

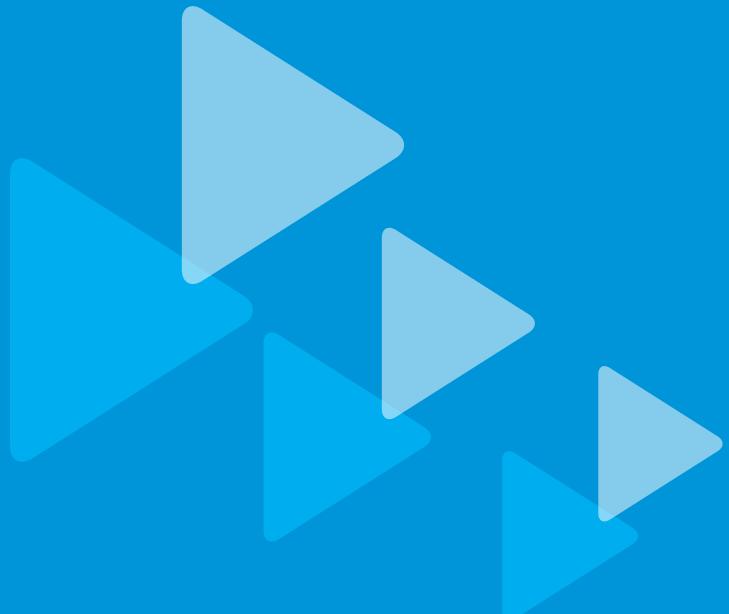
Regional Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture



**Regional Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for
Fisheries and Aquaculture**

1st October 2024

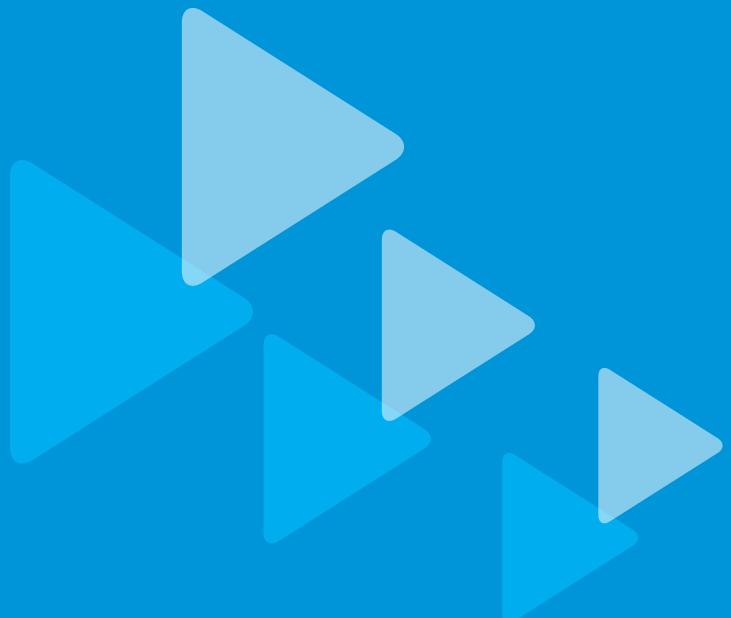
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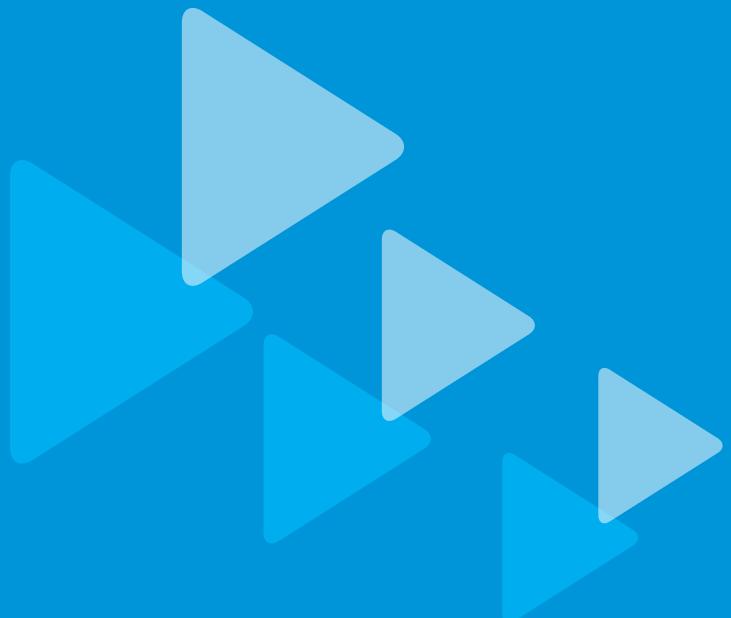
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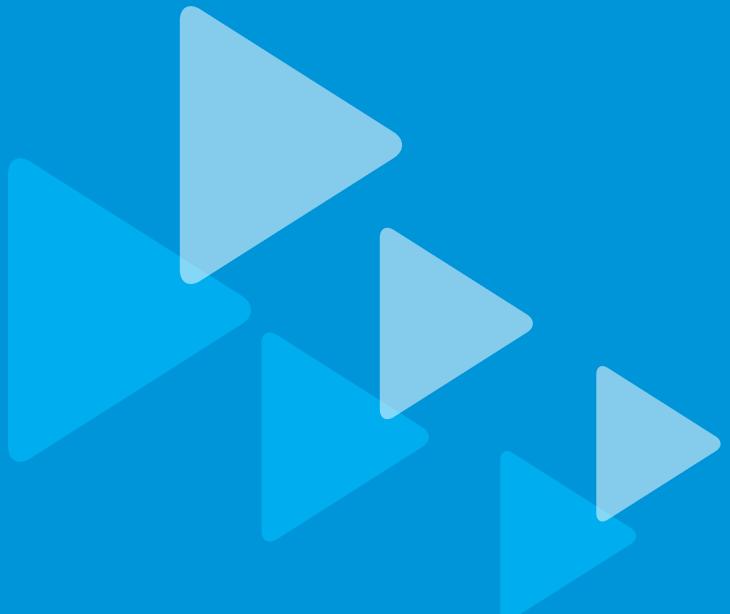
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ACRONYMS



ABES	Africa Blue Economy Strategy
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFRM	African Fisheries Reform Mechanism
AIMS	African Integrated Maritime Strategy, 2050
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUDA	African Union Development Agency
AU-IBAR	African Union InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources
BE	Blue Economy
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CAMFA	African Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture
CBOs	community-based organizations
CCIA	COMESA Common Investment Area
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DMROs)	Duly Mandated Regional Organizations (
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCWC	Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea
GAFRD	General Authority for Fish Resources Development
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated
LTA	Lake Tanganyika Authority
LVFO	Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization
MCS	Strengthen Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance
MS	Member State
MTSP	Med Term Strategic Plan
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PF&RS	Policy Framework and Reform Strategy
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
R&D	Research and Development
REC	Regional Economic Community
RFMOs	Regional Fisheries Management Organisations
RFBs	Regional Fisheries Bodies
RSCs	Regional Steering Committees
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SIOFA	Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
WB	World Bank
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

Acknowledgement



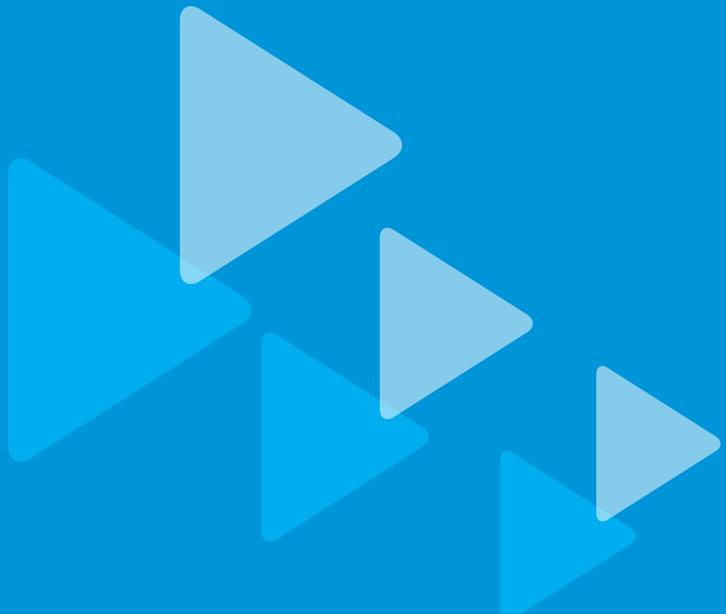
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Executive Summary



The Regional Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region is a comprehensive blueprint designed to transform and strengthen the fisheries and aquaculture sectors across the region. These sectors are vital for the socio-economic development of COMESA member states, contributing significantly to food security, employment, and economic growth. The strategy seeks to address existing challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and promote sustainable practices that will ensure the long-term viability and prosperity of these industries.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

The fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the COMESA region face several challenges, including overfishing, weak value chains, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance, and the impacts of climate change. These challenges threaten the sustainability of fish stocks, the livelihoods of fishing communities, and the overall economic contribution of these sectors.

However, there are also significant opportunities to be leveraged. The expansion of sustainable aquaculture practices presents a major opportunity to increase fish production and enhance food security. Improving value chains and market access can boost economic returns and create jobs. Additionally, integrating fisheries and aquaculture with other sectors such as tourism can open up new avenues for economic development.

Policy Framework and Strategic Focus

The Framework is structured around nine key policy areas, each of which is critical to achieving the overarching goals of sustainability, inclusivity, and regional integration. These policy areas include:

1. **Sustainable Management of Fisheries and Aquaculture Resources:** This policy focuses on implementing comprehensive fisheries management plans, strengthening monitoring and control systems, promoting ecosystem-based management, and restoring critical habitats. The goal is to ensure the sustainable use of resources, preventing overexploitation and protecting biodiversity.
2. **Expansion of Aquaculture and Sustainable Practices:** This policy aims to expand aquaculture production through the adoption of sustainable practices, such as best management practices, sustainable feed usage, and effective zoning and spatial planning. The focus is on optimizing production while minimizing environmental impacts.
3. **Value Chain Development and Market Access:** Strengthening fisheries and aquaculture value chains is essential for improving product quality, market access, and economic returns. This policy promotes investment in infrastructure, enhances market information systems, and supports value addition and product diversification.
4. **Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening:** Effective management of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors requires strong institutional capacities and skilled stakeholders. This policy emphasizes the development of training programs, the strengthening of governance structures, and the enhancement of monitoring and enforcement capacities.
5. **Climate Resilience and Adaptation:** Climate change poses significant risks to fisheries and aquaculture. This policy focuses on conducting climate impact assessments, developing adaptive strategies, and promoting climate-smart technologies to enhance the resilience of these sectors.
6. **Sustainable Tourism Integration and Economic Development:** Linking fisheries and aquaculture with the tourism industry creates unique economic development opportunities. This policy promotes the development of ecotourism and culinary tourism initiatives, enhancing infrastructure and services, and providing capacity building and training.
7. **Regional Trade Integration and Infrastructure Enhancement:** Facilitating intra-regional fish trade and

improving infrastructure are vital for boosting economic opportunities. This policy focuses on harmonizing regional standards, simplifying customs procedures, and investing in infrastructure to support trade.

8. **Enhanced Regional Cooperation and Integration:** Strengthening regional cooperation is essential for effective resource management and economic development. This policy promotes harmonization of policies and regulations, joint regional projects, and enhanced data sharing and research.
9. **Gender and Youth Inclusion in Fisheries and Aquaculture:** Ensuring the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth is critical for the equitable development of these sectors. This policy focuses on promoting gender and youth-friendly policies, enhancing access to resources and opportunities, and providing tailored financial and capacity-building initiatives.

Expected Outcomes and Impacts

The implementation of the reform is expected to lead to several key outcomes, including:

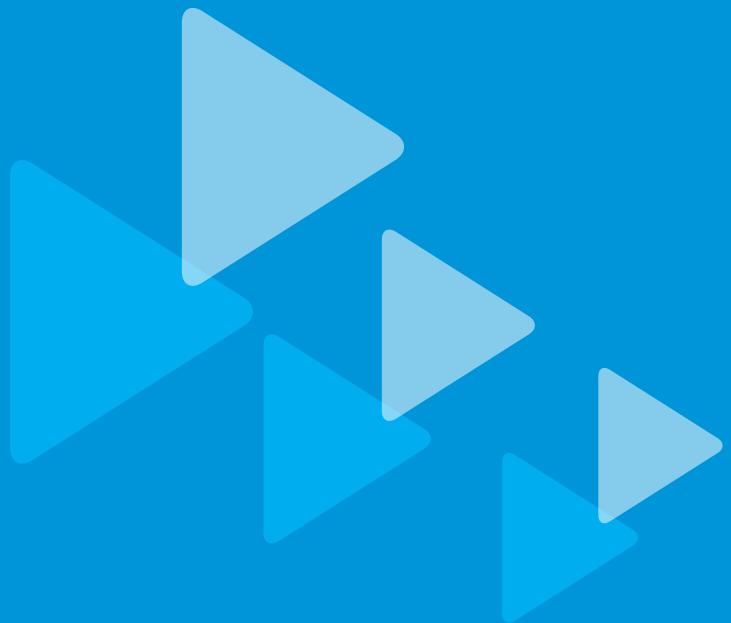
- Long-term sustainability of fish stocks and aquaculture practices, ensuring continued availability of resources.
- Enhanced food security and improved nutrition through increased fish production.
- Significant contributions to national GDP, job creation, and poverty reduction.
- Better livelihoods for fishing communities and equitable distribution of benefits.
- Increased resilience of the sectors to climate change and environmental shocks.
- Strengthened regional integration and cooperation, leading to effective management of shared resources.
- Greater gender equality, increased economic participation, and inclusive development.
- Enhanced conservation of marine and freshwater ecosystems, protecting biodiversity.

The framework is structured around several key components: a set of guiding and cross-cutting principles, nine main policy areas, objectives, and corresponding strategies for each objective. The Regional Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in the COMESA Region establishes the guiding principles necessary for implementing appropriate reforms while the Reform Strategy outlines the action steps that can be applied within the sector. This comprehensive approach takes into account (i) region-specific priorities that are of common interest to the COMESA member states, (ii) supporting and delivery mechanisms to assist and facilitate the implementation of the agreed strategies, and (iii) indicators for measuring success and progress.

The Policy Framework and Reform Strategy offers the COMESA region the opportunity to transition its fisheries and aquaculture sectors towards enhanced productivity, sustainability, and profitability, with an emphasis on regional collaborative management of shared resources. The Policy Framework incorporates a variety of approaches, including economic, ecosystem-based, social, and welfare considerations. However, the critical precondition for these approaches to translate into tangible development outcomes is the commitment of member states to reform their fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

By adopting this Policy Framework and Reform Strategy, COMESA member states will be better equipped to develop appropriate fisheries management and aquaculture exploitation arrangements, supported by fiscal reforms that will promote the sustainable generation of benefits at the community level and wealth creation throughout the entire value chain.

Introduction



1.1. Highlights of COMESA's Fisheries and Aquaculture

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) provides its Member States and partners with numerous advantages, including an expansive, harmonized competitive market, enhanced industrial productivity and competitiveness, increased agricultural production and food security, sustainable exploitation of natural resources, harmonized monetary, banking, and financial policies, and reliable transport and communications infrastructure. COMESA has established nine institutions aimed at fostering sub-regional cooperation and development. In terms of decision-making, COMESA has established structures led by the Heads of State and Government (COMESA Authority) that set policy direction. The Council of Ministers ensures COMESA operates effectively according to the COMESA Treaty provisions, supported by various technical committees and advisory bodies. The COMESA Secretariat, located in Lusaka, is tasked with facilitating and coordinating the work of the REC. Additionally, each Member State has appointed a contact person to handle day-to-day communications. COMESA is currently implementing a five-year Medium Term Strategic Action Plan (MTSP) for 2021-2025¹.

The COMESA Member States have extensive coastlines, a substantial continental shelf, and a vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Additionally, the region is rich in inland water resources. Countries with extensive coastlines, such as Madagascar, and those with significant EEZs, including Seychelles, Mauritius, and Madagascar, are all part of COMESA. Fisheries and aquaculture are crucial to the region, contributing significantly to the agricultural GDP, particularly in Island COMESA Member States. Fish and fish products are vital sources of animal protein, and women play a key role in fish processing and marketing, representing a significant portion of these activities. In Island COMESA Member States, the fisheries sector is a major contributor to exports, especially with products like tuna and shrimp.

Inland fisheries resources are abundant, including those from Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika, as well as the vast freshwater systems of the Nile, Congo, and Zambezi Basins, along with smaller rift valley lakes. Although aquaculture is still relatively underdeveloped in the region, Egypt—one of the high-producing countries—is a COMESA member state. Furthermore, Uganda, Zambia, DR Congo, and Zimbabwe are experiencing significant growth in aquaculture.

While reliable fisheries data for the entire COMESA region is scarce, according to FAO statistics from 2021², the total fisheries and aquaculture production (both inland and marine waters) in COMESA amounted to approximately 3.6 million tonnes. Notably, in countries like Seychelles, fisheries play a significant role, ranking as the second-largest contributor to GDP after tourism. In Seychelles, fisheries account for 20% of the GDP and employ 17% of the population³.

The food balance sheet for aquatic foods and fish contribution to protein supply in COMESA MS reveals significant variations in production, consumption, and nutritional reliance on fish across different countries. Egypt stands out with the highest production of 2,039 thousand tonnes and the greatest per capita apparent consumption of 26.2 kg/year, contributing 7.5 grams of fish protein per day, which is 26.9% of the animal protein intake. In contrast, countries like Burundi and Ethiopia show minimal fish production and consumption, with Burundi's per capita consumption at only 2.0 kg/year and Ethiopia's even lower at 0.5 kg/year. Notably, countries like Comoros and Seychelles, despite lower production figures, have high per capita consumption rates of 18.0 kg/year and 15.4 kg/year, respectively, indicating a significant dietary reliance on fish. Malawi also shows substantial reliance on fish proteins, with a per capita consumption of 10.0 kg/year and fish contributing 23.0% to the animal protein intake. Other countries such as Tunisia and Zambia demonstrate moderate levels of production and consumption, with fish protein making up 11.7% and 15.3% of their animal protein intake, respectively. This underscores the diverse dependency on fish across the region, with certain countries having high nutritional reliance on fish despite varying levels of production and imports⁴.

¹ COMESA Medium Term Strategic Action Plan (MTSP) for 2021-2025 <https://www.comesa.int/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/4Final-MTSP-2021-2025-English-Reviewed-2-feb.pdf>.

² FAO. 2024. Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics – Yearbook 2021. FAO Yearbook of Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9523en>.

³ Government of the Seychelles, 2018, Seychelles Blue Economy Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap: Charting the Future (2018-2030). Mahe: Seychelles.

⁴ FAO. 2024. Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics – Yearbook 2021. FAO Yearbook of Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9523en>.

