

Fishery Statistics
2019

Negotiation of fishing quotas with Spain allowed Portugal to double the fishing opportunities for swordfish in 2019

Swordfish is a migratory species caught by the national fishing fleet, whose nominal catches almost duplicate over the last decade, reaching 3 362 tonnes in 2019. The income of auction sales, from landings in national fishery ports, followed the same trend and more than doubled, rising from EUR 2.2 million in 2009 to EUR 5.4 million in 2019. However, the swordfish caught is mainly intended for the foreign market, with most of the catches being unloaded in non-national ports (since 2014, on average, only 1/5 of the catches are unloaded in national ports). The trade balance of swordfish is positive, having grown over the last decade at an average annual rate of 8.1%, reaching EUR 32 million in 2019.

The increase of catches by the Portuguese fleet is associated to the negotiations with Spain to exchange quotas¹. The transfer of quota from Spain, which in 2009 represented 4.2% (78 tonnes) of the quota allocated to Portugal, reached a record in 2019 (1 360 tonnes), which made it possible to double the fishing opportunities by the national fleet.

¹ Quota exchanges between member states are carried out under the terms of paragraph 8 of article 16 of Regulation (EU) n° 1380/2013 of 11 December, (basic regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy). In effect, the regulation allows member states on a basis of good management and taking advantage of the Union's fishing opportunities to exchange among themselves all or part of the fishing opportunities (quotas) that are allocated annually in accordance with the allocation key based on historical criteria.

Swordfish has been one of the situations in which the quota allocated to Portugal has proved to be insufficient for the good management of national vessels that are authorized to capture this species. In this way, Portugal exchanges quotas with Spain, (which does not use its entire quota), receiving a swordfish quota and assigning a quota to one or more species in order to achieve an identical market value, regardless of the quantities and species exchanged.