



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



The EAF-Nansen Programme

A partnership for the oceans





OUR MISSION

The Nansen Programme began in 1975 as a joint initiative of Norway and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Its objective was to help newly independent states improve food security by identifying resources in their seas and oceans to support the development of their fisheries. A research vessel, *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* was built for the programme, serving as a laboratory for research, training and the exchange of knowledge. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has collaborated in the use of the vessel for fisheries development research in the waters of many beneficiary countries.

For over 40 years the Nansen Programme has assisted developing countries in fisheries research and management. Its principal concerns are to enhance food security through sustainable fisheries, while contributing to global efforts to address ocean sustainability issues, such as marine pollution, and the impact of climate variability and change on oceans and ocean life.

The programme's long period of engagement and its dedication to promoting sustainable fisheries and safeguarding the marine environment make it unique within the sphere of international development. It operates at the forefront of fisheries and marine ecosystem research, and has forged crucial links between science and decision-making – demonstrating that the latter must always be guided and informed by quality research. The programme has been acclaimed as a unique mechanism for cooperation, knowledge generation and exchange in developing regions, particularly in Africa.





OCEANS AND THEIR CHALLENGES

Oceans, seas and coastal areas provide a vital source of food, employment, recreation, trade and economic well-being for millions of people around the world. They also offer goods and services essential to the very existence of life on earth. Yet the capacity of marine ecosystems to continue to provide these resources is severely under threat. Fish stocks in many parts of the world continue to be overexploited and there is abundant evidence of the degradation of oceans and their ecosystems.

Unsustainable fisheries, pollution and climate variability and change pose the main threats to marine life and biodiversity. Most pollutants originate on land (such as microplastics), but human exploitation of other natural resources at sea (such as oil and gas), can also disturb and destroy marine ecosystems. It is now evident that the effects of climate change on our oceans will result in rising sea temperatures and increased acidification of seawater, which in turn will have adverse effects on fish stocks and deplete fisheries resources in many areas. Population increases, especially in Africa, will further exacerbate problems of food insecurity and poverty in developing coastal countries.

High-level processes

A series of high-level processes have recognized the essential role oceans play in sustainable development, including the contribution they make towards reducing poverty and ensuring food security and sustainable livelihoods. The recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”) include a goal specific to the oceans.

Various international binding and voluntary agreements (such as the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries laid down in 1995), place the sustainable use of fishery resources, especially in the exclusive economic zones of countries, at the heart of ocean governance. Other processes and initiatives address issues relating to biodiversity and deep-sea fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). Because many fish stocks are shared between neighbouring countries, FAO and non-FAO regional fishery bodies and management organizations, are bringing nations together to address issues related to sustainable fisheries through regional agreements and initiatives.





THE NANSEN PROGRAMME

Over the more than 40 years of its existence, the Nansen Programme has journeyed through various phases, adapting and evolving to meet new ocean issues and challenges that have come to light.

In the last decade the programme operated as the EAF-Nansen Project and piloted the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) for the management of selected fisheries in Africa. Through this orientation, the programme has furthered its emphasis on tackling transboundary ecosystem issues, fostering cooperation and collaboration, and harmonizing approaches towards a sustainable management of fisheries. Working with 31 countries in four regional groupings around the coast of Africa, the programme has strengthened national and regional fisheries management bodies, providing each with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement EAF. The methodology uses the programme's unique capacities by bringing the research and knowledge generated on board the vessel to guide policy and management strategies.

A new programme

A new EAF-Nansen Programme will start in January 2017, carrying forward the objectives of the Nansen Programme, with particular attention to issues of sustainability and threats to marine ecosystems. It will continue to disseminate the EAF management model, while also broadening the scope of its scientific research to incorporate research and survey work that extends beyond pure fisheries concerns.

The new programme will build on the paradigm of knowledge-based decision-making, and therefore strengthen the link between the research activities of the *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* research vessel and policy, legislation and decision-making at regional and national levels. At the national level the EAF process draws on scientific research in order to generate awareness and guide decision-making for fisheries management. At the regional level, the close collaboration and consultation with regional bodies and relevant international NGOs in applying the knowledge generated by the programme/project is considered essential. All data and scientific research produced from the vessel will also benefit the global community.



Research focus of the EAF-Nansen Programme

In the new EAF-Nansen Programme the research vessel will work primarily in the western and eastern maritime areas of Africa but with the possibility of also conducting surveys in other tropical and sub-tropical areas.

Areas of work will include the following:

Fisheries and ecosystems	Pollution	Climate variability and change
<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Abundance, distribution and dynamics of transboundary stocks> Biological parameters and life cycle of main species> Identification of vulnerable marine habitats> Mapping biodiversity, particularly on the sea-floor> Characterization of ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Environmental assessment of the impact of oil/gas extraction and other mining activities> Measuring levels of hazardous substances in bottom habitats and in fish, and identifying pollutant pathways> Mapping distribution and density of marine debris, including microplastics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Examining trends in climate-change related indicators> Assessing how climate variability and change affects marine ecosystems, including food-web dynamics, recruitment, distribution, migration and growth of fish species> Understanding how climate change affects ocean biochemistry processes

A new research vessel for the programme

A new state-of-the-art research vessel – the third in the series – will be available to the programme to continue the work of its two predecessors. The new programme and vessel will strengthen the spirit of partnership that is characteristic of the programme. Together they are expected to provide a platform for United Nations agencies and other partners to support countries in their efforts towards the sustainable use of the oceans.

The new *Dr Fridtjof Nansen* vessel has been equipped with the latest advanced technologies to further its research and data collection capacity and tackle new and emerging challenges in marine research and fisheries management. New features include the latest acoustic and video facilities, a system that will enable the ship to work safely around sensitive infrastructure, such as oil rigs, a lookout compartment in the main mast for observation of seabirds and marine mammals, and a work boat to facilitate research in shallow waters.

Equipment on board will allow scientists to determine the climate-related risk categories of different regions, in order to guide adaptation and mitigation strategies. The vessel will house a 30-seat auditorium for workshops and seminars.

Working with partners

In the past the Nansen Programme has developed and strengthened partnerships at international, regional, subregional and national levels. Working with the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-supported large marine ecosystem (LME) projects in Africa in particular has enabled the programme to accelerate its dissemination of the EAF methodology to many countries around the African coast. The new EAF-Nansen Programme will continue to extend its reach and impact, seeking to develop synergies and opportunities for knowledge-sharing by partnering with donors with similar commitment and vision.





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