Table 1 Food balance sheet of aquatic foods and fish contribution to protein supply by country (2021)⁵

Country	Production ¹	Non-food use ¹	Food imports ¹	Food exports ¹	Apparent consumption ¹	Per capita apparent consumption (kg/year)	Fish proteins (g/day)	Animal proteins (g/day)	Total proteins (g/day)	Share of fish proteins over animal proteins (%)	Share of fish proteins over total proteins (%)	Share of proteins over total proteins (%)
Burundi	21	0	6	<1	27	2.0	0.5	9.3	47.2	5.1	1.1	
Comoros	18	8	4	0	14	180	5.5	18.8	61.4	29.1	8.9	
DRC	280	0	20	1	299	3.3	0.9	8.2	45.4	11.0	2.0	
Djibouti	2	0	2	0	4	4.0	1.2	13.8	73.0	8.5	1.6	
Egypt	2,039	0	764	36	2,766	26.2	7.5	27.9	92.6	26.9	8.1	
Eritrea	6	0	<1	<1	6	1.6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Eswatini	<1	0	5	<1	5	4.2	1.2	19.5	59.2	6.2	2.0	
Ethiopia	59	0	3	<1	62	0.5	0.2	7.2	77.9	2.1	0.2	
Kenya	141	2	45	2	182	3.5	1.0	20.1	66.2	4.9	1.5	
Libya	3	0	37	1	39	5.8	1.5	21.2	78.1	7.1	1.9	
Madagascar	125	0	25	6	143	5.2	1.5	10.2	53.8	14.6	2.8	
Malawi	187	0	6	5	188	10.0	2.7	11.8	64.2	23.0	4.2	
Mauritius	7	1	32	2	36	28.5	7.5	45.1	107.8	16.6	7.0	
Rwanda	14	0	15	<1	29	2.4	0.8	8.1	52.4	9.8	1.5	
Seychelles	10	0	3	0	13	15.4	4.0	29.2	98.4	13.6	4.1	
Somalia	42	0	1	1	42	2.7	0.8	17.3	52.5	4.8	1.5	
Sudan	45	0	1	<1	46	1.0	0.3	10.6	60.1	2.7	0.5	
Tunisia	128	3	27	17	135	11.4	2.9	24.6	90.4	11.7	3.2	
Uganda	351	11	7	91	256	5.7	1.8	11.3	59.6	15.9	3.0	
Zambia	113	1	27	4	135	7.6	2.1	14.0	60.1	15.3	3.4	
Zimbabwe	9	<1	10	1	18	1.1	0.3	7.7	55.6	3.8	0.6	

Expressed in thousand tonnes (live weight).

Uganda leads the way in capture fisheries production with 622,000 tonnes, followed closely by Egypt at 476,000 tonnes (both figures from 2021). The total aquaculture production in the COMESA region was 1.845 million tonnes in 2021. Egypt stands out as a major player, contributing by 1.576 million tonnes, which accounts for 67.9% of the continent's total production and 1.7% of the world's share. Uganda follows with 139 000 tonnes, representing 6.0% of Africa's production and 0.2% globally. Zambia, Tunisia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Malawi contribute smaller portions, with production volumes ranging from 63 to 10 thousand tonnes, collectively making up 7.9% of Africa's total. The combined output of these eight major producers constitutes 79.4% of Africa's total aquaculture production, highlighting their dominance in the sector. Despite their significant contributions at the continental level, these countries hold relatively modest shares in the global aquaculture industry⁶.

Table 2 Aquaculture Production of Aquatic Animals and Share of Total, Top Producers (2021)⁷

Country	Aquaculture Production ¹	Africa's Total Share	World's Share
Egypt	1,576	67.9%	1.7%
Uganda	139	6.0%	0.2%
Zambia	63	2.7%	0.1%
Tunisia	26	1.1%	<0.1%
Kenya	21	0.9%	<0.1%
Rwanda	10	0.4%	<0.1%
Malawi	10	0.4%	<0.1%
Total 8 Major Producer	1,845	79.4%	2%

Expressed in thousand tonnes (live weight)

1.2. Conceptualization of COMESA's Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector

1.2.1. Key dimensions

The COMESA region is richly endowed with extensive aquatic resources that present vast potential for the fisheries and aquaculture sector. This potential is built on a foundation of diverse inland water bodies, expansive coastlines, and a wealth of marine biodiversity. A multi-dimensional approach is used to fully conceptualize the sector within COMESA, exploring various critical aspects.

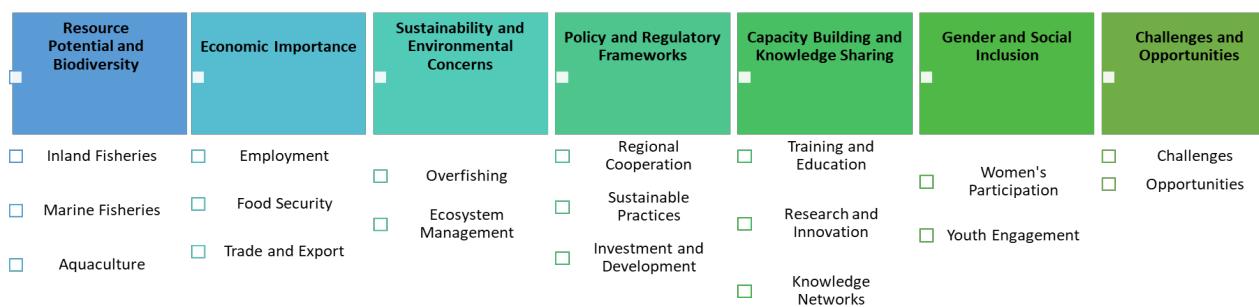


Figure 1 key dimensions for the conceptualization of COMESA's Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector

1.2.2. Challenges

The fisheries and aquaculture sector within the COMESA region faces significant challenges that hinder its potential

⁶ FAO. 2024. Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics – Yearbook 2021. FAO Yearbook of Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9523en>.

⁷ Data exported from FAO. 2024. Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics – Yearbook 2021. FAO Yearbook of Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9523en>.

to contribute meaningfully to the regional development. Key challenges include:

- **Stagnating capture fisheries production**

Overexploitation of fish stocks is a critical issue in the COMESA region, with far-reaching consequences for ecosystems, livelihoods, and food security. The relentless pressure on fish populations has led to a decline in fish stocks, affecting both small-scale and industrial fisheries.

Key drivers of overexploitation in the COMESA region include increased fishing pressure, where a growing human population and rising demand for fish have led to fishing efforts that exceed the replenishment capacity of fish stocks. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing further exacerbates the issue by depleting fish stocks, undermining sustainable management efforts, and creating unfair competition for law-abiding fishers. Weak governance and enforcement contribute significantly to overfishing, with inadequate fisheries management systems and insufficient monitoring, control, and surveillance. Additionally, the lack of alternative livelihoods for coastal communities' forces many to rely heavily on fishing, which intensifies pressure on fish stocks. Climate change also plays a critical role, as changing ocean conditions such as rising sea temperatures and ocean acidification adversely impact fish populations, worsening the effects of overexploitation.

Addressing overexploitation demands a multifaceted approach. Implementing effective fisheries management plans, including catch limits, size restrictions, and gear restrictions, is crucial. Strengthening enforcement through increased surveillance and penalties to combat IUU fishing is equally important. Diversifying income sources for coastal communities by providing support for alternative livelihoods can alleviate pressure on fisheries. Enhancing collaboration among COMESA MS to address shared fisheries challenges is vital, as is investing in human resources development and building the capacity of fisheries agencies for effective management.

- **Weak value chains and value addition:**

The COMESA region's fisheries and aquaculture sector grapples with a range of challenges that impede the development of robust value chains. Limited value addition is a significant issue, as most fish products are exported in raw or minimally processed forms, resulting in lower returns for the region. Inadequate infrastructure, including insufficient transportation, storage, and processing facilities, hinders both value chain efficiency and product quality. The sector also suffers from a lack of market information, with insufficient data on market trends, consumer preferences, and pricing restricting producers' ability to make informed decisions. Access to finance is another barrier, as small-scale fishers and processors often struggle to obtain credit for business investment and expansion. Furthermore, weak linkages between value chain actors—such as producers, processors, exporters, and retailers—impede coordination and collaboration. The sector's limited skills and capacity, particularly in processing, quality control, and marketing, exacerbate these challenges.

Structurally, the predominance of small-scale, often family-owned, fishing and aquaculture enterprises limits economies of scale and hinders investment in value addition. Post-harvest losses are significant due to inefficient handling and processing practices, reducing product quality and profitability. Additionally, slow adoption of modern technologies affects productivity and product quality.

Market-related challenges include price volatility, which creates uncertainty for producers and processors, complicating planning and investment. Small-scale producers frequently face low bargaining power, resulting in reduced returns for their products. Trade barriers, such as non-tariff barriers and complex customs procedures, also hinder trade in fisheries and aquaculture products. The lack of reliable and timely market data further hampers decision-making and restricts access to profitable markets.

Institutionally, weak regulatory frameworks and inadequate policies create an uncertain operating environment for businesses. Insufficient infrastructure, including poor transportation, energy, and communication networks, raises costs and diminishes competitiveness. Moreover, a shortage of skilled labor in areas such as quality control, processing, and marketing limits the sector's potential for growth and development.

The COMESA region's fisheries and aquaculture sector faces a complex array of challenges that impede the development of robust value chains. The following obstacles further hinder the sector's growth:

- **Growing pressure on fisheries resources**

Growing pressure on fisheries resources in the COMESA region arises from multiple competing demands and unsustainable practices. One significant factor is the increasing competition from alternative uses of aquatic resources. As tourism, energy development, and infrastructure projects expand, they often encroach on marine and freshwater environments, leading to habitat degradation and increased strain on fish populations. These activities can disrupt the delicate balance of aquatic ecosystems and reduce the availability of resources for traditional fisheries.

Moreover, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing intensifies the pressure on fisheries resources. IUU fishing practices undermine sustainable management efforts by depleting fish stocks faster than they can naturally replenish. This not only affects the availability of fish but also creates unfair competition for those who adhere to legal and sustainable fishing practices. The combined effects of these pressures lead to overexploitation, reduced biodiversity, and compromised livelihoods for communities dependent on fisheries. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts to balance competing uses of aquatic resources and strengthen measures to combat IUU fishing.

- **Low Investments in Critical Areas**

Low investments in critical areas present a major obstacle to the development and sustainability of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the COMESA region. The implications of insufficient funding are multifaceted and significantly impact various aspects of the sector.

- *Fisheries Management Capacity*

Inadequate investment in fisheries management severely hampers the ability to implement and enforce sustainable practices. Effective fisheries management requires robust systems for monitoring, control, and surveillance, well-trained personnel, and adequate resources to enforce regulations. Without sufficient investment, there are limited capabilities to develop and enforce management plans, which results in overfishing, habitat degradation, and loss of biodiversity. Moreover, weak management systems lead to inefficient allocation of resources, poor data collection, and ineffective responses to illegal fishing activities, all of which undermine the health and productivity of fish stocks.

- *Research and Monitoring*

Research and monitoring are critical for understanding the dynamics of fish populations, ecosystems, and the impacts of human activities. Insufficient funding in these areas limits the capacity to conduct essential research that informs fisheries management decisions and policy development. Without adequate investment in research, there is a lack of up-to-date data on fish stock assessments, environmental changes, and the effectiveness of conservation measures. This knowledge gap impedes the development of evidence-based management strategies and innovation in sustainable practices. Additionally, limited monitoring of fishery activities and ecosystem health can lead to unreported overexploitation and ecosystem degradation.

- *Trade and Market Infrastructure*

The lack of investment in trade and market infrastructure significantly affects the efficiency and effectiveness of the fisheries and aquaculture value chains. Inadequate infrastructure, such as transportation networks, cold storage facilities, and processing plants, hampers the distribution and accessibility of fish products. Poor infrastructure increases the cost of getting products to market, reduces product quality due to inadequate handling, and limits market access for small-scale producers. This results in higher post-harvest losses, reduced competitiveness in regional and international markets, and lower economic returns for fishers and aquaculture operators. Investments in infrastructure are crucial for improving value chain efficiency, enhancing product quality, and expanding market opportunities.

- **Trans-boundary challenges**

Trans-boundary challenges are a significant issue for the COMESA region, particularly in managing shared fisheries resources across national borders. The complexity of coordinating the management of these resources arises from effective institutional and political cooperation among neighboring countries.

Shared fisheries resources require a collaborative approach to ensure sustainable management and equitable use. However, differing national priorities, regulatory frameworks, and enforcement capabilities can complicate efforts to address overfishing, habitat degradation, and illegal fishing activities that cross borders. Effective management of trans-boundary fisheries involves aligning policies, harmonizing regulations, and establishing joint monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

Institutional cooperation is essential for creating and implementing agreements addressing the unique challenges shared resources pose. Political will and commitment from all involved parties are crucial for developing and maintaining frameworks that support joint management efforts, resolve conflicts, and foster collaborative solutions. Strengthening regional cooperation and building trust among countries can help overcome these transboundary challenges, ensuring that shared fisheries resources are managed sustainably and equitably for all stakeholders in the region.

- **Institutional and technical capacity and governance**

- *Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring*

Institutional and technical capacity, along with governance, play a crucial role in managing the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the COMESA region. Effective planning, implementation, and monitoring are fundamental to ensuring that policies and strategies are executed successfully. Strengthening governance structures helps in creating a conducive environment for policy implementation by clarifying roles, responsibilities, and accountability. This, in turn, ensures that fisheries management strategies are carried out effectively and that resources are utilized efficiently.

- *Control and Surveillance*

Robust capacity in control and surveillance is essential for monitoring fishing activities and enforcing regulations. Effective monitoring systems and enforcement mechanisms are necessary to curb illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, prevent overfishing, and protect aquatic ecosystems. Developing and maintaining these capabilities involves investing in technology, training personnel, and enhancing coordination among enforcement agencies.

- *Financial Sustainability*

Financial sustainability is another critical aspect for the long-term success of fisheries management and aquaculture development. Implementing sustainable funding models, such as user fees, public-private partnerships, or dedicated revenue streams, ensures that financial resources are available to support ongoing management, research, and enforcement activities. Without a stable financial foundation, efforts to manage and develop the sector may be compromised, hindering progress and sustainability.

- **Coordination among regional organizations**

Coordination among regional organizations in the COMESA region is a significant challenge, particularly concerning duly mandated regional organizations (DMROs) such as the East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), COMESA, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Low levels of coordination among these organizations can impede the harmonization of policies and actions related to fisheries and aquaculture management.

When DMROs do not effectively coordinate their efforts, it can lead to fragmented and inconsistent approaches to managing shared resources. This lack of alignment can result in overlapping initiatives, conflicting regulations, and

inefficiencies in policy implementation. For example, differing standards and practices among regional organizations can create barriers to trade, complicate enforcement, and undermine collaborative efforts to address trans-boundary challenges.

- Cooperation with Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) and RFMOs**

Strengthening cooperation between duly mandated regional organizations (DMROs) and regional fisheries bodies (RFBs) and regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs), such as the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), is crucial for enhancing regional fisheries management in the COMESA region.

Effective collaboration with these RFBs and RFMOs can significantly improve the management of shared fisheries resources. By aligning regional strategies with the guidelines and frameworks established by these bodies, DMROs can better address issues such as overfishing, stock depletion, and habitat destruction. Such cooperation facilitates the implementation of internationally agreed standards and practices, improves data sharing, and enhances the coordination of enforcement efforts.

- Capacity Building Challenges**

Capacity building remains a critical challenge in the COMESA region, particularly for duly mandated regional organizations (DMROs) that often lack the necessary capacities to implement effective fisheries programs. This gap in capacity can undermine efforts to manage and protect fisheries resources sustainably.

One significant aspect of this challenge is the need for strengthening the capabilities of competent authorities at the Member State (MS) level. These authorities require support to effectively conduct joint regional fisheries patrols and surveillance operations. Without adequate resources, training, and technical support, their ability to monitor and enforce regulations, combat illegal fishing, and manage shared resources is compromised.

1.2.3. Opportunities for Developing the PF&RS in the COMESA Region

The COMESA region is rich in diverse fisheries resources, encompassing both marine and inland systems, which provide substantial economic benefits in terms of revenue, food security, and livelihoods. Despite ongoing challenges, there are significant opportunities within the fisheries and aquaculture sector that, if effectively harnessed, could enhance the sector's contribution to socio-economic growth across COMESA MS.

Commitment is evident across the COMESA region to engage in and reform fisheries and develop sustainable aquaculture. The African Union has established several instruments to support fisheries and aquaculture management, which can serve as a foundation for the COMESA Regional Policy Framework and Reform Strategy. These instruments include the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the NEPAD Action Plan for the Development of African Fisheries and Aquaculture, and the Conference of African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture (CAMFA).

Donor support for sector development within the COMESA region is robust, and there is a prominent level of willingness among stakeholders and community-based organizations (CBOs) to be actively involved in the sector. Institutional arrangements and management frameworks for cooperative management of shared ecosystems and resources are already in place across the continent.

In recent years, COMESA MS have committed to strengthening the "African Voice" in international platforms. This commitment can be leveraged to enhance regional cooperation and policy harmonization for fisheries and aquaculture within COMESA.

The global food sector is undergoing substantial structural changes driven by increasing incomes, demographic

shifts, evolving lifestyles, globalization, and the liberalization of fish trade, along with the emergence of new markets. Africa is experiencing similar transformations, resulting in significant changes in food demand trends.

The demand for fish and fishery commodities continues to grow. According to the latest FAO data, global fish consumption reached approximately 20.5 kg per capita in 2023, marking an increase from previous years. This rising demand is projected to persist, with annual growth rates of around 2.3% until 2030. In the COMESA region, the demand for fish is also increasing rapidly, driven by population growth, urbanization, and rising incomes⁸.

However, this increasing demand poses challenges for supply. Both capture fisheries and aquaculture are facing constraints in meeting the growing needs. The FAO estimates that by 2030, the global fish supply will need to increase by 23 million tonnes to meet the demand. This shortfall presents an opportunity for the COMESA region to enhance the management of fisheries and expand aquaculture production to bridge the gap.

Developing a Regional Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture within COMESA is crucial. By improving the management of fisheries resources and promoting sustainable aquaculture practices, the region can address these challenges. Such strategies will not only help meet the rising demand for fish but also support economic development and food security across MS.

