



**TRANSFORMATIVE
RESEARCH
CHALLENGE
2025**

Nansen Programme Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) Prize



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(Co-hosted by the FAO EAF-Nansen Programme and the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI))

Marine ecosystems and aquatic food systems play an essential role in ensuring food and nutritional security around the world. However, the ability of these systems to continue providing these essential goods and services for the benefit of people is under significant threat from excessive fishing pressure, environmental variability, climate change and increasing pollution from marine and land-based sources.

The Nansen Programme Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) Prize is a one-off award celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF)-Nansen Programme in 2025. The prize aims to inspire young researchers to develop innovative and scalable solutions that enhance the adoption and implementation of the EAF. This holistic, risk-based approach aligns with sustainable development principles and considers ecological, environmental, social and governance factors in fisheries management.

By empowering youth and early-career professionals, this prize seeks to address critical challenges in sustainable fisheries management while fostering resilience in aquatic food systems and contributing to global food and nutrition security.

Objectives of the prize:

The Nansen Programme Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Prize encourages youth-led innovations that address critical gaps in fisheries science and management and ocean governance. This initiative intends to:





- **Encourage cross-sector collaboration** between scientists and practitioners to ensure that expertise and knowledge from both sides are incorporated effectively;
- **Foster innovative solutions** to adapt to challenges associated with climate change; and
- **Promote scalable technologies** that can be adopted/adapted globally, particularly in data-poor regions and countries.

Themes of the prize:

- **Enhancing implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management**

Research ideas on the different aspects of improving the implementation of the EAF. One example is provided below, but other aspects of enhancing implementation of EAF can be focused on:

Fisheries science-management/policy nexus: At the core of the work of the EAF-Nansen Programme is support for partner countries and regions to produce scientific information with the highly sophisticated research vessel 'Dr. Fridtjof Nansen', while supporting these partners to establish effective systems for managing their aquatic resources. However, one observation is the need to improve the link between these two important aspects: the use of scientific advice and information for decision making in fisheries management and policy.

- **Climate change considerations/adaptation (strategies) in EAF and for fishing/coastal communities**

The EAF-Nansen Programme considers climate change as a key threat to the ability of marine ecosystems and aquatic food systems to continue providing essential goods and services, particularly aquatic food products.





In Africa for example, the IPCC considers that climate change has already had a high impact on marine ecosystem structure, marine species range shift and a medium negative impact on fisheries yield and aquaculture production. However, information on the situation at regional, national and local scales is still inadequate and predictions of future impacts on scales relevant to local decision makers are not reliable. Therefore, this sub-theme focuses on research on strengthening linkages between the EAF and climate change adaptation plans and vulnerability assessments.

- **Modern tools and methods to facilitate the implementation of the EAF**

Considering the current proliferation of information-technology tools, there is the need to reconsider the different tools and methods used in the implementation of EAF to ensure a modern approach to look at 'old' problems. A few examples are as follows:

Data collection tools in artisanal (small-scale) fisheries

The EAF-Nansen Programme supports partner countries and regions to collect, analyse and manage both fisheries dependent and independent data. This is advised by the need for good quality data and information to support effective decision making and policy making. The artisanal fisheries sector presents a unique challenge due to the sheer number of fishers and highly dispersed landing sites coupled with small vessels sizes and crews, among others; and

Taxonomic tools for identifying/differentiating different marine fish species, etc.

The process of documenting, monitoring and protecting marine species is essential for sustainable use and management of fish stocks. However, the ability to identify and/or differentiate between two fishes caught typically requires extensive knowledge of subjects like taxonomy and morphology, which most fishers and managers do not have. Therefore, it is necessary to develop modern user-friendly tools and approaches that facilitate this process to allow non/low-technical people undertake this very important task.





- **Gender mainstreaming in EAF**

Gender equality has been accepted as an enabling and even an accelerating condition of sustainable development. Women represent at least 18% of fishers in the primary sector and 40% of people in fisheries value chains; this number increases to 45% when examining estimates of those who rely on small-scale fisheries for their livelihoods. However, despite growing recognition and improved visibility of women's crucial roles, their contributions and voices are still underrecognized and underrepresented in fisheries and marine resource management.

Eligibility:

The prize is open to participants from countries that are partners of the EAF-Nansen Programme. These include countries across Africa and Asia committed to sustainable fisheries management through the ecosystem approach to fisheries.

Eligible countries are: **Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Sao Tome and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Togo and Thailand.**

What will not be eligible?

The following topics that fall outside the scope of this prize and will not be considered:

- **Large-scale infrastructure projects:** This prize focuses on small-scale, innovative and affordable solutions rather than large, costly infrastructure projects.
- **Solutions requiring high capital investment:** The prize is intended to support affordable and scalable innovations. Therefore, solutions that require significant financial investment or large-scale infrastructure, which may not be feasible in the targeted African and Asian contexts, are not eligible.





Application Deadline:

Researchers must submit their applications by 9 May 2025.

What do young researchers gain?

- **Mentorship:** The winning team, comprising two individuals, will receive the opportunity to continue their work with additional support and mentorship at FAO headquarters in Rome for a duration of 3 months fully sponsored by the EAF-Nansen Programme.
- **Global visibility:** Finalist teams receive recognition for their innovative work through the WFF website and social media channels, showcasing their projects to a global audience.
- **Networking opportunities:** Finalist teams will be able to connect with a global network of young leaders, agrifood experts and representatives from the public and private sectors, as well as the United Nations.
- **Capacity development:** Semi-finalist teams receive expert guidance to strengthen their skills in research proposal development.
- **Invitation to FAO headquarters:** Finalist teams are invited to present their research at the TRC Finals held at FAO headquarters in Rome in October 2025, in front of a high-level jury and a global audience via live stream on a range of platforms including [UN Web TV](#).
- **Post awards support:** Finalists are invited to apply for the WFF [Youth Food Lab](#) incubator programme. Winning teams may also receive continued support to further develop and implement their research proposals.





In addition, winning teams will receive:

- Networking and partnership opportunities with fisheries-sector professionals working in the multilateral development space, scientists and researchers in fisheries-sector innovation, from institutions across regions. This will support the further development and potential scaling of the innovative solutions.

