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by: ДЕРЖАВНА НАУКОВА УСТАНОВА «ІНСТИТУТ РИБАЛЬСТВА, МОРСЬКОЇ ЕКОЛОГІЇ ТА ОКЕАНОГРАФІЇ» Ольга Прохорова

ДЕРЖАВНА НАУКОВА УСТАНОВА «ІНСТИТУТ РИБАЛЬСТВА, МОРСЬКОЇ ЕКОЛОГІЇ ТА ОКЕАНОГРАФІЇ»

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Ukraine

Project Information

1. Title of the grant application:

"Assessment of the status of aquatic biological resources using hydroacoustic equipment in coastal areas (marine estuaries and river mouths) of the Ukrainian zone of the Black Sea".

2. WTO Member or Members submitting this application:

Ukraine

3. Government agency or organization responsible for the implementation of this grant and its reporting to the Fish Fund:

State Scientific Institution "Institute of Fisheries, Marine Ecology and Oceanography" (SSI "IFMEO" / DNU "IRHEMO"), under the supervision of the State Agency of Ukraine for the Development of Melioration, Fisheries and Food Programs (State Fisheries Agency)

4. How the project aligns with the Fish Fund Theory of Change (Category I)?

- The main objective of this grant application is to support the preparation of a project proposal for a Category II project application, or another source of financing.

5. Indicate the total amount requested from the Fish Fund in United States Dollars (USD). Upload an indicative budget in Excel format, including estimated costs for experts, consultations, and outreach activities). The budget should also include any additional financial or in-kind contributions from the government and other agencies.

USD USD 48 500

20260508_142608_EN_Budget_Template_Cat_I.xlsx

6. Briefly describe the national context and challenges for implementing the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies in your country/territory or region.

Ukraine deposited its instrument of acceptance of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS) with the WTO Director-General on 17 August 2023, confirming its eligibility for Fish Fund support. The AFS entered into force on 15 September 2025, triggering concrete obligations for Ukraine, including initial notifications under AFS Article 8.3 and Article 8.4 due by 15 September 2026. Ukraine's fisheries sector encompasses the Black Sea and Sea of Azov as well as extensive inland waters. Since February 2022, Russia's full-scale armed aggression has imposed a complete ban on commercial marine fishing in the open Black Sea and coastal zones under martial law. Fishing enterprises previously operating in maritime zones have been forced to redirect activities to estuaries and lagoons – in particular the Dnistrovskiy Lyman (Odesa region, ~360 km²) and the Dnipro-Buh Estuary system (Mykolaiv and Kherson regions, ~800 km²). According to SSI IFMEO data, 15 to 25 small fishing enterprises employing up to 300 fishers currently operate in these water bodies, with income losses estimated at 60 to 90 percent compared to pre-war levels. These fishers represent Ukraine's small-scale marine fisheries sector displaced from the sea by armed conflict. The following AFS implementation gaps are directly addressed by this project: (1) AFS Article 4 – Subsidies for overfished stocks: Ukraine currently lacks reliable quantitative data on biomass and stock status for aquatic biological resources in estuaries and lagoons. Hydroacoustic surveys using direct area-based stock assessment methods have never been conducted in these water bodies. Without such data, Ukraine cannot classify estuarine fish stocks as "overfished" or "sustainably fished" – a prerequisite for applying AFS Article 4 prohibitions and making evidence-based decisions on subsidy eligibility. (2) AFS Article 8.1 – Notification obligations: Ukraine's capacity to submit accurate fisheries subsidy notifications, including status of fish stocks for which subsidies are provided, is directly constrained by the absence of scientifically validated stock assessment data for estuarine zones. The current reliance on outdated trawl survey data from the 2010s does not meet the evidentiary standard required for credible WTO notifications. (3) AFS Article 5 – Identification of fishing areas and socio-economic groups requiring targeted support: No targeted subsidy programmes for conflict-displaced small-scale fisheries currently exist in Ukraine. A core objective of this project is to identify fishing areas and socio-economic groups in Ukraine's estuarine and lagoon zones that may require targeted support in the form of subsidies or other measures, under conditions of restricted marine fisheries due to hostilities — and to ensure that any future support instruments are fully consistent with AFS Article 5 disciplines and do not fall within the prohibitions of Articles 3 or 4. Expected results of this component: a socio-economic profile of affected fishers and enterprises; identification of areas and groups warranting support; a typology of vulnerability by group; and preliminary recommendations for AFS-compliant support mechanisms, including eligibility criteria and notification requirements under AFS Article 8.1 – to be developed further under a Category II project. (4) Methodological gap: No validated methodology for hydroacoustic stock assessment in Ukrainian estuarine conditions exists. SSI IFMEO received a Simrad EK80 Portable hydroacoustic system from FAO in 2025 – the only scientific-grade hydroacoustic equipment in Ukraine for this purpose – but an adapted methodology for shallow, semi-enclosed water bodies has not yet been developed. Estuaries and lagoons occupy a unique regulatory gap: they fall outside GFCM's operative mandate covering open marine waters and outside EIFAAC's scope covering freshwater inland systems.