Table 3 Key Opportunities for Developing the PF&RS in the COMESA Region

Opportunities	Description
Expansion of Aquaculture and Sustainable Practices	The untapped potential for aquaculture development in the COMESA region can be realized by investing in sustainable practices, which not only increases fish production but also enhances food security and job creation, particularly in rural areas. Linking these efforts with capacity building and training ensures that local communities and businesses are equipped with the necessary skills to adopt sustainable aquaculture techniques, driving sector efficiency and development.
Enhanced Fisheries Management and Community-Based Approaches	Adopting effective fisheries management practices improves the sustainability and productivity of fish stocks. This initiative is enriched by community-based management strategies that engage local communities in the stewardship of their natural resources, ensuring more effective and inclusive conservation strategies. These community efforts are supported by broader regional cooperation on shared resources and ecosystems , which can lead to better management outcomes and increased fishery yields.
Regional Trade Integration and Infrastructure Enhancement	Leveraging COMESA's regional integration framework can facilitate intra-regional fish trade, boosting market access and economic opportunities. This effort is complemented by investments in infrastructure that reduce barriers and improve trade policies.
Sustainable Tourism Integration and Economic Development	Linking fisheries and aquaculture with the tourism industry creates unique economic development opportunities. Developing ecotourism and culinary tourism around fishing communities not only provides alternative income sources but also promotes conservation efforts. These initiatives should be supported by policy and institutional strengthening to create a supportive environment that enables the sustainable growth of both sectors.
Investment in Research and Innovation	Investing in research and technological advancements can drive improvements in sustainable fishing techniques, disease management in aquaculture, and development of value-added products, enhancing productivity and profitability .
Capacity Building and Training	Strengthening the skills and knowledge of those involved in fisheries and aquaculture through targeted training programs can improve practices and increase sector efficiency. Capacity building at both institutional and community levels is crucial for sustainable development.

⁸ FAO. 2024. *Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics – Yearbook 2021*. FAO Yearbook of Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9523en>.

Climate Resilience and adaptation strategies	Developing strategies to enhance the resilience of fisheries and aquaculture systems to climate change involves adopting adaptive management practices and promoting climate-smart aquaculture. This effort is bolstered by ongoing research and innovation to develop innovative technologies and methods that mitigate environmental impacts and adapt to changing climate conditions.
Regional Cooperation and Integration	Strengthening regional cooperation and integration is essential for addressing transboundary challenges and optimizing the use of shared resources. Collaborative efforts in policy harmonization , joint resource management, and knowledge sharing can enhance the overall effectiveness of fisheries and aquaculture initiatives. Establishing regional networks and platforms for dialogue among stakeholders can foster collaboration and drive collective action towards sustainable development goals.
Gender and Youth Inclusion in Fisheries and Aquaculture	Promoting the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors is crucial for ensuring equitable opportunities, enhancing sectoral productivity, and driving socio-economic development. This can be achieved by enhancing access to resources , facilitating access to finance and investment, providing capacity building and leadership training, and fostering inclusive governance structures.

1.3. Methodology of Developing the PF&RS

The development of the COMESA Regional Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PF&RS) for Fisheries and Aquaculture followed a systematic and inclusive methodology to ensure comprehensive and effective policy formulation. The process commenced with extensive data collection through a series of structured interviews and questionnaires administered to key stakeholders within the region. This initial phase was crucial for gathering detailed information and insights on the current state of fisheries and aquaculture, identifying challenges, opportunities, and best practices across COMESA member states.

Table 4 Stakeholders mapping.

Category	Stakeholders
African Union Organizations	-African Union Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) -African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) - Relevant Departments of the African Union Commission (AUC)
Regional Economic Communities (RECs)	- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) - East African Community (EAC) - Southern African Development Community (SADC) - Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
Regional Steering Committees (RSCs)	- Regional Steering Committees (RSCs)
Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFB)	- Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) - Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA)
Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs)	- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) - Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)
Specialized Regional Institutions	- New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) - Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC)
National Government Departments	- National Fisheries and Aquaculture Departments in COMESA Member States

Using the collected data, the PF&RS, highlighting key policy areas, setting clear objectives, and defining guiding principles such as sustainability, inclusivity, resilience, and innovation. The report also outlined corresponding implementation strategies tailored to the unique ecological, economic, and social contexts of the COMESA region. The framework was designed to be in alignment with broader regional integration efforts, trade facilitation initiatives, and sustainable development goals, incorporating elements of the common Regional and African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) frameworks.

Central to the methodology was ensuring coherence with existing continental policies. The formulation of the PF&RS drew heavily from the Africa Union Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture and its implementation guidelines. This alignment was vital for creating a harmonized approach to fisheries and aquaculture development across the continent.

To enhance governance and coordination, the methodology included the design of robust mechanisms for inter-state cooperation, compliance monitoring, and capacity building. These mechanisms are intended to facilitate effective implementation and oversight of the strategy across various authorities within the COMESA region.

After the initial framework drafting, the draft was circulated electronically for internal review within COMESA and AU-IBAR. This review phase allowed for initial feedback and input from these core institutions. Subsequently, the draft was shared with a broader range of stakeholders, including AUDA-NEPAD, relevant departments within the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Regional Fisheries Management Bodies (RFMBs), and the fisheries and aquaculture departments of COMESA member states. This inclusive review process ensured that diverse perspectives and expert opinions were incorporated, enriching the policy framework.

Based on the feedback and suggestions received during the review phases, the draft was revised and refined the draft, preparing a second version that addressed the comments and incorporated additional insights. The final document reflects a concerted effort to propose sustainable practices and scalable solutions for the long-term growth of the fisheries and aquaculture sector, aiming to contribute significantly to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the COMESA region.

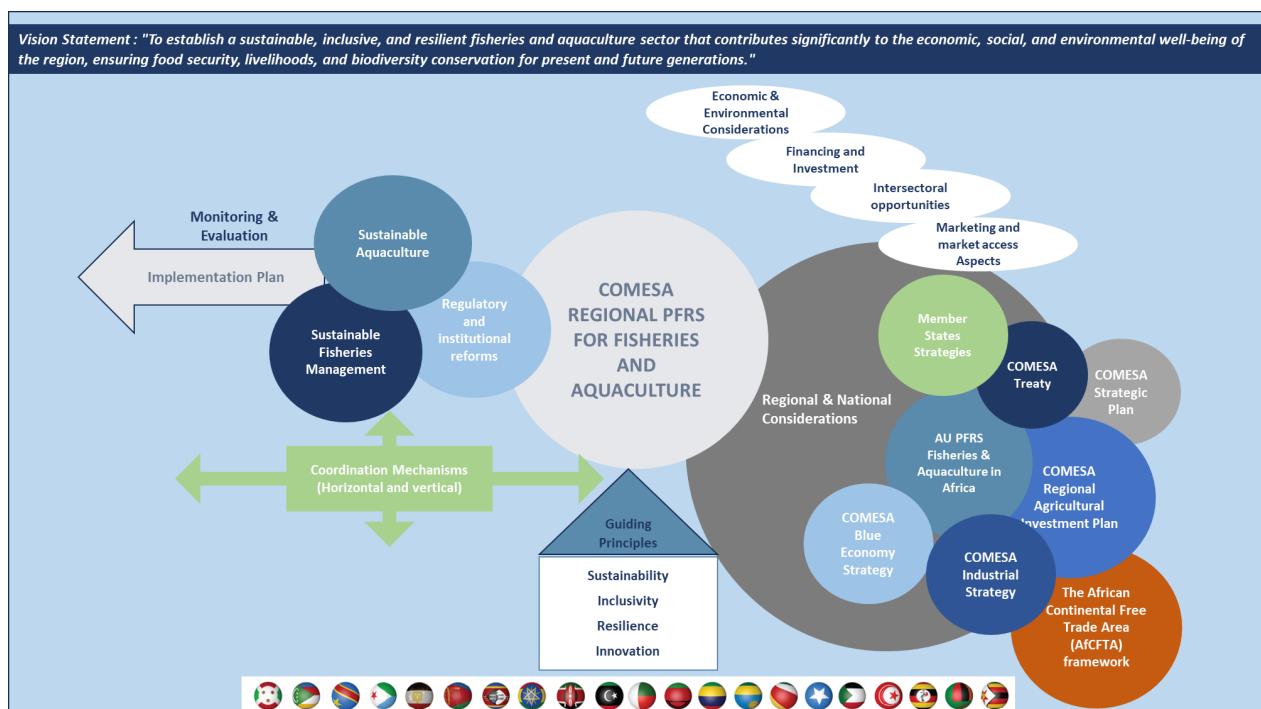


Figure 2 Structured Approach for developing the regional PF&RS for Fisheries and Aquaculture

Fisheries and aquaculture policies and strategic orientations in the COMESA region



2.1. Review Approach

2.1.1. Scope

The primary emphasis of the mapping exercise is on fisheries and aquaculture strategies and policy frameworks in the COMESA region. Although many African countries and regions have embraced the integrated concept of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and numerous individual strategies have long existed. Only initiatives that form part of an established strategic plan or policy program for fisheries and aquaculture are included in this review.

Recognizing that different countries and stakeholders have varying perspectives on what constitutes effective fisheries and aquaculture management and the drivers of its growth and development, the mapping exercise covers a wide range of strategy documents, policy instruments, and enabling tools. Countries may prioritize economic, social, ecological, or environmental objectives differently and frame their governance approaches in many ways, from broad policy statements to detailed action plans. This exercise includes blueprints, policy directions, strategic guides, action plans, planning, institutional, legal, regulatory instruments, and tools for financing, capacity building, skills development, innovation, and partnerships. The approach is designed to provide a systemic and structured method for exploring different frameworks and applications, assessing their adequacy and coherence within and across COMESA MS, and aligning them with the African Union's goals and policies for fisheries and aquaculture.

2.1.2. Methods

The mapping of fisheries and aquaculture strategy and policy frameworks in the COMESA region involves an extensive top-down desktop review of publicly available materials at both national and regional/international levels. At the national level, documents are sourced directly from published reports, government websites, and formal communications. At the regional and international levels, references and publications from agencies and institutions are used. Secondary data is collected from reliable sources and cross-checked for accuracy.

Complementing the top-down review, a bottom-up primary research review fills information gaps and stakeholder feedback. Primary data is collected through a (See annex1) and targeted interviews with relevant stakeholders in fisheries and aquaculture, providing insights into strategies, barriers, and implementation challenges. This combined approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the status and strategic orientations of fisheries and aquaculture policies in the COMESA region. At the national level, referenced documents were sourced directly from published reports, Government websites, and formal communications at both local and national levels.

2.2. Overview of frameworks on fisheries and aquaculture in the COMESA Region

The fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the COMESA region are critical for food security, livelihoods, economic development, and environmental sustainability. To address the unique challenges and opportunities within these sectors, COMESA MS have developed comprehensive strategies and policy frameworks that align with regional and continental goals. This overview provides insights into the strategic orientations, policy frameworks, and key initiatives shaping the fisheries and aquaculture landscape in the COMESA region.

2.2.1. Pan-African Level

At the Pan-African level, the African Union (AU) has provided a robust framework for the development of fisheries and aquaculture through its 2050 Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS). This strategy underscores the importance of sustainable management of marine resources and the promotion of a blue economy. The AU's Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PF&RS) serves as a guiding document for member states, emphasizing sustainability, governance, and socio-economic benefits. The Africa Blue Economy Strategy (ABES) further elaborates on these principles, promoting the integration of fisheries and aquaculture into broader economic development plans.

- *AU-IBAR Fisheries and aquaculture Policy Framework and Reform Strategy*

The African Union's Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture aims to facilitate coherent policy development and sustainable management of fisheries resources across Africa. The strategy emphasizes optimizing fisheries and aquaculture productivity, improving the profitability of fish enterprises, enhancing sustainability, and promoting regional collaboration. It also focuses on small-scale fisheries development, recognizing the role of women and marginalized communities in the sector.

- *Guide for Implementation of Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture*

This guide provides detailed instructions for implementing the AU-IBAR Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture. It includes methodologies for policy formulation, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring and evaluation. The guide aims to ensure that member states effectively implement reforms to achieve sustainable fisheries management and development.

- *The 2004 Sirte Summit and the 2005 Abuja Fish-for-All Declarations*

These declarations are pivotal milestones in Africa's commitment to sustainable development and food security. The Sirte Summit Declaration, adopted by the African Union, underscored the importance of agriculture and water resources for the continent's socio-economic development. It emphasized the need for member states to invest in agricultural infrastructure, technology, and research to boost productivity and ensure food security. Following this, the 2005 Abuja Fish-for-All Declaration highlighted the critical role of fisheries and aquaculture in addressing hunger and poverty. This declaration called for enhanced cooperation among African nations to sustainably manage fishery resources, improve governance in the sector, and support small-scale fisheries and aquaculture initiatives. Together, these declarations reflect Africa's strategic vision to leverage its agricultural and aquatic resources for the betterment of its people, fostering regional collaboration and sustainable practices to achieve long-term prosperity.

- *The 2010 Banjul Conference of African Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture (CAMFA I) and the 2014 Addis Ababa CAMFA II*

Represent significant steps in advancing fisheries and aquaculture governance in Africa. The 2010 Banjul CAMFA I marked a crucial gathering where African ministers underscored the importance of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors for food security, economic growth, and poverty alleviation. The conference emphasized the need for sustainable management of fishery resources, improved regulatory frameworks, and greater investment in aquaculture to meet the growing demand for fish and seafood.

Building on the progress made in Banjul, the 2014 Addis Ababa CAMFA II reinforced these commitments and expanded the focus to include climate change adaptation, regional cooperation, and the promotion of intra-African fish trade. CAMFA II highlighted the necessity of integrating fisheries and aquaculture into national development plans and enhancing the capacity of stakeholders through training and education. Both conferences have been instrumental in shaping policies and strategies that aim to harness the potential of Africa's fisheries and aquaculture sectors, ensuring their contribution to sustainable development and the well-being of African communities.

- *The African Fisheries Reform Mechanism (AFRM)*

A strategic initiative aimed at transforming Africa's fisheries and aquaculture sectors to promote sustainable development, economic growth, and food security. Established to address the myriad challenges facing these sectors, the AFRM seeks to enhance governance, ensure the sustainable use of fishery resources, and foster regional cooperation among African nations. By providing a platform for policy dialogue, technical support, and capacity building, the AFRM aims to harmonize fisheries management practices across the continent, align national policies with international standards, and support the implementation of best practices. Key components of the AFRM include developing regulatory frameworks, promoting responsible fishing practices, and empowering local fishing communities. The mechanism also focuses on combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, improving fish trade, and encouraging investment in aquaculture. Through its efforts, the AFRM strives to create a more resilient and equitable fisheries sector that can sustainably meet the nutritional and economic needs of Africa's

growing population, contributing to the broader goals of regional integration and sustainable development.

2.2.2. Regional Level

At the regional level, COMESA has taken significant steps to harmonize fisheries and aquaculture policies among its member states. The COMESA Regional Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture aims to create a cohesive approach to resource management, trade facilitation, and sustainable development. This strategy aligns with the broader goals of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by promoting intra-regional trade in fish and fish products, enhancing market access, and reducing trade barriers.

Key regional initiatives include the COMESA Blue Economy Strategy, which emphasizes the sustainable use of marine and inland water resources for economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation. The COMESA Industrial Strategy also supports the development of fisheries and aquaculture by encouraging value addition, innovation, and investment in these sectors.

- *COMESA Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) 2018-2022*

The RAIP 2018-2022 outlines COMESA's commitment to enhancing agricultural productivity and trade within its member states. It identifies three core priority areas: agriculture production and productivity, removing barriers to agricultural trade, and reducing social and economic vulnerability while enhancing food security. Fisheries and aquaculture are integral components of the agricultural sector, emphasizing sustainable practices and regional cooperation.

- *COMESA Blue Economy Strategy 2022-2032*

The COMESA Blue Economy Strategy integrates fisheries and aquaculture within a broader framework of sustainable ocean-based economic development. It emphasizes improving governance, fostering regional cooperation, and promoting investment in blue economy sectors, including fisheries and aquaculture. The strategy highlights the importance of sustainable practices and capacity building to enhance productivity and market access.

- *COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2021-2025*

The MTSP 2021-2025 outlines COMESA's strategic vision for regional integration and economic development, including the fisheries sector. It aims to catalyze sustainable fisheries production and market access through private sector involvement and policy support. The plan emphasizes enhancing regional data and information systems to support evidence-based strategy development for fisheries and other blue economy sectors.

- *COMESA Industrial Strategy*

The COMESA Industrial Strategy recognizes fisheries and aquaculture as key sectors for economic transformation. It aims to promote sustainable industrial development by leveraging natural and human resources. The strategy includes priorities such as increasing value addition, enhancing competitiveness, and fostering regional cooperation to develop a vibrant and sustainable industrial sector, which includes fisheries and aquaculture.

- *Revised Investment Agreement for the COMESA Common Investment Area (CCIA)*

The Revised Investment Agreement for the CCIA promotes a conducive investment climate within COMESA, supporting sectors like fisheries and aquaculture. It aims to attract foreign and domestic investment by providing clear guidelines and protections for investors, thereby fostering economic growth and sustainable development in fisheries and aquaculture.

2.2.3. National Level

At the national level, COMESA member states have developed and implemented various strategies and policy frameworks tailored to their specific contexts. These national strategies often reflect the principles and objectives outlined in the AU and COMESA regional frameworks. Key areas of focus include sustainable fisheries management,

aquaculture development, regulatory reforms, and capacity building.

Countries have adopted a range of policy instruments, such as national fisheries and aquaculture plans, legal and regulatory frameworks, and institutional arrangements to ensure effective governance and management of these sectors. Additionally, national strategies emphasize the importance of environmental conservation, socio-economic development, and resilience to climate change.

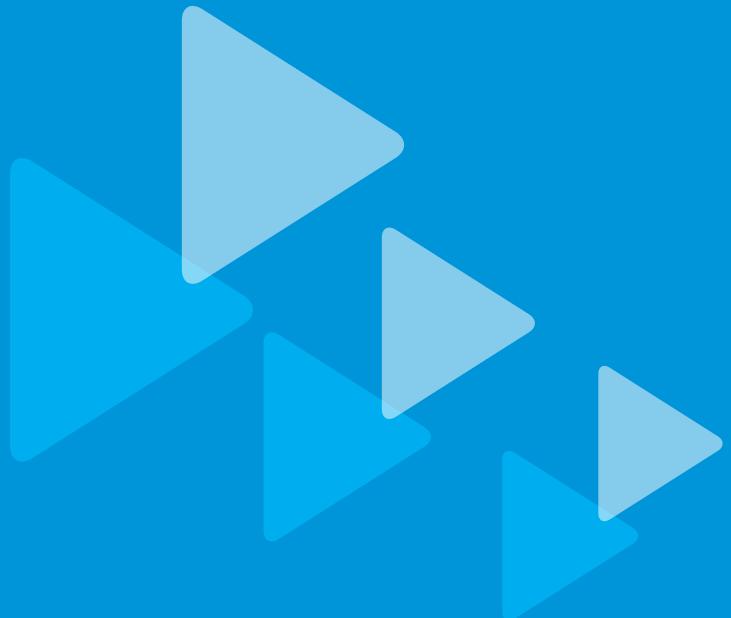
2.2.4. International Level

Internationally, COMESA MS are active participants in various global initiatives and frameworks aimed at promoting sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. They collaborate with international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank (WB) to access technical assistance, funding, and best practices.

African countries in the COMESA region are also part of several international agreements and conventions that support sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and various regional fisheries management organizations.

