

Common fisheries policy (CFP)

2011/0195(COD) - 28/11/2013 - Committee recommendation tabled for plenary, 2nd reading

The Committee on Fisheries adopted the recommendation for a second reading contained in the report by Ulrike RODUST (S&D, DE) and approved the Council position at first reading with a view to the adoption of a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002, (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision (EC) No 2004/585.

Following its adoption of the position in Parliament's first reading in plenary on 6 February 2013, informal negotiations started with the Irish Presidency with view to reaching an early second reading agreement. After seven rounds of trialogue, Parliament's and Council's negotiating team reached agreement on the file on 30 May 2013. As Council's first reading position is in conformity with the agreement reached in the trilogues, the report recommends that Parliament accept it without further amendments.

The main elements of the compromise are as follows:

- overfishing must be stopped, if possible by 2015, so that fish stocks can start to recover. It is made clear that postponing this to a later date (up to 2020 at the latest) can only be permitted if the economic and social sustainability of the fishing fleets involved is seriously jeopardized;
- the principle of maximum sustainable yield should not merely have the status of a political declaration of intent but should be genuinely legally binding on all future decisions;
- it is clear that the objective of all these measures is to allow stocks to grow not just to a sustainable level but beyond. Parliament has thus succeeded in creating a safety margin for the environment;
- agreement was also reached on the proposed requirement that all catches should be landed (the 'discard ban').
- exemptions to the discard ban may be adopted (up to 5% of all catches, 7% for a transitional period). Parliament successfully argued that exemptions should only be adopted where it is very hard for the fishermen concerned to fish more selectively, or where the processing of by-catches would entail disproportionately high costs.
- with regard to the issue of fleet overcapacity, the compromise text lays down the principle that Member States must ensure that their catch capacities are in line with resources. Parliament obtained the inclusion of a provision whereby Member States have to examine their fleets' catch capacities every year in accordance with criteria set by the Commission;
- as part of the reform, preparations were also made for the further decentralisation ('regionalisation') of decision-making. The Advisory Councils will have a more balanced membership in future, with 40% of their members being representatives from outside the fisheries sector (e.g. from NGOs);
- the compromise text also stipulates that the EU must avoid contributing to overfishing in foreign waters;
- the new basic regulation contains a decision in principle that appropriations from EU fisheries funds may only be disbursed if the rules of the common fisheries policy are complied with;
- lastly, the inclusion of 'access criteria' was a success for the negotiating team. In future the Member States will have to distribute catch quotas among their fishermen in accordance with objective and transparent criteria.