No GFCM, EIFAAC, or FAO-funded project has conducted hydroacoustic surveys in these transitional water bodies, and no parallel national or international project for hydroacoustic stock assessment in these zones exists as of 2026. Wartime displacement of fishing effort into these zones makes the assessment urgent: concentration of fishing pressure on previously moderately exploited ecosystems creates real risk of overexploitation and consequent non-compliance with AFS Article 4.

7. Does this grant application support activities that have been directly linked to an approved national strategy or plan? If yes, please name the document and indicate whether there is an explicit reference to the implementation of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.

Yes

Yes. This project supports activities directly linked to the following approved national strategic documents: 1. Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 402-r of 2 May 2023 "On the Approval of the Strategy for the Development of Ukraine's Fisheries Sector for the Period up to 2030" – includes measures on combating IUU fishing, alignment with international standards, and European integration. 2. Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 226-r of 12 March 2026 "On the Approval of the Operational Plan of Actions for the Implementation in 2026-2029 of the Strategy for the Development of the Ukrainian Fisheries Sector for the Period until 2030" – establishes concrete action milestones for 2026-2029 directly relevant to this project. These documents do not contain an explicit reference to the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies by name; however, they include measures on combating IUU fishing, improvement of national legislation, and alignment with international fisheries governance standards, all of which directly correspond to AFS disciplines. Ukraine's WTO obligations under the AFS and the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement fisheries provisions are also aligned with the project's objectives.

8. Indicate whether your government is or has been a beneficiary of support from Fish Fund core partners or other specialized agencies with the objective of supporting the implementation of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and/or issues relating to IUU fishing. If yes, please provide a description of the support measure and its implementing partner, with a brief explanation on how this grant application will avoid duplicating activities and/or resources.

Yes

Yes. The following support has been received; this application avoids all duplication: (1) FAO – Project "Inclusive, Competitive and Sustainable Value Chain Functioning and Development in Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry" (ongoing): FAO supports legal approximation to EU acquis, institutional capacity, fisheries data collection systems, and digital tools (E-Fish, VMS). SSI IFMEO received a Simrad EK80 Portable hydroacoustic unit from FAO in 2025. Non-duplication: the FAO project focuses on institutional and system design for the broader sector; it does not include hydroacoustic field surveys, estuarine stock assessment, or methodological adaptation for transitional water bodies. This project builds on the FAO equipment delivery by developing the validated methodology needed to deploy it. (2) GFCM-GEF Project "FishEBM BS" (November 2025 – March 2026): SSI IFMEO

experts contributed to the component "Current Status of Ukrainian Marine Small-Scale Fisheries in the Black Sea Region". Non-duplication: FishEBM BS covered open-sea marine small-scale fisheries; it did not cover estuarine systems and included no hydroacoustic surveys. (3) GFCM and EIFAAC: Neither organisation has provided or is providing support for hydroacoustic surveys in Ukrainian estuaries/lagoons. These transitional water bodies fall outside both organisations' operative mandates.

9. Indicate if this grant application will benefit from implementation support from any of the Fish Fund partners. If support will be provided by other international organizations, please specify under 'Other'.