The fisheries and aquaculture strategies in the COMESA region are characterized by a multi-level approach that integrates Pan-African, regional, national, and international frameworks. These strategies aim to enhance the sustainability, productivity, and resilience of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, contributing to food security, economic growth, and environmental conservation in the region. Through coordinated efforts and alignment with broader continental and global goals, COMESA MS are working towards a sustainable and prosperous future for their fisheries and aquaculture industries.

Fundamental Elements of the PF&RS



3.1. Scope and Nature

The geographic scope of the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PF&RS) for Fisheries and Aquaculture encompasses all COMESA Member States. The PF&RS focuses on marine and inland fisheries and aquaculture, as well as the post-harvest sector. It recognizes that fish is a valuable and vital renewable resource that, if effectively managed, can provide significant benefits to present and future generations. The PF&RS acknowledges the diverse uses of fish resources and advocates for a broad, inclusive approach to fisheries management and aquaculture development. This framework is built upon a clear vision and achievable objectives, aligning with the Comprehensive Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa, Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and various national strategies adopted to stimulate economic growth and modernize development. Furthermore, the PF&RS is evidence-based, holistic, pragmatic, and precautionary in its approach.

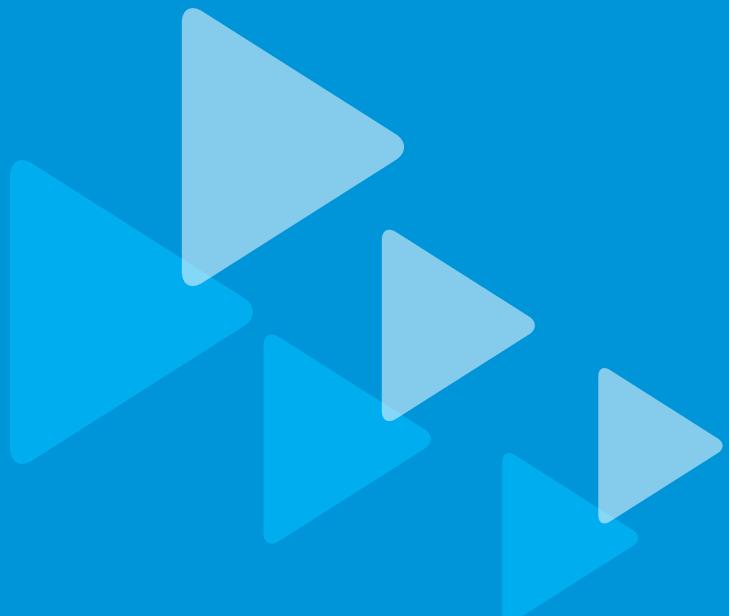
3.2. Overall Purpose

The overall purpose of the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PF&RS) for Fisheries and Aquaculture is to facilitate the transformation of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors within the COMESA region to enhance food security, livelihoods, and economic prosperity. This transformation is essential for leveraging the full potential of these sectors, which are vital for the sustainable development of COMESA Member States. Accordingly, the PF&RS aims to achieve the following:

- 1) **Good Governance and Coordination:** The PF&RS seeks to establish and clarify essential guiding principles for the good governance of fisheries and aquaculture. By promoting increased coherence and coordination within the sector, it aims to create a unified approach to resource management and policy implementation across COMESA Member States. This includes setting clear standards for transparency, accountability, and participatory decision-making processes.
- 2) **Policy Development Assistance:** The PF&RS assists COMESA Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Regional Fisheries Bodies (RFBs) in developing realistic and effective fisheries and aquaculture policies. By suggesting standards and best practices, the framework aims to maximize the benefits of the sector, particularly in terms of food security, employment, and income generation. This involves providing technical guidance, capacity building, and knowledge sharing to support policy formulation and implementation.
- 3) **Regional Collaboration and Integration:** Recognizing the shared nature of many fisheries and aquaculture resources, the PF&RS promotes regional collaboration and integration in resource management. This involves fostering partnerships and cooperation among Member States to manage transboundary water bodies and migratory fish stocks effectively. The framework encourages the harmonization of policies and practices to ensure sustainable and equitable resource use.
- 4) **Guidance on Implementing Reforms:** The PF&RS provides comprehensive guidance on how to implement necessary reforms for the development of fisheries and aquaculture. This includes practical advice on institutional strengthening, regulatory adjustments, and the adoption of innovative practices. By addressing key challenges and barriers to sectoral growth, the framework aims to create an enabling environment for sustainable development.
- 5) **International Compliance and Advocacy:** To ensure that COMESA MS are aligned with global standards, the PF&RS facilitates the ratification and/or adoption of relevant provisions in international fisheries management instruments. This enhances the region's compliance with international agreements and conventions, promoting responsible and sustainable fisheries practices. Additionally, the framework advocates for increased investment in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, highlighting their importance for economic growth and resilience.
- 6) **Investment and Resource Mobilization:** The PF&RS underscores the need for increased investment in

fisheries and aquaculture to drive sustainable development. It advocates for resource mobilization from both public and private sectors, including international donors and development partners. By highlighting the economic potential and social benefits of these sectors, the framework aims to attract investment for infrastructure development, technological innovation, and capacity building.

Vision, Goal, Policy Areas, and Objectives



4.1. Vision Statement

To establish a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient fisheries and aquaculture sector that contributes significantly to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the region, ensuring food security, livelihoods, and biodiversity conservation for present and future generations.

4.2. Primary Objective

The primary objective of the PF&RS is to transform the fisheries and aquaculture sectors within the COMESA region to enhance their contribution to food security, livelihoods, and economic prosperity. This transformation aims to leverage the full potential of these sectors, which are vital for sustainable development across COMESA MS.

4.3. Main Policy Areas

To address the challenges and opportunities of fisheries and aquaculture in the COMESA region and harness their full potential, the following set of policies are prioritized for reform to enhance the sector's contribution to the COMESA MS socio-economic development. These policy areas and strategic actions result from a combination of various activities, including national and regional assessments to generate evidence, as well as a series of consultative processes, primarily at the regional level. These policy areas aimed at promoting sustainable management, enhancing value chains, and ensuring resilience and growth in these sectors.

The key policies are outlined below:

4.3.1. Area 1: Sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture resources

The sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture resources is crucial for maintaining the long-term viability and productivity of these sectors. This policy focuses on implementing comprehensive fisheries management plans, strengthening monitoring, control, and surveillance systems, promoting community-based management approaches, and enhancing data collection and research. By adopting ecosystem-based management practices and restoring critical habitats, this policy aims to ensure that fish stocks and aquatic ecosystems are managed sustainably for the benefit of current and future generations.

4.3.2. Area 2: Expansion of aquaculture and sustainable practices

Aquaculture offers significant opportunities for increasing fish production, enhancing food security, and supporting economic growth. This policy promotes the expansion of aquaculture through the adoption of sustainable practices, including best management practices, sustainable feed and inputs, and aquaculture zoning and spatial planning. By investing in research and development, strengthening capacity building and training, and facilitating access to finance and investment, this policy aims to develop a resilient and sustainable aquaculture sector in the COMESA region.

4.3.3. Area 3: Value chain development and market access

To maximize the economic benefits of fisheries and aquaculture, it is essential to strengthen value chains and improve market access. This policy focuses on investing in infrastructure development, enhancing market information systems, promoting value addition and product diversification, and facilitating access to finance. By strengthening linkages among value chain actors, improving access to regional and international markets, and building capacity and training, this policy aims to create robust value chains that enhance product quality, increase market access, and drive sustainable economic growth and integrate the principles of the circular economy into fisheries and aquaculture management to maximize resource efficiency and minimize waste.

4.3.4. Area 4: Capacity building and institutional strengthening

Effective management and development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors require strong institutional capacities and skilled stakeholders. This policy emphasizes the development of training and capacity-building programs, strengthening institutional frameworks and governance structures, enhancing monitoring, control, and surveillance capacities, and fostering collaboration and partnerships. By developing financial and technical support mechanisms and promoting stakeholder engagement and awareness, this policy aims to build the necessary capacity for sustainable management and development.

4.3.5. Area 5: Climate resilience and adaptation

Climate change poses significant risks to fisheries and aquaculture, affecting fish stocks, ecosystems, and communities. This policy focuses on conducting climate impact assessments, developing and implementing adaptive strategies, promoting climate-smart technologies, and strengthening disaster risk management. By enhancing community resilience, facilitating access to climate financing, and promoting research and knowledge sharing, this policy aims to increase the resilience of fisheries and aquaculture systems to climate change impacts.

4.3.6. Area 6: Sustainable tourism integration and economic development

Linking fisheries and aquaculture with the tourism industry creates unique economic development opportunities. This policy promotes the development of ecotourism and culinary tourism initiatives, enhances infrastructure and services, and provides capacity building and training. By strengthening policy and institutional frameworks, marketing and promotion, and community engagement and benefits, this policy aims to create a supportive environment for sustainable tourism that drives economic development and conservation efforts.

4.3.7. Area 7: Regional trade integration and infrastructure enhancement

Regional trade integration and infrastructure enhancement are vital for facilitating intra-regional fish trade and boosting economic opportunities. This policy focuses on harmonizing regional standards and regulations, simplifying customs procedures, and investing in critical infrastructure. By improving market access, promoting sustainable trade practices, and strengthening regional cooperation, this policy aims to create a dynamic and competitive environment for fisheries and aquaculture trade, driving economic growth and sustainability.

4.3.8. Area 8: Enhanced regional cooperation and integration

Strengthening regional cooperation and integration is essential to promote sustainable development, improve resource management, and boost economic opportunities in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors across the COMESA region. This policy focuses on harmonizing policies and regulations, fostering institutional collaboration, promoting cross-border and intra-regional trade, and enhancing data sharing and research. By investing in joint regional projects and initiatives, supporting capacity building, and facilitating regional policy dialogues, this policy aims to create a cohesive and cooperative framework for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development. Enhanced regional cooperation and integration will lead to more effective management of shared resources, improved economic opportunities, and greater resilience to environmental and market changes, benefiting all member states in the COMESA region.

4.3.9. Area 9: Gender and youth inclusion in fisheries and aquaculture

Promoting the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors is crucial for ensuring equitable opportunities, enhancing sectoral productivity, and driving socio-economic development. This policy focuses on enhancing access to resources and opportunities for women and youth, promoting gender and youth-friendly policies, facilitating access to finance and investment, and strengthening market access and value chains. It emphasizes the importance of capacity building and leadership training to prepare women and youth for decision-making roles. By fostering inclusive governance structures, enhancing data collection and research, and raising awareness through advocacy, the policy aims to create a supportive environment where women and youth can actively participate and thrive in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Policy and Reform Narrative, Expected Outcomes, Strategies, and Action Steps



The table below outlines the strategic policies and action steps prioritized for reform to enhance the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture sectors to the socio-economic development of COMESA member states. These policies, developed through national and regional assessments and consultative processes, aim to promote sustainable management, enhance value chains, and ensure resilience and growth in these sectors.

Table 5 The strategic policies and action steps for reform to enhance the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture sectors to the socio-economic development of COMESA MS.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Area 1. Sustainable	Ensure the sustainable use and management of fisheries and aquaculture resources to enhance productivity,	Develop and implement comprehensive fisheries management plans	Stock assessment and monitoring Conduct regular stock assessments to gather data on fish populations and ecosystem health. Implement monitoring systems to track changes and trends over time.	Accurate data on fish populations and ecosystem health, enabling informed management decisions. Effective monitoring systems that provide real-time data on fish stocks and trends.
			Management measures Establish and enforce management measures such as catch limits, size restrictions, seasonal closures, and gear regulations to prevent overfishing and allow fish stocks to recover.	Prevented overfishing and recovery of fish stocks through enforced regulations. Improved compliance with fishing regulations among stakeholders.
			Ecosystem-based management Adopt ecosystem-based management approaches that consider the broader ecological interactions and environmental factors affecting fisheries and aquaculture.	Improved health and resilience of aquatic ecosystems, supporting biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Strengthen Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) Systems	<p>Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing Develop and implement robust MCS systems to detect and deter IUU fishing activities.</p> <p>Enhance surveillance capabilities using technology such as satellite monitoring and drones.</p>	<p>Reduced instances of IUU fishing activities due to improved detection and deterrence.</p> <p>Increased use of advanced surveillance technologies, resulting in better enforcement.</p>
			<p>Enforcement and compliance</p> <p>Strengthen enforcement mechanisms, including increased patrolling, inspections, and penalties for non-compliance.</p> <p>Train and equip fisheries enforcement officers to effectively carry out their duties.</p>	<p>Increased compliance with fishing regulations, resulting in fairer competition and better resource management.</p>
			<p>Community involvement</p> <p>Engage local communities in monitoring and reporting IUU activities through participatory surveillance programs and community-based management initiatives.</p>	<p>Empowered local communities actively participating in fisheries management and conservation efforts.</p>
		Promote Community-Based Management Approaches	<p>Community rights and responsibilities</p> <p>Recognize and support community rights to manage local fisheries resources.</p> <p>Establish clear roles and responsibilities for communities in resource management and conservation efforts.</p>	<p>Empowered Communities with increased involvement in fisheries and aquaculture management.</p>
			<p>Capacity building</p> <p>Provide training and capacity-building programs for community members on sustainable fishing practices, resource management, and conservation techniques.</p>	<p>Enhanced skills and knowledge of community members in sustainable practices.</p>
			<p>Collaborative governance</p> <p>Foster collaboration between government agencies, local communities, and other stakeholders to develop and implement community-based management plans.</p>	<p>Improved collaboration and successful implementation of management plans.</p>

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Enhance Data Collection and Research	Scientific Research Invest in scientific research to improve understanding of fish biology, ecosystems, and the impacts of environmental changes. Data Management Develop centralized databases and data management systems to store, analyze, and share fisheries and aquaculture data. Ensure data accessibility for decision-makers, researchers, and stakeholders. Adaptive Management Use research findings and data to inform adaptive management strategies that can be adjusted based on changing conditions and new information.	Improved understanding of ecosystems and fish populations, informing better management strategies. Accessible and reliable data supporting evidence-based decision-making. Flexible management strategies that respond to environmental changes and new information.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Implement Measures to Restore and Conserve Critical Habitats	<p>Habitat Restoration</p> <p>Identify and restore degraded habitats that are crucial for fish spawning, nursery, and feeding. Implement habitat restoration projects such as mangrove reforestation, coral reef rehabilitation, and wetland restoration.</p> <p>Protected Areas</p> <p>Establish and effectively manage marine protected areas (MPAs) and freshwater conservation zones to safeguard critical habitats and biodiversity.</p> <p>Environmental Impact Assessments & Plastic pollution</p> <p>Conduct environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for proposed development projects that may affect fisheries and aquaculture resources.</p> <p>Introduce specific measures to monitor and mitigate the impact of macro and microplastics on aquatic ecosystems.</p> <p>Establish environmental monitoring systems specifically targeting plastic pollution in water bodies, promoting waste management initiatives, and encourage the adoption of eco-friendly materials in fisheries and aquaculture operations.</p>	<p>Recovery of crucial habitats, leading to increased fish populations and biodiversity.</p> <p>Preservation of critical habitats and protection of biodiversity.</p> <p>Mitigated negative impacts of development projects on fisheries and aquaculture resources.</p> <p>Tackling pollution in fisheries and aquaculture.</p>

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Strengthen Climate Resilience and Adaptation	<p>Climate Impact Assessments</p> <p>Assess the impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture, including changes in water temperature, sea level rise, and extreme weather events.</p> <p>Adaptive Strategies</p> <p>Develop and implement adaptive strategies to enhance the resilience of fisheries and aquaculture systems to climate change.</p> <p>Promote climate-smart practices and technologies.</p> <p>Disaster Risk Management</p> <p>Establish disaster risk management plans to protect fisheries and aquaculture resources and communities from natural disasters such as storms, floods, and droughts.</p>	<p>Improved understanding of climate change impacts on fisheries and aquaculture.</p> <p>Enhanced resilience and adaptability of fisheries and aquaculture systems to climate change.</p> <p>Reduced vulnerability of fisheries and aquaculture communities to natural disasters.</p>
Area 2. Expansion of Aquaculture and Sustainable Practices	Promote the expansion of aquaculture through the adoption of sustainable practices to enhance food security, economic growth, and environmental conservation in the COMESA region.	Promote Sustainable Aquaculture Practices	<p>Best Management Practices (BMPs)</p> <p>Develop and promote BMPs for aquaculture that minimize environmental impacts, improve resource efficiency, and ensure fish health and welfare.</p> <p>Sustainable Feed and Inputs</p> <p>Encourage the use of sustainable feed sources, reduce reliance on wild-caught fish for feed, and promote environmentally friendly inputs in aquaculture.</p>	<p>Lower ecological footprint and enhanced sustainability of aquaculture operations.</p> <p>Improved Fish Health and reduced disease outbreak.</p> <p>Improved feed conversion ratios and reduced pressure on wild fish populations.</p> <p>Adopted eco-friendly practices</p>

