



Photo credit: Mona El-Azazy/WorldFish

# FACT SHEET Empowering Women Fish Retailers in Egypt (EWFIRE) Project



## Introduction

In 2018, WorldFish Egypt launched the Empowering Women Fish Retailers (EWFIRE) Project. Funded by the European Commission (EuropeAid), the project supports vulnerable women retailers and processors to develop their businesses in five urban areas across the Sharkia governorate, lower Egypt (Zagazig, Faous, Belbeis, Al-Hussainya and Abu-Kebeer).

Many of Egypt's fish retail markets remain underdeveloped, with traders operating informally without access to public marketplaces and extension services, running water, electricity supply and cold chain facilities. To date, there have been few initiatives focused on improving the livelihoods of Egyptian fish retailers. Fewer yet have focused on developing businesses among low-income and vulnerable women fish retailers. Through EWFIRE, WorldFish aims to provide technical, physical and social assistance to women beneficiary groups. The project targets enterprise growth by supporting existing women-led businesses and delivering sustainable, profitable business models for entry-level women entrepreneurs.

## Project goals

The objective is to empower existing and new fish retailers by providing training in product development, increasing their market visibility and supporting community-based market development initiatives in Sharkia. The project will test different value chain development strategies to achieve these outcomes. Specifically, the project aims to generate 300 additional full-time jobs by establishing 50 new enterprises and improving the profitability of 100 existing women retailers.



## Key outcomes

-  **5** women-led fish retailing centers established
-  **100** existing women fish retailers have improved profitability
-  **50** new fish processing businesses developed
-  **300** full-time jobs created

**Donor**  
European Commission (EuropeAid)

- Partners**
- Fair Trade Foundation Egypt
  - Zagazig University
  - Women's Economic Council of Sharkia

**Timeframe**  
3 years (2019–2021)

## Background

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Egypt's per capita fish supply has risen steadily in recent years, resulting in considerable expansion of domestic fish markets and related employment opportunities. Reports point to notable rates of employment generation in the retail subsector, where women account for the majority of workers (9.7 FTE/100mt). However, research finds that informal enterprises face challenging working conditions, particularly those run by poor women. Studies show that women retailers face limited access to financial services, extension services and formal marketplaces, as well as restricted freedom of movement, insecure access to credit and supply contracts, and heavy time burdens that limit their performance in the market. Considering that the Egyptian fish retail sector is vital for food security and employment for women, there is a need for value chain development initiatives to assess the current situation and address gender-based market constraints facing women traders and women-led cooperatives.

## Project components

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### Interventions

During the project launch in 2018, exchange visits were organized with local retailers and local partners in target sites. Six planning workshops were also held at the WorldFish Abbassa training and business hub, which were attended by members from national and local institutions, public regulatory bodies, private industry, and the governorate's chambers of commerce and women's economic council. The project has been designed in response to this initial feedback from these key stakeholders. The project is divided into five work packages:

1. Organize women retailers into market cooperatives and enable the participatory formation of retailer committees to communicate with their wider community and engage with local market authorities.
2. Establish and facilitate management of five women-led fish retailing centres in cooperation with local community development associations and/or NGOs.
3. Train women fish retailers in technical fish processing and value addition skills, business development, marketing and product certification.





4. Support development of participatory market action plans to test new fish products and business models.
5. Improve market linkages through information and communications technology (ICT) training on accessing stakeholder databases, online marketing platforms and facilitating negotiations with certified suppliers and local formal retail chains.

In 2019, an awareness and stakeholder engagement campaign was launched. Project staff made field visits to new markets in target sites to gather feedback from local stakeholders about which activities they are most interested in pursuing. Throughout the campaign, baseline survey activities were implemented by the partner research team from WorldFish, Zagazig University and Suez University. The research team met with diverse retailer enterprises asking them of the factors that enable their economic empowerment in the local markets. This has provided in-depth perspectives for particular project activities around fish processing centres and the support for collective mobilization.

The stakeholder engagements and baseline information has helped to inform the design of the first fish processing unit at the WorldFish Abbassa training and business hub in Sharkia. At the fish processing unit, national food safety and fish processing experts as well as the Egyptian Chef's association have provided introductory presentations on cost-effective and value adding innovations.

In collaboration with the Abbassa fish processing unit and training centre, ICT training workshops have been launched to engage retailer beneficiaries with the WorldFish market platform. These modules have helped to inform tailored guidelines and mediums to share access to the project's mobile app for trading and pricing platforms.

Communication campaigns have been built on these networks and workshops through printed and social media to raise awareness and garner local support for scaling the project's operations. The project will support beneficiaries to participate in upcoming food fairs, business start-up events and entrepreneurship conventions.

## Planned outcomes by 2021

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1. Five women-led fish and training centres established in five urban communities, equipped with processing and storage facilities.
2. Training centres functioning to provide space for fish business hubs, training and workshops on product certification and marketing.
3. 200 existing fish retailers and 50 new women-led fish entrepreneurs establish profitable and sustainable business models.
4. 400 new full-time jobs generated among beneficiary cohorts.

Towards this, even sub-outcomes will be targeted.

Overall, the project will establish 400 profitable micro, small and medium enterprises in Sharkia's aquaculture and fisheries value chains. Women fish retailers will have:

- increased social capital
- increased access to assets and credit for enterprise growth.
- greater recognition by market authorities and communities as legitimate enterprises
- improved business development and fish processing technical skills
- established new businesses and product lines, operating as sustainable, profitable businesses
- improved access to market information and are able to use it
- improved linkages with other market actors and improved bargaining power.

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