In West Africa, the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) supports the Sub-Regional Commission on Fisheries and the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea through the project ‘Improved regional fisheries governance in western Africa (PESCAO)’. EFCA’s actions are carried out in close cooperation with these two organisations, and with the fisheries control authorities of 13 countries that are members: Benin, Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

From 2 to 14 May 2019 EFCA requested CMS support for operation ‘Kuta’, a specific control operation in West African Waters. EFCA requested images and vessel detection services aimed at detecting:

- fishing vessels (trawlers, long liners and purse seiners) and associated vessels (reefers);
- transhipment activities (fishing vessels alongside reefer vessels);
- vessels from 10 to 80 metres in length.

The routine service request consisted of the delivery of synthetic-aperture radar (SAR) images over an area of interest covering more than 370,000 km², encompassing the Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry and Sierra Leone territorial waters and exclusive economic zones. In total, 18 SAR images were delivered with 1343 vessels detected, of which 473 could be identified using information from vessel reporting systems at EMSA, and 870 could not.

This information enabled the partners in the operation to define target areas and vessels with suspicious behaviour. Further analysis of the activity of a number of reefer vessels in the area revealed suspicious behaviour, possibly linked to illegal transhipments.

The coastal state concerned concluded that illegal activities had occurred in its waters, resulting in sanctions being applied to two reefer vessels and a bunkering vessel.

Get in touch for more information

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