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Implement Aquaculture Zoning and Spatial Planning	Zoning Regulations Develop zoning regulations (e.g. aquaculture parks) to designate suitable areas for aquaculture development, taking into account environmental, social, and economic factors.	Efficient use of land and water resources, minimizing conflicts with other land uses. Protected sensitive ecosystems and habitats.
			Carrying Capacity Assessments Conduct assessments to determine the carrying capacity of different aquaculture sites to prevent overstocking and environmental degradation.	Maintained ecological balance and prevented overexploitation
		Enhance Research and Development (R&D)	Aquaculture Innovation Invest in research and development to innovate and improve aquaculture technologies, practices, and species diversification.	Adopted advanced technologies. New and resilient aquaculture species introduced (species diversification), reducing risks associated with monoculture.
			Collaborative Research Foster collaboration between research institutions, universities, and the private sector to address key challenges and opportunities in aquaculture.	Enhanced knowledge of aquaculture systems and effective solutions to industry challenges.
		Strengthen Capacity Building and Training	Skills Development Provide training programs for aquaculture farmers, technicians, and managers on best practices, biosecurity, and sustainable management.	Increased competency and expertise among aquaculture stakeholders. Higher adoption rates of sustainable and efficient aquaculture practices.
			Extension Services Establish and strengthen aquaculture extension services to provide ongoing technical support and guidance to farmers.	Enhanced farmer support leading to better aquaculture management and productivity.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Facilitate Access to Finance and Investment	Financial Products Develop tailored financial products and services for aquaculture farmers, including loans, insurance, and grants.	Increased Investment and resources available for aquaculture development and expansion. Reduced financial risks for aquaculture farmers through insurance and financial support.
			Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) Encourage PPPs to leverage resources and expertise for infrastructure development and value chain enhancement in aquaculture.	Greater investment in aquaculture infrastructure and technology. Enhanced value chains and improved efficiency and productivity in the aquaculture sector.
		Promote Market Access and Value Addition	Market Information Systems Develop market information systems to provide timely data on prices, demand, and supply, enabling farmers to make informed decisions.	Better market positioning and pricing strategies for aquaculture products. Increased competitiveness in regional and international markets.
			Value Addition Encourage the development of value-added products such as processed, packaged, and branded fish products.	Increased economic returns through value addition and product diversification. Enhanced market appeal and differentiation of aquaculture products.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Enhance Environmental Monitoring and Compliance	Monitoring Systems Implement environmental monitoring systems to track the impacts of aquaculture activities on water quality and ecosystems, including plastic pollution.	Minimized negative impacts on aquatic ecosystems through proactive monitoring. Higher compliance rates with environmental regulations and standards.
			Certification Programs Develop and promote certification programs for sustainable aquaculture practices.	Increased market recognition and consumer trust in certified sustainable aquaculture products.
		Promote Community Involvement and Benefits	Community Engagement Engage local communities in aquaculture development planning and decision-making processes.	Inclusive development Equitable distribution of economic benefits from aquaculture development.
			Social Programs Implement social programs to ensure that aquaculture development supports local livelihoods and community well-being.	Enhanced socio-economic conditions for communities involved in aquaculture. Stronger social ties and community cohesion through inclusive and beneficial aquaculture practices.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Area 3. Value Chain Development and Market Access	Strengthen fisheries and aquaculture value chains to improve product quality, market access, and economic returns, ensuring the sectors' sustainable growth and competitiveness	Invest in Infrastructure Development	Cold storage facilities Establish and upgrade cold storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses and maintain product quality during transportation and storage.	Improved product quality and reduced post-harvest losses through better preservation and storage.
			Processing plants Develop modern fish processing plants equipped with advanced technology to enhance value addition and ensure compliance with international quality standards.	Enhanced value addition and economic returns by developing modern processing facilities.
			Transport and logistics Improve transport infrastructure, including roads, ports, and logistics hubs, to facilitate efficient movement of fish products from production sites to markets.	Efficient movement of fish products, leading to higher market value and reduced waste.
		Enhance Market Information Systems	Data Collection and Analysis Develop robust market information systems that collect and analyze data on prices, demand, supply, and consumer preferences to guide decision-making.	Better-informed decision-making due to robust market information systems.
			Market Intelligence Provide market intelligence reports and updates to fish producers, processors, and traders to help them respond to market trends and opportunities.	Increased responsiveness to market trends and opportunities.
			Digital Platforms Establish digital platforms for real-time market information dissemination, enabling stakeholders to access and use data effectively.	Real-time access to market information, enabling effective data utilization.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Promote Value Addition and Product Diversification	Product Development Encourage the development of value-added products such as smoked, canned, and processed fish to increase market options and profitability.	Increased profitability through the development of value-added products.
			Quality Assurance Implement strict quality assurance and certification processes to ensure that fish products meet regional and international standards.	Compliance with international standards, leading to enhanced market access.
			Innovation and Technology Foster innovation in product packaging, processing techniques, and preservation methods to enhance product appeal and shelf life.	Improved product appeal and shelf life through innovative packaging and processing techniques.
		Facilitate Access to Finance	Financial Services Develop financial products and services tailored to the needs of small-scale fishers and aquaculture operators, including loans, insurance, and grants.	Enhanced financial support for small-scale fishers and aquaculture operators.
			Investment Incentives Provide incentives for private sector investment in fisheries and aquaculture value chains, such as tax breaks and subsidies.	Increased private sector investment in fisheries and aquaculture value chains.
			Public-Private Partnerships Promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) to leverage resources and expertise for infrastructure development and value chain enhancement.	Leveraged resources and expertise for infrastructure development and value chain enhancement

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Strengthen Linkages Among Value Chain Actors	<p>Cooperatives and Associations</p> <p>Support the formation and strengthening of cooperatives and associations among fish producers, processors, and traders to improve coordination and bargaining power.</p> <p>Value Chain Integration</p> <p>Facilitate vertical and horizontal integration of value chain actors to enhance efficiency and collaboration.</p> <p>Networking Events</p> <p>Organize trade fairs, expos, and networking events to connect value chain actors, promote partnerships, and showcase products.</p>	<p>Improved coordination and bargaining power among fish producers, processors, and traders.</p> <p>Enhanced efficiency and collaboration through vertical and horizontal integration of value chain actors</p> <p>Increased partnerships and market visibility through trade fairs and expos</p>
		Improve Access to Regional and International Markets	<p>Trade Facilitation</p> <p>Simplify and harmonize trade regulations and procedures to reduce barriers and facilitate smooth cross-border trade.</p> <p>Market Access Programs</p> <p>Develop programs that support fish producers and processors in meeting the requirements of regional and international markets.</p> <p>Export Promotion</p> <p>Implement export promotion strategies, including marketing campaigns and participation in international trade shows, to increase the visibility and competitiveness of fish products.</p>	<p>Simplified trade regulations and procedures, facilitating smooth cross-border trade.</p> <p>Better support for meeting regional and international market requirements.</p> <p>Increased visibility and competitiveness of fish products through marketing campaigns and international trade shows.</p>
		Integrate Circular Economy Approach	<p>Circular Economy Approach</p> <p>Promote practices such as recycling of fishing gear, reducing post-harvest losses, and utilizing fish by-products for other industries.</p>	Optimize the use of resources, reduce environmental impacts, and create new business opportunities by turning waste into valuable inputs for other sectors.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Capacity Building and Training	<p>Skills Development</p> <p>Provide training programs on best practices in production, processing, quality control, and marketing to improve skills and knowledge among value chain actors.</p> <p>Business Management</p> <p>Offer training on business management, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship to enhance the capacity of fishers and aquaculture operators to run profitable enterprises.</p> <p>Technical Assistance</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to fish processors and traders to adopt modern technologies and comply with quality standards.</p>	<p>Improved skills and knowledge in production, processing, quality control, and marketing.</p> <p>Enhanced capacity for running profitable enterprises through training in business management and financial literacy.</p> <p>Viable fisheries and aquaculture Small and Medium-Size Enterprises (SMEs) operating in MS.</p> <p>Adoption of modern technologies and compliance with quality standards through technical assistance.</p>
Area 4. Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening	Strengthen the capacity of institutions and stakeholders to effectively manage and develop the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, ensuring sustainable practices, compliance with regulations, and enhanced productivity.	Develop Training and Capacity-Building Programs	<p>Skills Development</p> <p>Provide targeted training programs for fisheries managers, enforcement officers, and community members on sustainable practices, resource management, and compliance.</p> <p>Leadership and Governance</p> <p>Conduct training sessions on effective leadership, governance, and policy implementation for institutional leaders and key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Improved capabilities of fisheries managers, enforcement officers, and community members to implement sustainable practices.</p> <p>Strengthened leadership and governance in fisheries and aquaculture institutions, leading to better policy implementation and management.</p>
		Strengthen Institutional Frameworks and Governance Structures	<p>Regulatory Frameworks</p> <p>Review and update regulatory frameworks to align with best practices and international standards.</p> <p>Organizational Development</p> <p>Support institutional reforms and organizational development initiatives to improve efficiency and effectiveness.</p>	<p>Enhanced alignment with best practices and international standards, leading to more effective management and compliance.</p> <p>Increased efficiency and effectiveness of fisheries and aquaculture institutions, leading to better resource management.</p>

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Enhance Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) Capacities	<p>Technology Integration</p> <p>Implement modern technologies such as satellite monitoring, drones, and electronic reporting systems to enhance MCS capabilities.</p> <p>Training and Equipment</p> <p>Provide training and necessary equipment to enforcement officers to improve their ability to conduct surveillance and enforce regulations.</p>	<p>Increased ability to monitor and control fishing activities, leading to reduced illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.</p> <p>Better-equipped and trained enforcement officers, leading to more effective regulation enforcement and compliance.</p>
		Foster Collaboration and Partnerships	<p>Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)</p> <p>Encourage partnerships between public institutions, private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to leverage resources and expertise.</p> <p>Regional Cooperation</p> <p>Strengthen cooperation among COMESA MSto address transboundary challenges and share best practices.</p>	<p>Increased resources and expertise from PPPs, leading to improved capacity and innovation in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.</p> <p>Enhanced collaboration and knowledge sharing among member states, leading to better management of shared resources.</p>
		Develop Financial and Technical Support Mechanisms	<p>Funding Programs</p> <p>Establish funding programs to support capacity-building initiatives, infrastructure development, and research activities.</p> <p>Technical Assistance</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to institutions and stakeholders to implement best practices and innovative solutions.</p>	<p>More resources available for capacity-building, infrastructure, and research, leading to strengthened institutional capacities.</p> <p>Improved technical capabilities of institutions and stakeholders, leading to more effective management and development.</p>
		Promote Stakeholder Engagement and Awareness	<p>Community Outreach</p> <p>Conduct outreach programs to educate communities on the importance of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture practices.</p> <p>Stakeholder Involvement</p> <p>Ensure active involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes and policy formulation.</p>	<p>Increased community awareness and support for sustainable practices among leading to better resource management.</p> <p>Enhanced inclusive and participatory governance, leading to policies and practices that reflect stakeholder needs and priorities.</p>

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Conduct Climate Impact Assessments	Vulnerability Assessments Assess the vulnerability of fisheries and aquaculture sectors to climate change, including the impacts of changing water temperatures, sea level rise, and extreme weather events.	Informed risk management and identification of areas and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts, enabling targeted interventions.
			Ecosystem Monitoring Implement regular monitoring of aquatic ecosystems to track changes and predict future climate-related trends.	Data-driven insights into ecosystem changes, supporting proactive management and adaptation strategies
		Develop and Implement Adaptive Strategies	Adaptive Management Plans Create and implement adaptive management plans that can be adjusted based on ongoing climate impact assessments and new information.	Ability to quickly adjust management practices in response to changing climate conditions.
			Climate-Smart Practices Promote the adoption of climate-smart fishing and aquaculture practices that enhance resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change.	Increased use of practices that minimize climate risks and improve sustainability.
		Promote Climate-Smart Technologies	Innovative Technologies Support the development and adoption of innovative technologies that improve the efficiency and sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture operations in the face of climate change.	Improved resilience of operations to climate impacts through the use of advanced technologies.
			Renewable Energy Encourage the use of renewable energy sources in fisheries and aquaculture operations to reduce carbon footprints and enhance energy security.	Lower greenhouse gas emissions from the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Strengthen Disaster Risk Management	Risk Management Plans Develop and implement disaster risk management plans to protect fisheries and aquaculture resources and communities from natural disasters such as storms, floods, and droughts.	Enhanced preparedness and response capabilities, reducing the impact of natural disasters on the sectors.
			Early Warning Systems Establish early warning systems for extreme weather events and climate-related hazards to enable timely responses	Improved ability to anticipate and respond to climate-related hazards, minimizing damage and loss.
		Enhance Community Resilience	Capacity Building Provide training and resources to communities to build their capacity to adapt to climate change and implement climate-resilient practices.	Increased ability of communities to adapt to and manage climate risks effectively.
			Community-Based Adaptation Support community-based adaptation initiatives that engage local populations in developing and implementing climate resilience strategies.	Greater community involvement and ownership of adaptation strategies, leading to more sustainable outcomes.
		Facilitate Access to Climate Financing	Funding Mechanisms Develop funding mechanisms to support climate resilience and adaptation projects in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.	Increased Investment and resources available for climate resilience initiatives, leading to enhanced adaptive capacity.
			International Collaboration Collaborate with international organizations and donors to secure funding and technical assistance for climate resilience projects.	Access to global expertise and funding, enhancing the effectiveness of local climate resilience efforts
		Promote Research and Knowledge Sharing	Climate Research Invest in research to better understand the impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture and identify effective adaptation strategies.	Research-driven insights informing the development of effective adaptation measures.
			Knowledge Platforms Establish platforms for sharing knowledge and best practices on climate resilience and adaptation among stakeholders.	Increased dissemination of best practices and lessons learned, fostering a collaborative approach to climate resilience.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Develop Ecotourism and Culinary Tourism Initiatives	<p>Ecotourism Projects</p> <p>Establish ecotourism projects that highlight the natural beauty and biodiversity of fishing communities and aquatic ecosystems.</p> <p>Culinary Tourism</p> <p>Promote local culinary traditions and seafood products as part of the tourism experience.</p>	<p>Boosted local economies through tourism-related income.</p> <p>Raised awareness and appreciation for local ecosystems and biodiversity</p> <p>Increased demand for local seafood and traditional dishes.</p> <p>Cultural preservation of local culinary traditions.</p>
		Enhance Infrastructure and Services	<p>Invest in infrastructure</p> <p>Develop visitor centers, eco-lodges, and sustainable transport options to improve tourist experiences.</p> <p>Amenities and services</p> <p>Create tour packages that combine recreational fishing, and seafood tasting events, and environmental education.</p> <p>Sustainability in infrastructure development</p> <p>Ensure that tourism infrastructure development adheres to environmental sustainability principles to minimize ecological footprints.</p>	<p>Enhanced facilities leading to a better overall experience for tourists.</p> <p>Job creation and economic opportunities for local communities.</p> <p>Diverse and engaging activities for tourists, increasing destination attractiveness.</p> <p>Increased understanding of sustainable practices among tourists.</p> <p>Minimized ecological damage from tourism infrastructure.</p> <p>Long-term viability of tourism initiatives.</p>

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Capacity Building and Training	<p>Training for local communities</p> <p>Provide training focused on ecotourism management, hospitality, and customer service to enhance their capacity to engage in tourism-related activities.</p> <p>Workshops and certifications</p> <p>Offer sessions on sustainable tourism practices and conservation to ensure that tourism development supports environmental goals.</p>	<p>Enhanced skills and knowledge among community members, leading to improved service quality.</p> <p>Increased capacity of local communities to manage and benefit from tourism activities.</p> <p>Adoption of practices that protect and preserve natural resources.</p> <p>Increased awareness and commitment to sustainable tourism among stakeholders.</p>
		Policy and Institutional Strengthening	<p>Develop policies</p> <p>Integrate sustainable tourism with fisheries and aquaculture sectors, ensuring coordinated development and management.</p> <p>Strengthen institutional frameworks</p> <p>Support planning, regulation, and promotion of sustainable tourism initiatives.</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Foster collaboration between tourism boards, fisheries departments, and conservation organizations to align efforts and resources</p>	<p>Enhanced cooperation between tourism and fisheries and aquaculture sectors.</p> <p>Improved management and oversight of integrated tourism projects.</p> <p>Enhanced cooperation between tourism and fisheries and aquaculture sectors.</p> <p>Improved management and oversight of integrated tourism projects.</p> <p>More cohesive and efficient implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives.</p>

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Marketing and Promotion	Marketing campaigns Promote the unique tourism opportunities in fishing and aquaculture communities, targeting both domestic and international tourists.	Greater awareness and interest in fishing and aquaculture communities as tourist destinations. Increased number of tourists visiting fishing and aquaculture communities.
			Utilize digital platforms and social media Reach broader audiences and create engaging content that highlights local attractions and sustainable practices.	Enhanced ability to attract tourists through effective digital marketing.
		Facilitate Intra-Regional Fish Trade	Standardization Develop and implement standardized procedures for fisheries and aquaculture products to ensure compliance and ease of trade among COMESA Member States.	Uniform quality and safety standards, enhancing trust and reducing trade barriers. Simplified procedures promoting smoother and quicker trade flows.
			Customs Procedures Simplify and streamline customs procedures to reduce delays and costs associated with cross-border fish trade.	Lower transaction costs and faster customs clearance times. Increased trade volumes due to streamlined processes. Generation of new employment opportunities in fisheries, aquaculture, logistics, processing, and related sectors due to increased trade and investment.
			Certifications Promote mutual recognition of certifications and quality standards to facilitate the free movement of fish products within the region.	Easier access to multiple markets with recognized standards. Higher compliance rates with regional quality standards.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Enhance market access and integration	<p>Trade Barriers</p> <p>Develop and implement policies that reduce trade barriers, such as tariffs and non-tariff barriers, to improve market access for fish and aquaculture products.</p> <p>Regional Market Information System</p> <p>Establish regional market information systems to provide timely data on prices, demand, supply, and trade flows, enabling producers and traders to make informed decisions.</p> <p>Trade Fairs and Expos</p> <p>Support the development of regional trade fairs, expos, and business forums to showcase fish products and facilitate business-to-business interactions.</p>	<p>Reduced costs for producers and traders, making products more competitive.</p> <p>Wider market reach for fish and aquaculture products.</p> <p>Better market positioning and pricing strategies for producers and traders.</p> <p>Enhanced ability to compete in regional and international markets.</p> <p>Increased networking and business deals among stakeholders.</p> <p>Greater exposure for fisheries and aquaculture products in regional and international markets.</p> <p>Increased incomes for fishers, aquaculture operators, and traders from expanded market opportunities and improved value chain efficiency.</p>

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Strategic Pillar 1: Enhancing Trade Facilitation and Infrastructure	Objective 1.1: Improve Trade Policies	Improve Trade Policies	Supportive Trade Policies Develop and implement trade policies that support the growth of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, ensuring they are aligned with regional integration goals. Advocate for the inclusion of fisheries and aquaculture priorities in national and regional trade agreements and policy frameworks.	Coherent policies that support sector growth and integration.
			Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) Foster public-private partnerships to leverage investment and expertise in trade infrastructure and services.	Increased Investment and resources for infrastructure development and trade facilitation. Enhanced collaboration leading to innovative trade solutions.
	Objective 1.2: Strengthen Regional Cooperation	Strengthen Regional Cooperation	Collaboration Among Member States Foster collaboration among COMESA MS to address common challenges and opportunities in fish trade, including joint initiatives on trade facilitation and infrastructure development.	Enhanced cooperation and coordination among COMESA on trade facilitation and infrastructure development, fostering a more integrated regional market.
			Coordination with Other RECs Enhance coordination with other regional economic communities (RECs) to align policies and initiatives, promoting wider regional integration and trade.	Better alignment of policies and initiatives with other regional economic communities. Expanded market access through coordinated regional efforts.
		Trade Associations	Support the establishment of regional trade associations and networks to represent the interests of fish producers, processors, and traders.	Stronger representation and advocacy for sector interests. Greater support for trade-related issues from a unified body.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Promote Sustainable Trade Practices	<p>Sustainable Fishing and Aquaculture Practices</p> <p>Encourage the adoption of sustainable fishing and aquaculture practices to ensure long-term viability and environmental conservation.</p> <p>Traceability Systems</p> <p>Implement traceability systems to ensure that fish products are sourced from sustainable and legal fisheries, enhancing market confidence and compliance with international standards.</p> <p>Eco-Labeling and Certification Schemes</p> <p>Promote eco-labeling and certification schemes that highlight sustainably produced fish products, increasing their market appeal and value.</p>	<p>Greater market confidence in sustainably sourced products.</p> <p>Increased market trust and compliance with international standards.</p> <p>Higher market value for traceable and sustainable products.</p> <p>Increased appeal and value of eco-labeled products.</p> <p>Greater consumer awareness and preference for sustainable products.</p>
		Capacity Building and Training	<p>Training and Technical Assistance</p> <p>Provide training and technical assistance to fish producers, processors, and traders on best practices in production, processing, and trade.</p> <p>Regulatory and Customs Officials Training</p> <p>Enhance the capacity of regulatory authorities and customs officials to enforce trade regulations and standards effectively.</p> <p>Entrepreneurial Skills Development</p> <p>Support the development of entrepreneurial skills and business management capabilities among fish value chain actors to improve competitiveness and market orientation.</p>	<p>Improved skills and knowledge among fish producers, processors, and traders through targeted training programs, leading to better business practices and increased efficiency.</p> <p>Enhanced capacity of regulatory authorities and customs officials to enforce trade regulations and standards effectively, ensuring smooth trade operations.</p> <p>More competitive and market-oriented businesses.</p> <p>Increased economic opportunities for value chain actors.</p>

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Enhance Research and Innovation	Development of new technologies and practices Invest in research and innovation to develop new technologies and practices that improve the efficiency and sustainability of fish trade.	Adoption of advanced technologies improving productivity and sustainability. Development of innovative practices addressing trade challenges.
			Collaboration for research capacity Foster collaboration between research institutions, industry, and government to address trade-related challenges and opportunities.	Enhanced capabilities for data collection, analysis, and dissemination, providing valuable insights into market trends, consumer preferences, and trade dynamics.
			Digital Technologies and E-Commerce Platforms Promote the adoption of digital technologies and e-commerce platforms to expand market reach and facilitate trade transactions.	Greater access to regional and international markets through the use of digital technologies. Streamlined trade processes and transactions through digital platforms, reducing barriers to trade and enhancing the efficiency of market operations.
Area 8. Enhanced Regional Cooperation and Integration	Strengthen regional cooperation and integration to promote sustainable development, improve resource	Strengthen Regional Institutions and Governance Structures	Capacity building Enhance the capacity of regional institutions such as COMESA and regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) to coordinate and oversee fisheries and aquaculture activities.	Strengthened regional institutions able to effectively manage and coordinate sector activities. Enhanced governance structures leading to better oversight and accountability.
			Institutional collaboration Foster collaboration between regional institutions (DMROs, RFB, etc.), member states, and other stakeholders to address shared challenges and opportunities.	Improved ability to address transboundary issues and leverage shared resources and expertise (collaborative problem-solving).

