



Fighting Illegal (IUU) Fishing: The Republic of Congo Sets up a New Fisheries Monitoring Center with CLS

The Republic of Congo is scaling up its sustainable fisheries management by creating a new Monitoring, Control and Surveillance center. The Ministry of Fisheries has chosen CLS, the global leader in FMCs, as its provider.

Today, Congolese fisheries authorities face three main challenges:

1. an increasing number of industrial fishing vessels, which sometimes encroach on the coastal zone reserved for traditional fishers;
2. the possibility of foreign vessels fishing in their sovereign waters, landing their catches in foreign ports, and depriving the Congolese of their own marine resources;
3. overfishing and reduced stocks, jeopardizing the food security of the population that relies heavily on protein from fish.

The Ministry of Fisheries Takes Action

To address these issues, the Ministry of Fisheries has progressively implemented a sustainable fisheries management plan. The Republic of Congo first passed legislation requiring licensing of fishing vessels in 2000. Then in 2019, the government required Vessel Monitoring Systems for its industrial fleet. They chose CLS' Triton Advanced VMS. This terminal meets international reporting requirements and is able to send electronic catch reports, should they choose to implement that in the future.

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With these regulations, licensing and VMS, the Congo had set the foundations for sustainable management, but did not yet have the means to control and enforce those who do not follow the law. Managers needed an operational center that would enable real-time monitoring of fishing activity, analysis of this data, and coordination of surveillance and control activities.

To set up this Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) center, the Congo turned to CLS, the world's leading provider. CLS will provide the equipment and our THEMIS software platform, and training, enabling managers to have a complete view of fishing activity in their EEZ.

Congo Fisheries

Congo has a 180 km coastline and an estimated EEZ of 60,000 km². According to some studies, the Congolese maritime fishing industry has an exploitable potential of between 70,000 and 100,000 metric tons of fish per year. The national industrial fleet amounts to about 100 vessels. The port of Pointe-Noire is Central Africa's gateway to the ocean and the main landing point for fishery products caught in Congolese fishing waters. It is a key hub for intercontinental trade.

Resources at Risk

There has been a rapid increase in number of industrial fishing vessels. In December 2017, 110 ships were identified operating in a relatively small fishing zone, compared to just 60 in 2015. Although overfishing has been a problem for years, precise data or assessments have been hard to come by, due to the lack of VMS tracking data and surveillance centers.

This recent intensification raises many challenges. First, these industrial vessels compete with the traditional Congolese fishing fleet. The government has passed legislation reserving the first 6 nautical miles from the coast for these small-scale fishers. But up until now, this has been difficult to enforce without control and monitoring systems. In addition, the increase in catches by the industrial fishing industry, and their freezing and packing for export, mainly to China, raises issues about the food security of the country's inhabitants, many of whom depend on fish as a vital protein source.

Now, with the CLS Triton VMS installed and the THEMIS monitoring platform and operations center, authorities can protect these fishers and the Congo's marine resources. They can set up restricted zones and see in real-time if industrial vessels are fishing in the zone reserved for small-scale fishers. With THEMIS, operators can instantly have access to vessel license or ID information if they observe suspicious activity, and authorities have proof of illegal fishing behavior or transshipment.

New Interministerial Commission

Two weeks ago, the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries, Henri Djombo took a step further and [announced a new commission](#) to ensure that fisheries regulations are followed and to enforce the law.

New resources, such as patrol boats and inspections, and new technology, such as VMS terminals and the THEMIS operations center, will enable effective enforcement.

Mr. Djombo insisted that fishing must be carried out legally. Only vessels that have a fishing license and have VMS terminals on board will be allowed to fish. "The team will check the boats to see if those vessels are not allowed to fish but are doing so in violation of the law," he said.

"We must be very careful about the number of fishing boats. Only boats with a 2020 license are allowed to fish. The administration must ensure that this provision is respected and ask boats operating in Congolese marine waters to comply with the law," said Henri Djombo.



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About CLS Fisheries Division

CLS is the world leader in Vessel Monitoring Systems and Fisheries Monitoring Centers. We have been a pioneer in sustainable fisheries management since 1990. Our team are experts in a broad range of fields: fisheries, oceanography, marine biology, modelling, product design, satellites, data science, advanced analytics, software and hardware engineering, and operations.

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Key Facts

30 years' expertise
15,000 VMS vessels tracked worldwide
+30 Fisheries Monitoring Centers
Fisheries clients in +90 countries

About CLS Group

CLS is a worldwide company and pioneer provider of monitoring and surveillance solutions for the Earth since 1986. Our mission is to deploy innovative space-based solutions to understand and protect our planet and to manage its resources sustainably. CLS employs 750 people, at its headquarters in Toulouse (France) and in its 24 other sites around the world.

The company works in six strategic areas of activity: sustainable fisheries management, environmental monitoring, maritime surveillance, fleet management, energy & mining, space & ground systems. CLS process environmental data and positions from 80,000 transmitters per month.

<https://www.cls.fr/en/>

Key Facts CLS Group

130 satellites
25 million positions processed every day
Worldwide network: 28 premises on 5 continents