No

10. Provide additional information on other government departments that are expected to play a role in the implementation and or collaboration of this grant.

- State Fisheries Agency – supervisory authority and founder of SSI IFMEO; signs endorsement letter; provides policy guidance. - Ministry of Economy, Environment, and Agriculture of Ukraine main body in the system of central executive authorities of Ukraine responsible for formulating and implementing state policy in the field of fisheries and the fishing industry, conservation, use, and restoration of aquatic biological resources, and regulation of fisheries.

11. Indicate the expected duration for implementation and completion of the grant:

3-6 months

12. Provide a brief description of the communication strategy that will be used to disseminate information about the grant and its intended audience.

The communication strategy aims to: (i) ensure visibility of the project and the Fish Fund's support; (ii) disseminate findings to government stakeholders, the scientific community, and the public; and (iii) build awareness of Ukraine's AFS implementation process among national and international audiences. Planned outputs: - One press release at project launch, issued by State Fisheries Agency and SSI IFMEO in Ukrainian and English. - One press release upon project completion presenting key findings and the Category II proposal. - Three social media posts on government channels (State Fisheries Agency, SSI IFMEO): project launch; explainer on AFS and Ukraine's obligations; findings summary. - Publication of the Methodological Manual and needs assessment report on the SSI IFMEO and State Fisheries Agency official websites in open access. - Presentation of findings at a relevant national or international fisheries forum (GFCM, CACFish, or national fisheries science conference), subject to availability. All outputs will acknowledge WTO Fish Fund support in accordance with the Fund's visibility requirements. SSI IFMEO will coordinate communication activities with the Fish Fund Secretariat. Target audiences: Ukrainian government (State Fisheries Agency, Ministry of Economy, Environment, and Agriculture of Ukraine); Fish Fund Secretariat and core partners (FAO, WTO, World Bank, IFAD); Ukrainian scientific community; fishing enterprises and small-scale fisheries associations; general public.

13. Indicate communication channels that will be used to share information about the project and from the Fish Fund?

Government website or social media, Local media (TV, news, etc), Through partner organizations websites and social media, Other
Official website of SSI "IFMEO" (www.irgemo.gov.ua) – publication of project results, methodological manual, and needs assessment report in open access.

14. Upload a letter of endorsement from the government entity responsible for implementation.

20260508_142609_Support_Letter_SSI____IFMEO____WTO_4.pdf

15. Any additional comment or observation relevant to consideration of the application.

Value for money: This project delivers exceptional value within the Category I ceiling. The government in-kind contribution – including the Simrad EK80 Portable hydroacoustic system (procured by FAO, estimated value USD 30,000-40,000) and dedicated SSI IFMEO staff time and coordination – substantially multiplies the effective resource base. SSI IFMEO's pre-existing access to national fisheries databases, established relationships with local military administrations for field access, and an operational Black Sea Department in Odesa eliminate set-up costs that would be incurred by any external implementer. Unique institutional position: SSI IFMEO is the sole national fisheries science institution with a statutory mandate covering the Black Sea including bays and estuaries, responsible for annual stock assessment, catch limit justification, and scientific support to Ukraine's obligations within GFCM, CCAMLR, and NAFO. It holds the only scientific-grade hydroacoustic equipment (Simrad EK80 Portable) available for estuarine research in Ukraine. Filling a genuine gap: The estuaries and lagoons of Ukraine's Black Sea zone are outside both GFCM and EIFAAC mandates. No hydroacoustic survey has ever been conducted in these water bodies. The Fish Fund has a unique opportunity to generate new scientific knowledge with direct AFS compliance relevance that no other donor is positioned to address. Risk management: The primary implementation risk is field access under martial law. Mitigation measures include: (i) SSI IFMEO's demonstrated track record of field research under wartime conditions; (ii) established authorisation protocols with local military administrations; (iii) project design that is predominantly analytical with field visits limited to two reconnaissance missions to Dnistrovskiy Lyman (the more accessible priority site); (iv) a 6-month timeline providing buffer for access delays; (v) 5% contingency budget allocation.

16. Contact point for this application

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