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Enhance Data Sharing and Information Exchange	Regional portal Establish regional databases (Portal) and information systems for sharing data on fisheries and aquaculture resources, market trends, and best practices.	Access to reliable data and information supporting evidence-based decision-making. Enhanced sharing of knowledge and best practices among member states.
			Collaborative Research Promote collaborative research initiatives to address common challenges and develop innovative solutions.	Leveraged research capabilities leading to more comprehensive and impactful studies. Development of new technologies and practices that benefit the entire region
		Support Regional Projects and Initiatives	Joint Projects Develop and implement joint projects that address shared challenges, such as resource management, conservation, and climate resilience. Collaborative projects leading to shared benefits and improved resource management. Strengthened sense of regional solidarity and cooperation.	Collaborative projects leading to shared benefits and improved resource management. Strengthened sense of regional solidarity and cooperation. Increased Investment and more financial resources available for regional projects, driving development and innovation. Sustainable funding solutions ensuring the sustainability of regional initiatives.

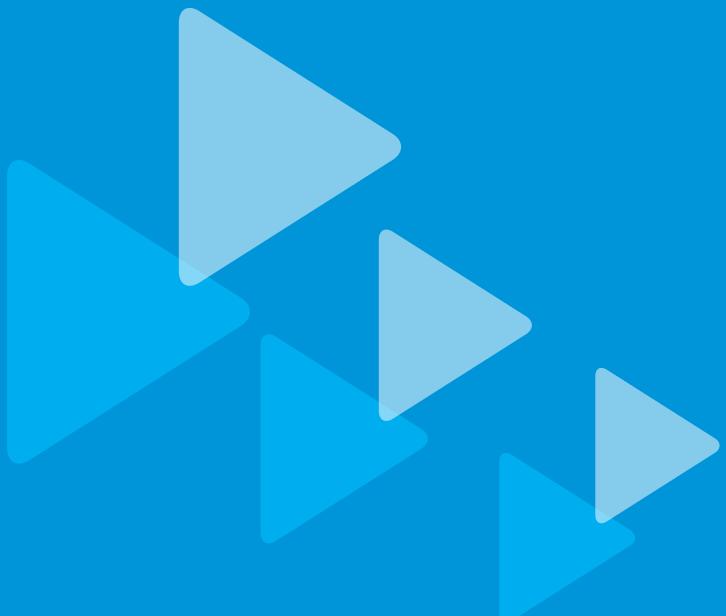
Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Enhance Stakeholder Engagement and Participation	Multi-Stakeholder Platforms Establish platforms for engaging various stakeholders, including governments, private sector, civil society, and local communities, in regional decision-making processes.	More inclusive decision-making processes that consider the views and needs of all stakeholders. Increased support and commitment from stakeholders, leading to better implementation of regional initiatives.
			Capacity Building for Stakeholders Provide training and capacity-building programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of stakeholders involved in regional cooperation.	More knowledgeable and capable stakeholders actively participating in regional initiatives. Improved collaboration and coordination among stakeholders at the regional level.
		Facilitate Regional Policy Dialogues and Forums	Policy Dialogues Organize regular regional policy dialogues and forums to discuss key issues, share experiences, and develop coordinated strategies.	More coherent and coordinated regional policies addressing common challenges. Enhanced exchange of knowledge and best practices among member states.
			Networking Events Facilitate networking events and partnerships to foster relationships and collaborations among stakeholders.	Strengthened networks and partnerships, leading to more effective regional cooperation. Increased number of collaborative initiatives and projects addressing regional priorities.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Area 9: Gender and Youth Inclusion in Fisheries and Aquaculture Promote the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to ensure equitable opportunities, enhance sectoral productivity, and drive socio-economic development.	Enhance Access to Resources and Opportunities	Equitable Resource Allocation	Ensure that women and youth have equal access to resources such as fishing gear, aquaculture inputs, and financial services.	Higher involvement of women and youth in fisheries and aquaculture activities. Enhanced productivity and efficiency due to better resource utilization.
		Capacity Building Programs	Develop targeted training and capacity-building programs for women and youth on sustainable fishing practices, aquaculture management, and entrepreneurship.	Enhanced skills and knowledge among women and youth, leading to improved performance in the sector. Empowered individuals to participate actively in fisheries and aquaculture
	Promote Gender and Youth-Friendly Policies	Policy Development:	Formulate and implement policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by women and youth in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.	Inclusion of women and youth. Lowered barriers to entry and participation for women and youth.
		Institutional Support	Strengthen institutional frameworks to support gender and youth inclusion, including dedicated units or focal points within relevant agencies.	More effective and coordinated efforts to address gender and youth issues

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Facilitate Access to Finance and Investment	Financial Services Develop tailored financial products and services for women and youth, including microloans, grants, and insurance schemes.	Greater access to capital for women and youth, enabling them to start and expand fisheries and aquaculture enterprises. Reduced financial risks through access to insurance and financial support.
			Public-Private Partnerships Encourage public-private partnerships to leverage resources and expertise for supporting women and youth in the sector.	Increased investment in initiatives that support women and youth. Enhanced solutions for gender and youth inclusion.
		Strengthen Market Access and Value Chains	Market Linkages Facilitate access to local, regional, and international markets for products produced by women and youth.	Greater market access for products, leading to increased sales and income. Enhanced economic opportunities and improved livelihoods for women and youth. Economic empowerment of women and youth through better market opportunities.
			Value Addition Support women and youth in developing value-added products and engaging in processing activities to increase profitability.	Increased economic returns through value addition and product diversification. Improved competitiveness of products in the market.

Policy areas	Objective	Strategies	Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
		Promote Leadership and Decision-Making Roles	Leadership Training Provide leadership training and mentorship programs to women and youth to prepare them for decision-making roles in the sector.	More women and youth in leadership positions within fisheries and aquaculture organizations. Enhanced decision-making processes that reflect the perspectives of women and youth.
			Inclusive Governance Structures Ensure that women and youth are represented in governance structures at all levels, from community-based organizations to national policy-making bodies.	More inclusive and representative governance structures. Policies and decisions that better address the needs and priorities of women and youth
		Enhance Data Collection and Research	Gender and Youth Data Collect and analyze data on the participation and impact of women and youth in fisheries and aquaculture to inform policy and program development.	Better-informed decisions and policies based on accurate data. More effective and targeted interventions to support women and youth.
			Research Initiatives Support research initiatives that focus on gender and youth issues within the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.	Increased understanding of the challenges and opportunities for women and youth. Development of innovative approaches to address gender and youth inclusion.

The Reform Strategy

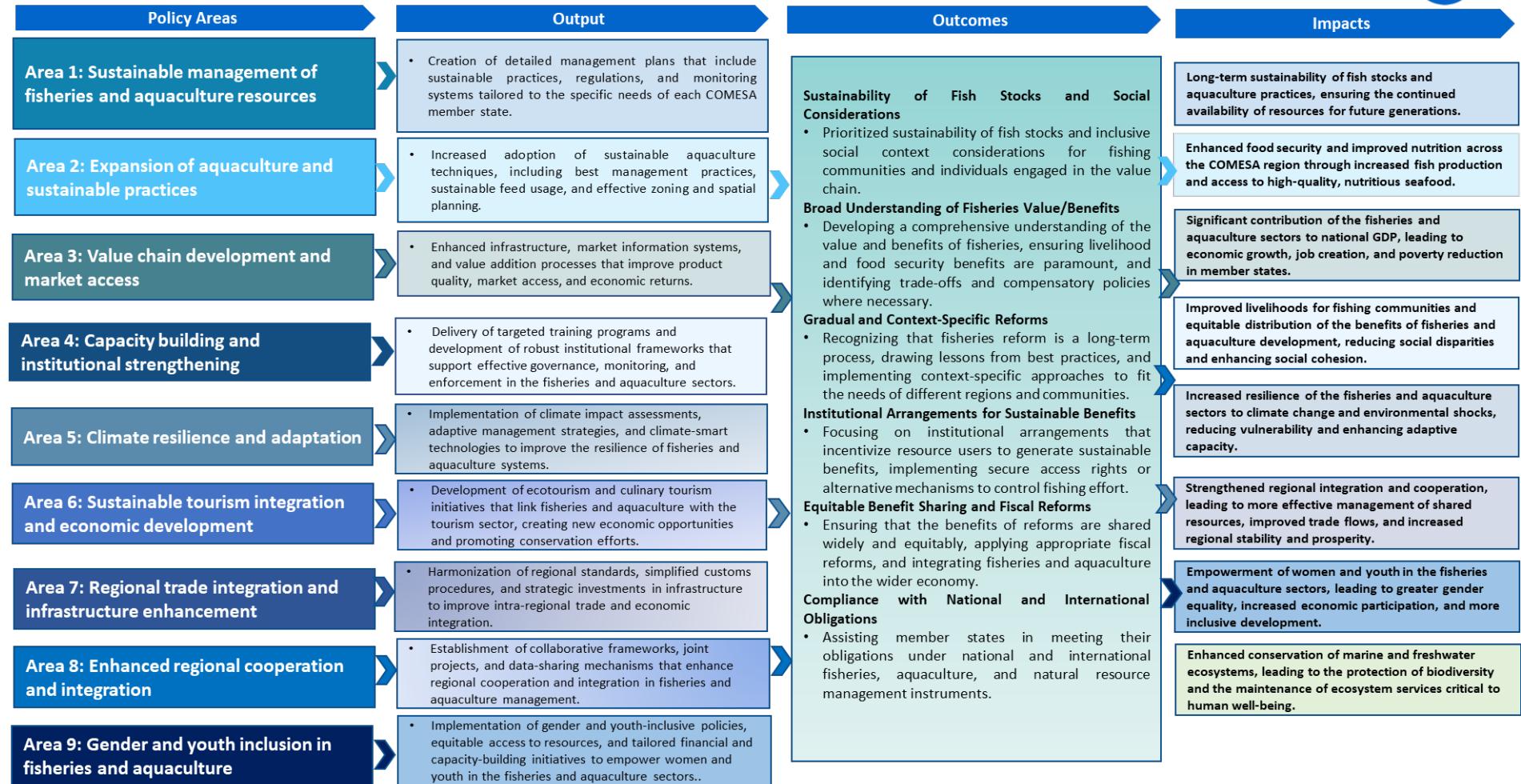


6.1. The Theory of Change

The Theory of Change for the fisheries and aquaculture reform strategy in the COMESA region is built on the premise that sustainable management, inclusive development, and regional cooperation will lead to enhanced productivity, economic growth, and resilience in these sectors. By addressing the key challenges and leveraging opportunities through targeted policies and strategic actions, the reform strategy aims to create a conducive environment for the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture, contributing to the socio-economic development of COMESA member states. The Theory of Change outlines the pathway from inputs and activities to outputs, outcomes, and long-term impacts, ensuring that all efforts are aligned with the overarching goals of sustainability, inclusivity, and regional integration. Figure 3 presents the theory of change (TOC) of the PF&RS.

Figure 3 TOC for developing the regional PF&RS for Fisheries and Aquaculture

VISION To establish a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient fisheries and aquaculture sector that contributes significantly to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the region, ensuring food security, livelihoods, and biodiversity conservation for present and future generations



6.2. Policy Objective

The primary objective of the reform strategy is to enhance the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to the socio-economic development of COMESA member states. This includes ensuring the sustainable management of resources, expanding aquaculture practices, improving value chains and market access, building institutional capacity, enhancing climate resilience, integrating sustainable tourism, facilitating regional trade, promoting regional cooperation, and ensuring gender and youth inclusion.

6.3. Expected Outputs

The expected outputs of the reform strategy represent the tangible results that will be generated from the implementation of various policies and strategic actions. These outputs will serve as milestones toward achieving the broader outcomes and impacts of the strategy. The expected outputs include:

1. **Developed and Implemented Comprehensive Fisheries Management Plans:** Creation of detailed management plans that include sustainable practices, regulations, and monitoring systems tailored to the specific needs of each COMESA member state.
2. **Expansion of Sustainable Aquaculture Practices:** Increased adoption of sustainable aquaculture techniques, including best management practices, sustainable feed usage, and effective zoning and spatial planning.
3. **Strengthened Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains:** Enhanced infrastructure, market information systems, and value addition processes that improve product quality, market access, and economic returns.
4. **Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening:** Delivery of targeted training programs and development of robust institutional frameworks that support effective governance, monitoring, and enforcement in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.
5. **Enhanced Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategies:** Implementation of climate impact assessments, adaptive management strategies, and climate-smart technologies to improve the resilience of fisheries and aquaculture systems.
6. **Integration of Fisheries and Aquaculture with Sustainable Tourism:** Development of ecotourism and culinary tourism initiatives that link fisheries and aquaculture with the tourism sector, creating new economic opportunities and promoting conservation efforts.
7. **Facilitated Regional Trade and Infrastructure Enhancement:** Harmonization of regional standards, simplified customs procedures, and strategic investments in infrastructure to improve intra-regional trade and economic integration.
8. **Strengthened Regional Cooperation and Integration:** Establishment of collaborative frameworks, joint projects, and data-sharing mechanisms that enhance regional cooperation and integration in fisheries and aquaculture management.
9. **Increased Gender and Youth Inclusion:** Implementation of gender and youth-inclusive policies, equitable access to resources, and tailored financial and capacity-building initiatives to empower women and youth in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

6.4. Expected Outcomes

The reform strategy aims to achieve a series of comprehensive and interrelated outcomes, each contributing to the

overall objective of enhancing the socio-economic development of COMESA member states through sustainable fisheries and aquaculture practices. These expected outcomes include:

1) Sustainability of Fish Stocks and Social Considerations

- Prioritized Sustainability: Ensuring that the sustainability of fish stocks is at the forefront of all reform considerations.
- Inclusive Social Context: Taking into account the social context of fishing communities and individuals engaged in the value chain to create inclusive and equitable policies.

2) Broad Understanding of Fisheries Value/Benefits

- Comprehensive Valuation: Developing a broad understanding of the value and benefits of fisheries and resources prior to implementing reforms.
- Contextual Reforms: Ensuring that livelihood and food security benefits are paramount, and reforms are undertaken within this context.
- Trade-offs and Compensation: Identifying areas where reforms complement existing benefits and where trade-offs and compensatory policies are necessary.

3) Gradual and Context-Specific Reforms

- Long-term Process: Recognizing that fisheries reform is a gradual process that may take decades to bear fruit.
- Best Practices: Drawing lessons from best practices while acknowledging that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to fisheries reforms and aquaculture development.
- Context-Specific Approaches: Tailoring reforms to fit the specific needs and contexts of different regions and communities.

4) Institutional Arrangements for Sustainable Benefits

- Incentivizing Resource Users: Focusing on institutional arrangements that provide resource users with the incentive to generate the full range of potential benefits sustainably.
- Secure Access Rights: Implementing secure user or access rights or alternative mechanisms to control fishing effort as a foundation for reforms.

5) Equitable Benefit Sharing and Fiscal Reforms

- Wide and Equitable Distribution: Ensuring that the benefits of reforms are shared widely and equitably among all stakeholders.
- Fiscal Reforms: Applying appropriate fiscal reforms to support fisheries reforms.
- Economic Integration: Reviewing fiscal arrangements and the general macroeconomic stance to gradually integrate fisheries and aquaculture into the wider economy.

6) Compliance with National and International Obligations

- Supporting Member States: Assisting member states in meeting their obligations under national and

international fisheries, aquaculture, and natural resource management instruments.

Table 6 Summary of Expected Outcomes

Expected Outcomes	Description
Sustainability of Fish Stocks and Social Considerations	Prioritized sustainability of fish stocks and inclusive social context considerations for fishing communities and individuals engaged in the value chain.
Broad Understanding of Fisheries Value/Benefits	Developing a comprehensive understanding of the value and benefits of fisheries, ensuring livelihood and food security benefits are paramount, and identifying trade-offs and compensatory policies where necessary.
Gradual and Context-Specific Reforms	Recognizing that fisheries reform is a long-term process, drawing lessons from best practices, and implementing context-specific approaches to fit the needs of different regions and communities.
Institutional Arrangements for Sustainable Benefits	Focusing on institutional arrangements that incentivize resource users to generate sustainable benefits, implementing secure access rights or alternative mechanisms to control fishing effort.
Equitable Benefit Sharing and Fiscal Reforms	Ensuring that the benefits of reforms are shared widely and equitably, applying appropriate fiscal reforms, and integrating fisheries and aquaculture into the wider economy.
Compliance with National and International Obligations	Assisting member states in meeting their obligations under national and international fisheries, aquaculture, and natural resource management instruments.

By achieving these outcomes, the reform strategy aims to create a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient fisheries and aquaculture sector that significantly contributes to the socio-economic development of COMESA MS.

