano Vicente said.



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A small-scale fishing boat funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment in 2019. Image: Ministry of Agriculture and Environment / Un barco de pesca artesanal financiado por el Ministerio de Agricultura y Medio Ambiente en 2019

The deal with the EU grants tax exemptions to Cape Verdean fish, but the country has not been able to provide the necessary volumes to the two existing fish processing plants – and had to ask the EU for derogations several times to import fish, process it and export to Europe.

The last three-year derogation was granted in 2020, and now Cape Verde needs to ensure that within the next two years its fishing operators and processing plants will be strong enough to catch and process enough fish to maintain exports to Europe.

‘We need seiners like the ones our foreign competitors have. We established a co-op, and we want to fish and export, but we have to count on the government’s help,’ Ilidio Araújo said.

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A fishing vessel rebuilt by Idilio Araújo in 2017. Image: Idilio Araújo / Un barco de pesca reconstruido por Idilio Araújo en 2017

The co-op was launched by APESC's members and works as its financial branch. Susano Vicente said that it has recently designed an industrial vessel prototype, based on an already existing model but adapted to the Cape Verdean conditions.



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A traditional-style smaller fishing vessel built in a combination of wood and glass fibre. Image: Idilio Araújo / Un pesquero más pequeño de estilo tradicional construido en una combinación de madera y fibra de vidrio

‘This will be built in glass fibre and will have the ability to cope with tough conditions. It will be equipped with freezing systems and a processing deck,’ he said.

The project has already been presented to government officials. Susano Vicente and Idilio Araújo hope that the government will fund its construction, or at least will provide a bank guarantee so the co-op will be able to get a loan.

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to develop the marine industry, Susano Vicente said.

Ilidio Araújo stresses that the Cape Verdean fishing sector also needs to modernise shore-based processing, given that it only has two fishing processing plants, and these are not able to work with frozen fish.

‘We hope the government will support us,’ Susano Vicente said. ‘But we are not very confident.’