6.5. Expected impacts

The expected impacts of the reform strategy represent the long-term changes and benefits that will result from the successful implementation of the strategy. These impacts will contribute to the overarching goal of enhancing the socio-economic development of COMESA member states through sustainable and inclusive fisheries and aquaculture practices. The expected impacts include :

- o Long-term sustainability of fish stocks and aquaculture practices, ensuring the continued availability of resources for future generations.
- o Enhanced food security and improved nutrition across the COMESA region through increased fish production and access to high-quality, nutritious seafood.
- o Significant contribution of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to national GDP, leading to economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction in member states.
- o Improved livelihoods for fishing communities and equitable distribution of the benefits of fisheries and aquaculture development, reducing social disparities and enhancing social cohesion.
- o Increased resilience of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to climate change and environmental shocks, reducing vulnerability and enhancing adaptive capacity.
- o Strengthened regional integration and cooperation, leading to more effective management of shared resources, improved trade flows, and increased regional stability and prosperity.

- o Empowerment of women and youth in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, leading to greater gender equality, increased economic participation, and more inclusive development.
- o Enhanced conservation of marine and freshwater ecosystems, leading to the protection of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem services critical to human well-being.

6.6. Policy and Reform Strategies

The Policy and Reform Strategies are developed in alignment with the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa. These strategies are designed to address key challenges and leverage opportunities to enhance the sector's contribution to socio-economic development in the COMESA region.

1) Sustainable Management of Fisheries and Aquaculture Resources

Objective: Ensure the sustainable use and management of fisheries and aquaculture resources to enhance productivity, environmental conservation, and resilience to climate change.

Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Develop and Implement Comprehensive Fisheries Management Plans	Sustainable Fish Stocks: Achieved sustainable fish stock levels, ensuring long-term availability and productivity. Enhanced Ecosystem Health: Improved health and resilience of aquatic ecosystems, supporting biodiversity and ecosystem services.
Strengthen Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) Systems	Reduced IUU Fishing: Significant reduction in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, leading to fairer competition and more effective resource management.
Promote Community-Based Management Approaches	Empowered Communities: Increased capacity and involvement of local communities in fisheries and aquaculture management, fostering stewardship and sustainable practices.
Enhance Data Collection and Research	Informed Decision-Making: Enhanced data and research capacity, providing a strong foundation for evidence-based management and policy decisions.
Implement Measures to Restore and Conserve Critical Habitats	Restored Habitats: Successful restoration and conservation of critical habitats, contributing to the overall resilience and sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture.

2) Expansion of Aquaculture and Sustainable Practices

Objective: Promote the expansion of aquaculture through sustainable practices to increase fish production, enhance food security, and support economic growth.

Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Promote Sustainable Aquaculture Practices	Sustainable Aquaculture Growth: Adoption of sustainable aquaculture practices, leading to environmentally responsible and economically viable aquaculture development.
Enhance Research and Development (R&D)	Increased Production: Significant increase in fish production, contributing to food security and economic growth.
Strengthen Capacity Building and Training	Enhanced Competitiveness: Improved competitiveness of the aquaculture sector through innovation and best practices.

Facilitate Access to Finance and Investment	Resilient Communities: Strengthened resilience of local communities involved in aquaculture, ensuring sustainable livelihoods and economic stability.
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3) Value Chain Development and Market Access

Objective: Strengthen fisheries and aquaculture value chains to improve product quality, market access, and economic returns.

Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Invest in Infrastructure Development	Robust Value Chains: Development of robust value chains that enhance product quality, increase market access, and drive sustainable economic growth.
Enhance Market Information Systems	Improved Market Information: Better access to market information, enabling producers and traders to make informed decisions.
Promote Value Addition and Product Diversification	Increased Value Addition: Higher economic returns through value addition and product diversification.
Integrate the principles of the circular economy	Long-term solution: Addressing environmental and economic challenges in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors
Facilitate Access to Finance	Expanded Market Reach: Greater access to regional and international markets for fish and aquaculture products.

4) Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening

Build strong institutional capacities and skilled stakeholders for effective management and development of fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Develop Training and Capacity-Building Programs	Skilled Workforce: Enhanced skills and knowledge among stakeholders, leading to improved performance and sustainability.
Strengthen Institutional Frameworks and Governance Structures	Strong Institutions: Strengthened institutional capacities and governance structures, supporting effective management and development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.
Enhance Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) Capacities	Effective Enforcement: Improved monitoring, control, and surveillance capacities, ensuring compliance with regulations and sustainable practices.
Foster Collaboration and Partnerships	Collaborative Partnerships: Increased collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders, fostering coordinated efforts for sectoral development.

5) Climate Resilience and Adaptation

Objective: Enhance the resilience of fisheries and aquaculture systems to climate change impacts.

Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Conduct Climate Impact Assessments	Climate Resilience: Improved resilience of fisheries and aquaculture systems to climate change impacts, ensuring their long-term viability and sustainability.
Develop and Implement Adaptive Strategies	Adaptive Capacity: Enhanced capacity to adapt to climate change through the adoption of climate-smart practices and technologies.
Promote Climate-Smart Technologies	Innovative Practices: Promotion of climate-smart technologies and practices ensures the long-term sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture sectors.
Strengthen Disaster Risk Management	Disaster Preparedness: Increased preparedness and ability to respond to climate-related disasters, reducing risks and impacts on communities and ecosystems.

6) Sustainable Tourism Integration and Economic Development

Objective: Link fisheries and aquaculture with the tourism industry to create unique economic development opportunities, promote conservation efforts, and provide alternative income sources for local communities.

Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Develop Ecotourism and Culinary Tourism Initiatives	Economic Opportunities: Creation of unique economic development opportunities through the integration of fisheries and aquaculture with the tourism industry.
Enhance Infrastructure and Services	Tourism Infrastructure: Improved infrastructure and services that support sustainable tourism and benefit local communities.
Capacity Building and Training	Community Benefits: Equitable distribution of tourism revenues, supporting community development and conservation initiatives.
Policy and Institutional Strengthening	Conservation Efforts: Enhanced conservation efforts driven by ecotourism and community engagement in sustainable tourism practices.
Marketing and Promotion	Tourism Integration: Attract tourists and generate additional revenue streams through integrated tourism marketing strategies.

7) Regional Trade Integration and Infrastructure Enhancement

Objective: Leverage COMESA's regional integration framework to facilitate intra-regional fish trade, boost market access, and enhance economic opportunities through strategic investments in infrastructure and improved trade policies.

Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Facilitate Intra-Regional Fish Trade	Facilitated Trade: Streamlined intra-regional fish trade, reducing barriers and improving market access.
Enhance Market Access and Integration	Integrated Markets: Improved integration of regional markets, boosting economic opportunities and competitiveness.

Invest in Infrastructure	Enhanced Infrastructure: Development of critical infrastructure that supports efficient and high-quality fish value chains.
Improve Trade Policies	Sustainable Trade Practices: Promotion of sustainable trade practices that ensure long-term viability and environmental conservation.
Strengthen Regional Cooperation	Regional Cooperation: Foster collaboration among COMESA member states to address common challenges and opportunities in fish trade.
Promote Sustainable Trade Practices	Market Expansion: Increased market reach and economic growth through sustainable trade practices.
Capacity Building and Training	Informed Decisions: Better decision-making and trade outcomes through enhanced capacity building and training programs.
Enhance Research and Innovation	Innovative Solutions: Adoption of new technologies and practices that improve the efficiency and sustainability of fish trade.

8) Enhanced Regional Cooperation and Integration

Objective: Strengthen regional cooperation and integration to promote sustainable development, improve resource management, and boost economic opportunities in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors across the COMESA region.

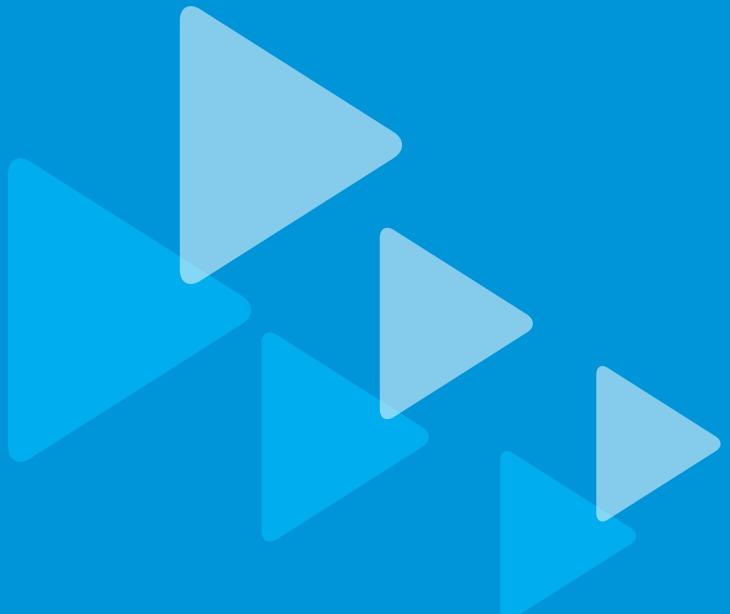
Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Strengthen Regional Institutions and Governance Structures	Coordinated Management: More effective management of shared resources through harmonized policies and collaborative initiatives.
Promote Cross-Border and Intra-Regional Trade	Economic Opportunities: Increased economic opportunities through enhanced regional cooperation and integration.
Foster Joint Resource Management Initiatives	Shared Knowledge: Enhanced data sharing and research collaboration, leading to better-informed policies and practices.
Enhance Data Sharing and Research Collaboration	Regional Development: Equitable and inclusive regional development, benefiting all member states.
Invest in Joint Regional Projects and Initiatives	Joint Initiatives: Improved regional infrastructure and capacity building through joint projects and initiatives.
Facilitate Regional Policy Dialogues	Policy Alignment: Improved alignment and coherence of regional policies through facilitated dialogues.
Strengthen Regional Networks and Platforms	Collaborative Efforts: Enhanced collaboration and coordinated efforts through strengthened regional networks.
Promote Inclusive Regional Development	Equitable Growth: Ensuring all member states benefit from regional policies and initiatives, promoting equitable growth.

9) Gender and Youth Inclusion in Fisheries and Aquaculture

Objective: Promote the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to ensure equitable opportunities, enhance sectoral productivity, and drive socio-economic development.

Action Steps	Expected Outcomes
Enhance Access to Resources and Opportunities	Equitable Access: Ensuring that women and youth have equal access to resources and opportunities in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.
Promote Gender and Youth-Friendly Policies	Inclusive Policies: Formulating and implementing policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by women and youth.
Facilitate Access to Finance and Investment	Economic Empowerment: Providing tailored financial products and services to support the economic empowerment of women and youth.
Strengthen Market Access and Value Chains	Market Inclusion: Improving market access for women and youth, and supporting value-added product development to enhance their economic participation.
Promote Leadership and Decision-Making Roles	Leadership Representation: Providing leadership training and ensuring representation of women and youth in governance structures, fostering inclusive decision-making.
Enhance Data Collection and Research	Informed Policies: Collecting and analyzing data on gender and youth participation in fisheries and aquaculture to inform policy development and implementation.
Raise Awareness and Promote Advocacy	Awareness and Advocacy: Conducting awareness campaigns and establishing advocacy networks to promote gender and youth inclusion in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Implementation



The successful implementation of the fisheries and aquaculture reform strategy for COMESA MS requires clear guiding principles, effective delivery mechanisms, well-defined roles and responsibilities, and robust systems for measuring preferred outcomes. This section outlines the guiding principles, delivery mechanisms, and specific roles and responsibilities necessary to jumpstart the implementation process.

7.1. Guiding Principles

Implementation of the reforms is the joint responsibility of government ministries, departments, or agencies in charge of fisheries, donor agencies, technical institutions, and all others involved in the sector. Effective implementation will require strong cooperation, collaboration, coordination, and investment across a range of entities based on a visionary, sequenced, and participatory approach, guided by the following principles:

7.1.1. Embracing a process-oriented approach in implementation

Realism and flexibility highlight that the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy serves as a guiding blueprint, rather than an all-encompassing solution, for the effective management and development of fisheries and aquaculture in COMESA MS. This approach involves implementing interventions adaptively over time, responding to both opportunities and constraints as they arise. Member states and regional institutions should adopt pragmatic interventions, ensuring that actions are developed and executed based on precise information and careful analysis. Adaptive management, involving a cycle of planning, action, monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment, will ensure continuous improvement.

7.1.2. Prioritization

Focusing on objectives involves concentrating on the realistic attainment of specific goals aligned with national or regional priorities. This goes hand in hand with Non-linear implementation, which means carrying out complementary activities in parallel to achieve these goals efficiently. Resources should be allocated strategically to areas that are most critical for achieving the desired outcomes, based on thorough analysis and stakeholder consultation.

7.1.3. Consultation, Cooperation, and Participation

Effective consultations involve engaging stakeholders to obtain their views and informed consent for decisions that affect them. Participatory decision-making empowers decision-making at the lowest possible decentralized level, ensuring the inputs and support of those affected. Establishing institutional linkages with other line ministries or agencies and promoting partnerships and collaboration with the private sector, international organizations, NGOs, and CSOs is crucial for fostering comprehensive and inclusive development.

7.1.4. Equity and Equality

Ensure decision-making processes are inclusive, fair, and transparent, avoiding discrimination against women, vulnerable, and disadvantaged groups, and adhering to clear and consistent rules and procedures. Fair practices should be implemented to ensure that benefits and opportunities are shared equitably among all stakeholders, with targeted support for vulnerable groups to enable full participation in the sector.

7.1.5. Scalability

Activities should be designed to be suitable for local, national, and regional scales, ensuring they have the potential for replication and adaptation in various contexts. Pilot projects can be used to test and refine approaches before scaling up, and lessons learned from these projects should inform broader implementation. Capacity building of local and regional institutions is essential for managing and scaling up successful initiatives.

7.1.6. Sustainability

Apply the precautionary approach and risk management to guard against undesirable bio-ecological and socio-economic outcomes. This principle focuses on long-term benefits and sustainability rather than short-term gains, promoting practices and policies that ensure the enduring viability of fisheries and aquaculture resources. Environmental stewardship is encouraged to protect and enhance the natural environment, promoting conservation and responsible resource management.

7.1.7. Accountability

Accountability holds states and non-state actors responsible for their decisions and actions. Transparency in decision-making and implementation processes is promoted, with regular reports on progress and outcomes provided to stakeholders and the public. Performance monitoring through the establishment of performance indicators and monitoring systems, coupled with regular evaluations, will assess the effectiveness of policies and interventions.

7.1.8. Self-Development

Governments must provide the operational plans, political will, and financial resources necessary for stakeholders to contribute to the sustainable use and economic viability of the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Empowering local communities and stakeholders to take an active role in resource management and development is crucial. Continuous learning and improvement among stakeholders are fostered, encouraging innovation and the adoption of best practices to enhance sector performance.

7.2. Delivery Mechanisms to Jumpstart the Implementation of the PF&RS

The implementation of the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PF&RS) for Fisheries and Aquaculture within the COMESA region requires a structured, coordinated approach involving various stakeholders at multiple levels. This section outlines delivery mechanisms necessary to jumpstart the implementation process.

7.2.1. Institutional Framework

To effectively implement the reform strategy, it is essential to establish national and regional coordination bodies that will oversee the process and ensure alignment with national and regional policies. Forming inter-ministerial committees is also crucial; these committees should include representatives from relevant sectors such as fisheries, environment, agriculture, finance, and trade to ensure a holistic approach. Additionally, setting up local fisheries management units to implement policies at the community level is necessary to ensure grassroots involvement and adherence to national strategies.

7.2.2. Capacity Building

To enhance the understanding of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture practices among government officials, community leaders, and stakeholders, it is vital to organize regular training programs. Additionally, conducting workshops and seminars will facilitate the sharing of best practices, new technologies, and innovative approaches. Providing technical assistance to member states is also necessary to develop and strengthen their institutional and regulatory frameworks. These combined efforts will ensure that the necessary knowledge and skills are disseminated effectively, promoting sustainable practices at all levels.

7.2.3. Financial Mechanisms

Advocating for increased budget allocations from national governments towards fisheries and aquaculture reforms is crucial to ensure sufficient funding for these initiatives. Engaging international donors and development partners can secure additional funding and technical assistance, bolstering these efforts. Promoting public-private partnerships (PPPs) will leverage private sector investment in infrastructure, research, and development, enhancing the sector's

growth and sustainability. Exploring innovative financing mechanisms, such as blue bonds, microfinance, and climate funds, will further support sustainable initiatives, providing diverse and reliable funding sources to advance fisheries and aquaculture reforms.

7.2.4. Regulatory Instruments

Drafting and implementing legislation and policies that promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture practices is essential for long-term environmental and economic health. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with these regulations, including imposing penalties for illegal activities, is also crucial. Harmonizing standards and regulations across member states will facilitate intra-regional trade and ensure product quality, contributing to a cohesive and efficient regional market. These measures combined will create a robust framework for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, promoting adherence to best practices and enhancing the sector's overall sustainability.

7.2.5. Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Monitoring and evaluation systems are established with clear indicators and benchmarks to track progress and assess the effectiveness of implemented policies and interventions. Regular assessments help evaluate the impact, while centralized data management systems are utilized to collect, analyze, and disseminate information effectively. Feedback mechanisms are incorporated to adapt strategies based on lessons learned.

Table 7 outlines the proposed framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the fisheries and aquaculture reform strategy. This table will allow to monitor key activities, track indicators, and ensure that the strategy is effectively implemented across the COMESA region.

Table 7 Proposed framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the fisheries and aquaculture reform strategy.

Policy areas	Indicator	Baseline Data	Regional Review/ Monitoring System
Develop and Implement Comprehensive Fisheries Management Plans	Number of management plans developed and implemented	Current number of existing management plans	Annual regional review of management plans and their effectiveness
Expand Sustainable Aquaculture Practices	Increase in sustainable aquaculture production (tonnes/year)	Baseline aquaculture production levels	Regional monitoring of aquaculture practices and production data
Strengthen Fisheries and Aquaculture Value Chains	Number of value chain enhancement initiatives implemented	Baseline data on existing value chain infrastructure	Regular audits and reviews of value chain improvements and market access
Build Institutional Capacity and Strengthen Governance	Number of capacity-building programs conducted	Current capacity levels of institutions	Biannual review of institutional capacity and governance effectiveness
Enhance Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategies	Number of climate adaptation strategies implemented	Baseline data on climate impact and adaptation measures	Monitoring of climate resilience initiatives and impact assessments
Integrate Fisheries and Aquaculture with Sustainable Tourism	Number of ecotourism and culinary tourism initiatives linked to fisheries	Current level of tourism activities linked to fisheries	Review of tourism integration strategies and their economic impact

Facilitate Regional Trade and Infrastructure Enhancement	Volume of intra-regional fish trade (tonnes/year)	Baseline data on regional fish trade volumes	Monitoring of trade flows, infrastructure development, and trade facilitation
Strengthen Regional Cooperation and Integration	Number of joint regional projects and collaborative initiatives	Current level of regional cooperation	Review of regional cooperation efforts and integration outcomes
Promote Gender and Youth Inclusion in Fisheries and Aquaculture	Percentage of women and youth participating in fisheries and aquaculture sectors	Baseline data on gender and youth participation	Monitoring of gender and youth inclusion efforts and their socio-economic impact

7.2.6. Communication and Awareness

Launching public awareness campaigns is essential to raise awareness about the importance of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture among the general public. Engaging stakeholders through forums, roundtable discussions, and consultations ensures their input and support, fostering a collaborative approach to implementing reforms. Utilizing various platforms, such as social media, websites, and newsletters, for information dissemination helps share updates about reforms, progress, and opportunities, ensuring transparency and widespread access to relevant information. These combined efforts will enhance public understanding and stakeholder involvement, crucial for the success of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture initiatives.

7.2.7. Research and Innovation

Providing grants and funding for research on sustainable practices, climate resilience, and new technologies is crucial for advancing the blue economy. Establishing innovation hubs and centers of excellence will foster research and development, creating environments where innovative solutions can be developed and tested. Partnering with universities and research institutions to conduct studies and pilot projects will further enhance these efforts, leveraging academic expertise and resources. These initiatives will support the continuous improvement and adaptation of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture practices, ensuring they remain effective and resilient in the face of changing environmental and economic conditions.

7.2.8. Community Engagement

Promoting community-based fisheries and aquaculture management approaches is essential for ensuring sustainable practices and local involvement. Involving communities in the planning and decision-making processes through participatory planning will ensure that their needs and knowledge are integrated into management strategies. Providing training and resources for capacity building will empower local communities to manage and benefit from fisheries and aquaculture resources sustainably. These efforts will foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members, leading to more effective and enduring management practices.

7.2.9. Partnerships and Collaboration

Strengthening regional cooperation among COMESA member states is crucial for addressing shared challenges and opportunities in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Building partnerships with international organizations, NGOs, and the private sector will help leverage additional resources and expertise, enhancing the effectiveness of these initiatives. Establishing networking platforms for stakeholders to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices will foster collaboration and innovation, driving progress towards sustainable management and development. These combined efforts will create a cohesive and supportive environment for achieving the goals of the blue economy within the region.

7.3. Roles and Responsibilities

The primary responsibility for implementing the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PF&RS) lies with the Member States. The ministry, department, or agency in charge of the sector in each country will regulate, promote, support, guide, and coordinate the implementation of reforms through broad consultative processes with other stakeholders. At the country level, action plans for priority actions to be undertaken will be developed.

Table 8 Roles and responsibilities for implementing the PF&RS for fisheries and aquaculture in the COMESA region.

Stakeholder	Roles and Responsibilities
Participating Member States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocate for fisheries and aquaculture development needs in national development plans and initiatives. - Create internal conditions for sector value and reform support. - Seek external funds from donors and development partners. - Invest in capacity development. - Promote vertical and horizontal partnerships for implementing reforms. - Review national priorities against current and emerging issues. - Report national progress to the COMESA Secretariat.
Regional Institutions and RECs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finance priority actions and coordinate region-wide programs with RFBs and RFMOs. - Strengthen cooperation and human capacity building in member states. - Develop plans for peer-to-peer learning. - Mobilize and secure resources for scaling up processes. - Source resources for creating loan guarantee funds for aquaculture investments.
National Level Technical Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure information availability for national reforms and development plans. - Create awareness among stakeholders on reform importance. - Communicate appropriate information to stakeholders. - Develop capacity to monitor reforms and developments. - Develop mechanisms for stakeholder involvement in implementation. - Promote sector importance at all levels. - Secure adequate funding for reforms/development. - Plan infrastructure development for landings, distribution, and marketing. - Maintain hygiene and sanitary facilities at fish landings. - Formulate better practices and provide technical guidance and advisory services.
Development partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitate reforms and support the implementation of the PF&RS. - Create institutional conditions to sustain the benefits of reforms. - Mobilize resources to support reform initiatives and capacity-building programs.

NGOs, CSOs, and CBOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and implement public awareness campaigns. - Facilitate multi-stakeholder activities and events. - Organize capacity-building activities. - Demonstrate practical ways of adopting best practices. - Improve and broaden networks and coalitions. - Co-finance specific activities. - Introduce and evaluate innovative financial instruments. - Indicate resource mobilization through NGO actions. - Test innovative technologies. - Participate in monitoring and evaluation processes. - Disseminate results through networks and channels.
COMESA Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assist in seeking funding from development partners and agencies. - Seek funding for investment funds for fisheries and aquaculture development. - Facilitate the establishment of a fisheries policy and research network. - Assist Member States in developing national plans of action. - Develop a communications strategy to keep partners updated. - Periodically update PF&RS priorities. - Promote experience exchange among regional organizations and Member States. - Facilitate new initiatives to improve understanding of fisheries and aquaculture importance. - Support capacity development of Member States, RFBs, and RECs. - Ensure progress reporting on PF&RS implementation in regional meetings.

7.4. Measuring Outcomes

To ensure the successful implementation of the fisheries and aquaculture reform strategy, it is essential to measure the attainment of preferred outcomes. This involves developing Action Plans containing baseline information, targets, and indicators of performance. The indicators must be comprehensive, policy-relevant, comparable across countries, easy to interpret, analytically sound, and supported by available data. The following outlines the approach to measuring preferred outcomes:

7.4.1. Preferred Outcomes

The preferred outcomes of the reform process for COMESA include:

- Sustainability of fish stocks and aquatic ecosystems.
- Improved productivity and efficiency in fisheries and aquaculture.
- Enhanced profitability and economic returns.
- Generation of wealth and contribution to GDP.
- Social benefits and food security.
- Effective management of shared resources.
- Strengthened regional cooperation and integration.

- Increased inclusion and empowerment of women and youth.
- Enhanced resilience to climate change impacts.

7.4.2. Action Plans and Indicators

To measure the attainment of these preferred outcomes, the following steps should be taken:

- Develop Comprehensive Action Plans:** Countries and regional entities should create detailed Action Plans that encompass baseline information, clear targets, and specific performance indicators. These plans should be tailored to address the unique contexts and challenges of each member state and region.
- Design Robust Indicators:** The indicators used to measure progress should be wide-ranging and possess clear policy relevance. They should facilitate comparison across countries, be easy to interpret, analytically sound, and supported by reliable and readily available data. These indicators should cover various dimensions of sustainability, productivity, profitability, wealth generation, social benefits, and resource management to provide a holistic view of the outcomes.

7.4.3. Examples of Indicators

Table 9 Summary of Expected Outcomes

Policy Area	Examples of Indicators
1. Sustainable Management of Fisheries and Aquaculture Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Status of Stocks: Assess the health and population levels of fish stocks. State of Resources: Evaluate the overall condition of aquatic ecosystems. Management Plans: Track the existence and effective implementation of fisheries management plans. Management Effectiveness: Measure the effectiveness of management strategies and interventions. Effort and Fleet Capacity Levels: Monitor fishing effort and fleet capacity to ensure they are within sustainable limits. Level of Compliance: Assess the compliance levels with fisheries regulations and management plans. Capacity Utilization: Evaluate the utilization of fishing and aquaculture capacities. Value of Fish Stock Size: Estimate the economic value of fish stock sizes. Subsidies and Taxes: Analyze the impact of subsidies and taxes on sustainability. Institutional Development: Assess the development and capacity of institutions managing fisheries. Robustness of Policies and Action Plans: Evaluate the strength and effectiveness of policies and action plans.

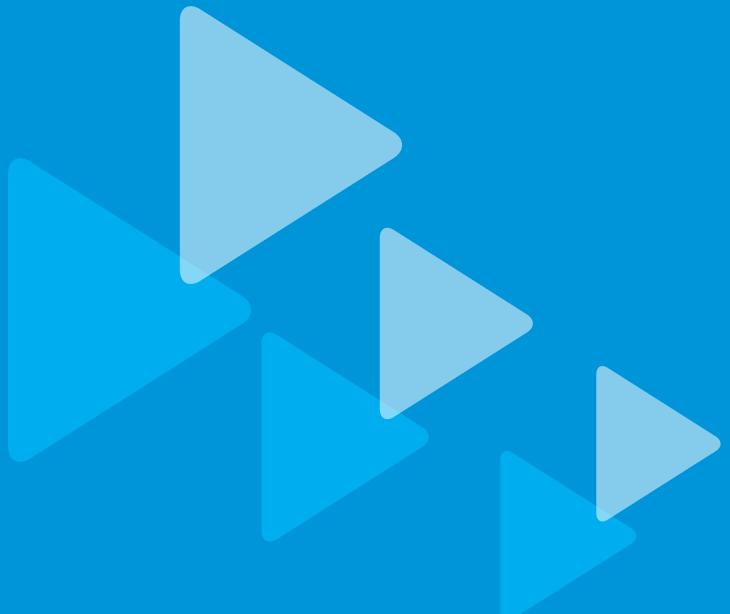
2. Expansion of Aquaculture and Sustainable Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aquaculture Production: Track the quantity and value of aquaculture production by species. - Sustainable Practices: Assess the adoption of best management practices and sustainable feed sources. - Zoning and Spatial Planning: Evaluate the implementation of zoning regulations for aquaculture. - Research and Development: Monitor investments in research and development for sustainable aquaculture. - Capacity Building: Measure the effectiveness of capacity-building programs and training initiatives. - Access to Finance: Track the availability and uptake of financial products and services for aquaculture development.
3. Value Chain Development and Market Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infrastructure Development: Monitor the development and enhancement of infrastructure for landings, processing, and distribution. - Market Information Systems: Evaluate the effectiveness of market information systems in providing timely data on prices, demand, supply, and trade flows. - Value Addition: Track the quantity and value of value-added products and product diversification. - Market Access: Assess the access to regional and international markets for fisheries and aquaculture products. - Finance Access: Measure the availability and uptake of financial products and services for value chain development.
4. Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training Programs: Monitor the number and effectiveness of training programs for government officials, community leaders, and stakeholders. - Institutional Frameworks: Evaluate the development and effectiveness of institutional frameworks and governance structures. - Monitoring and Control Capacities: Assess the capacity of monitoring, control, and surveillance systems. - Collaboration and Partnerships: Track the establishment and effectiveness of partnerships and collaboration initiatives. - Technical Assistance: Measure the availability and effectiveness of technical assistance provided to member states.
5. Climate Resilience and Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate Impact Assessments: Monitor the conduct and findings of climate impact assessments. - Adaptive Strategies: Evaluate the development and implementation of adaptive strategies for climate resilience. - Climate-Smart Technologies: Track the adoption of climate-smart technologies and practices. - Disaster Risk Management: Assess the development and effectiveness of disaster risk management plans. - Community Resilience: Measure improvements in community resilience to climate change impacts. - Access to Climate Financing: Track the availability and uptake of climate financing products and services.

6. Sustainable Tourism Integration and Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ecotourism and Culinary Tourism Initiatives: Monitor the development and promotion of ecotourism and culinary tourism initiatives. - Tourism Infrastructure: Assess the development and enhancement of tourism-related infrastructure and services. - Capacity Building for Tourism: Track the effectiveness of capacity-building programs for local communities in tourism management and hospitality. - Policy and Institutional Frameworks: Evaluate the development and effectiveness of policies and institutional frameworks supporting sustainable tourism. - Tourism Revenue: Measure the economic impact and revenue generated from tourism activities linked to fisheries and aquaculture.
7. Regional Trade Integration and Infrastructure Enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harmonization of Standards: Assess the harmonization of regional standards and regulations for fish and fish products. - Customs Procedures: Monitor the simplification and efficiency of customs procedures for cross-border fish trade. - Infrastructure Investments: Track investments in critical infrastructure such as cold storage facilities, processing plants, and transport networks. - Market Access: Evaluate the improvements in market access and trade flows within the region. - Public-Private Partnerships: Measure the establishment and effectiveness of public-private partnerships for infrastructure and trade enhancement.
8. Enhanced Regional Cooperation and Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy Harmonization: Monitor the harmonization of policies and regulations across member states. - Institutional Collaboration: Assess the effectiveness of institutional collaboration and joint initiatives. - Cross-Border Trade: Track the volume and value of cross-border and intra-regional fish trade. - Data Sharing: Evaluate the development and effectiveness of data-sharing systems and research collaborations. - Regional Projects: Measure the impact and progress of joint regional projects and initiatives. - Capacity Building for Regional Integration: Monitor the effectiveness of capacity-building programs supporting regional integration efforts.
9. Gender and Youth Inclusion in Fisheries and Aquaculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equitable Access: Track the access of women and youth to resources and opportunities in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. - Inclusive Policies: Evaluate the development and implementation of gender and youth-friendly policies. - Economic Empowerment: Measure the availability and uptake of tailored financial products and services for women and youth. - Training and Capacity Building: Monitor the effectiveness of training and capacity-building programs targeted at women and youth. - Participation in Decision-Making: Assess the level of participation of women and youth in decision-making processes. - Income and Employment: Track improvements in income levels and employment opportunities for women and youth in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

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Annexes



Annex 1: COMESA STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

This questionnaire aims to gather insights and feedback from key stakeholders involved in the fisheries and aquaculture sector within the COMESA region. The information collected will contribute to the development of a comprehensive Regional Policy Framework for Fisheries and Aquaculture. By understanding the roles, priorities, challenges, and opportunities faced by various organizations, we aim to create a robust strategy that promotes sustainable development, regional cooperation, and inclusive growth in this vital sector. Your responses will help shape policies and initiatives that support the long-term health and sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture across COMESA member states.

Thank you for your participation.

I. COMESA STAKEHOLDER GENERAL INFORMATION
Name of Organization/Institution:
Contact Person:
Position/Title:
Contact Information:
- Email:
- Phone:
- Address:
Country/Region:
II. ROLE AND INFLUENCE
1. What is the primary role of your organization in the fisheries and aquaculture sector?
2. How would you describe the influence of your organization on fisheries and aquaculture policy, regulation, and strategic planning?
3. Can you outline any key initiatives or projects your organization is currently involved in related to fisheries and aquaculture?
III. SECTORAL PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTOR
4. What do you consider the top three priorities that should be addressed in the COMESA Regional Policy Framework for Fisheries and Aquaculture ?
5. What are the main challenges faced by the fisheries and aquaculture sector in your region/country? How can these challenges be effectively addressed?
6. Are there any specific regulatory or policy challenges that need to be addressed to enhance the development and sustainability of the fisheries and aquaculture sector?
IV. OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
7. What opportunities do you see for growth and development in the fisheries and aquaculture sector?

8. How can regional cooperation and collaboration among COMESA member states contribute to addressing challenges and capitalizing on opportunities in the fisheries and aquaculture sector?
9. Can you suggest any specific areas where investment or support is needed to enhance the fisheries and aquaculture sector?

V. INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

10. How does your organization ensure the inclusion of various stakeholders, including small-scale fishers, women, and youth, in the formulation of fisheries and aquaculture policies and strategies?
11. What mechanisms are in place to ensure that the voices of local communities are heard and integrated into fisheries and aquaculture governance frameworks?

VI. FINAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

12. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding the governance and development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the COMESA region?

Annex 2: COMESA Stakeholder Consultation Report on Fisheries and Aquaculture: 1st Round Survey Analysis

Current number of respondents: 7

1. Organizational Profiles

Diversity of Respondents: The responses were collected from a diverse range of organizations involved in the fisheries and aquaculture sector within the COMESA region. These organizations include government ministries, research institutions, and policy advocacy groups, all of which play significant roles in various aspects of the sector.

Mission and Activities: The common themes in the mission statements of these organizations include sustainable fisheries management, aquaculture development, conservation of aquatic biodiversity, and enhancement of food security. Their activities span applied research, policy formulation, technical guidance, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement.

2. Role and Influence

Influence on Policy and Strategy: Most respondents indicated that their organizations have substantial influence on fisheries and aquaculture policies, regulation, and strategic planning. This influence is exerted through providing evidence-based research, technical guidance, and participating in policy-making processes.

Key Initiatives and Projects: Respondents outlined several key initiatives and projects, including:

- Sustainable Fishery Development in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (SFISH)
- Capacity building for ecosystem approach to fisheries management
- Development of aquaculture research facilities and programs

3. Sectoral Priorities and Challenges

Top Priorities:

1. **Good Governance Principles:** Ensuring coherent and coordinated governance frameworks for sustainable fisheries management.
2. **Policy Development and Best Practices:** Crafting realistic and effective policies that promote food security and economic growth.
3. **Regional Collaboration:** Enhancing cooperation among COMESA member states for effective management of shared resources.

Main Challenges:

1. **Regulatory and Policy Issues:** Complex and unclear regulatory frameworks that hinder effective policy implementation.
2. **Resource Management:** Challenges such as overfishing, weak enforcement mechanisms, and inadequate infrastructure.

3. **Capacity Building:** Need for improved training and technical support for stakeholders.

4. **Training and Capacity Building Needs**

Priority Areas for Capacity Building:

- Sustainable fisheries management and governance
- Technical skills in aquaculture practices
- Stakeholder engagement and community-based resource management
- Fundraising, grant writing, and policy advocacy

Preferred Training Formats: Respondents expressed a preference for a mix of training formats, including:

- In-person workshops for hands-on learning
- Webinars for broader accessibility
- On-site mentoring to address specific needs

5. **Opportunities and Recommendations**

Growth Opportunities:

- Developing sustainable aquaculture practices and investing in alternative seafood sources.
- Promoting technological innovations such as smart aquaculture and IoT monitoring.
- Enhancing market integration and trade within the region.

Recommendations:

1. **Strengthening Regional Cooperation:** Sharing knowledge, data, and best practices to manage shared fishery resources effectively.
2. **Investment in Infrastructure:** Developing regional infrastructure to support efficient movement of fish products.
3. **Supporting Small-Scale Fishers:** Providing training on sustainable fishing methods and supporting community-based management approaches.
4. **Promoting Research and Innovation:** Investing in research on sustainable practices and technologies.
6. **Inclusive and Sustainable Development**

Stakeholder Inclusion: Organizations ensure the inclusion of various stakeholders, including small-scale fishers, women, and youth, through participatory decision-making processes and community-based management strategies. This approach ensures that local knowledge and perspectives are integrated into governance frameworks.

Community Engagement: Mechanisms to ensure that the voices of local communities are heard include the establishment of fisheries forums, cooperative societies, and participatory governance structures.

7. Final Comments and Suggestions

Communication Mechanisms: Stakeholders emphasized the need for effective communication mechanisms among COMESA countries to ensure broad participation in policy development and the activation of institutional roles in fisheries and aquaculture.

Enhanced Collaboration: There is a strong desire for more structured partnerships with local and international entities, support for scientific research, capacity building, and funding.

Improvement Suggestions: Creating platforms for collaboration, involving local communities in conservation efforts, and addressing regulatory and policy challenges to enhance the development and sustainability of the sector.



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