


Procedure file

| Basic information | | |
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| COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic) | 1997/2304(COS) | Procedure completed |
| Fisheries products in the Union: responsibility, partnership, competitiveness | | |
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| Key players | | | |
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| European Parliament | Committee responsible | Rapporteur | Appointed |
| | PECH Fisheries | PPE MCCARTIN John Joseph | 21/01/1998 |
| Council of the European Union | Council configuration | Meeting | Date |
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| Key events | | | |
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| 25/05/1998 | Vote in committee | | Summary |
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| Technical information | |
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Documentation gateway

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| Non-legislative basic document | | COM(1997)0719 | 16/12/1997 | EC | Summary |
| Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading | | A4-0204/1998 OJ C 210 06.07.1998, p. 0007 | 25/05/1998 | EP | |
| Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report | | CES0798/1998 OJ C 235 27.07.1998, p. 0056 | 27/05/1998 | ESC | |
| Text adopted by Parliament, single reading | | T4-0386/1998 OJ C 210 06.07.1998, p. 0280-0292 | 19/06/1998 | EP | Summary |

Fisheries products in the Union: responsibility, partnership, competitiveness

OBJECTIVE: To bring about an extensive debate with all the parties concerned with a view to revision of the Community market in fisheries products. On the basis of this debate the Commission will adopt measures and make proposals in this area before the end of 1998. Responses to this document are expected before 30 June 1998. **SUBSTANCE:** the Commission communication considers that future action in the fisheries sector should centre on three main objectives: (1) responsibility: the fishing industry is to be encouraged to take greater responsibility in managing the market and fish stocks to ensure sustainability; (2) partnership: there must be closer cooperation between all the operators in the production and distribution chain; (3) competitiveness: in view of the very competitive nature of the world market in fisheries products, only the most competitive producers in the EU will in future have a secure place on the international market; competitiveness must therefore be encouraged. The communication also aims to respond to the concerns expressed at international level, to ensure that responsible fishing goes hand-in-hand with responsible trade in fisheries products. It also points out the need to take into account all the factors which affect fisheries markets in Europe, including trade policy, consumer information and safety and improvement in product quality. In this context the Commission identifies a number of measures concerned with changes to the law and other measures to promote a more integrated market based on quality: - adoption of new rules on the minimum size of fish sold within the EU, - making certain adjustments to the conditions for recognition of producer organizations and encouraging inter-sectoral organizations and transnational producer organizations, - setting stricter conditions for intervention buying of unsold fish, to reduce the quantity of the limited resources which are thus destroyed, - adopting measures to further encourage contractual sales between producer organizations and the food industry, - adopting a Community 'demonstration programme' aiming to show how information technology can help to improve transparency on the market by helping to effectively concentrate supply and demand, - granting increased financial support for quality systems and promotion campaigns. ?

Fisheries products in the Union: responsibility, partnership, competitiveness

Responsibility, partnership and competitiveness: these three principles, set out in the Commission's paper on the future for the market in fisheries products, are to serve as its guidelines in the review of the common organisation of the fisheries market (COM). In adopting the report by John McCARTIN (EPP, Irl), the Committee hopes to play a part in the broad debate on this issue which has been set in motion by the Commission's paper. The report was adopted under the consultation procedure. The motion for a resolution, which was adopted unopposed with one abstention, calls for the COM to be refocused by investigating different options such as a gradual reduction in market intervention (which would allow more scope for market forces and hence achieve a better match between supply and demand), changes in the role of producer organisations, stricter measures against the sale of illegally landed fish and financial compensation for voluntary reductions in fishing. The main aim is to eliminate the contradictions between the various strands of the market policy and the common fisheries policy. In practical terms, this means gradually promoting carry-over premiums in the place of withdrawal aid. Withdrawal and destruction (discards at sea) should not be supported but penalised. The Commission is also asked to consider whether the introduction of financial compensation for a voluntary reduction of fishing activity might be a good way of compensating shipowners and fishermen who would no longer be able to benefit from the withdrawal system. The committee also emphasises the need to strengthen controls, for example by allowing fisheries products to be landed only at ports designated as having the capacity to carry out the necessary checks. In contrast to the proposals contained in the Commission's paper, the report argues that Community producers should continue to receive protection. Tariff reductions are thus undesirable and in any case the principle of reciprocity should be observed. The committee also calls for reference prices and safeguard clauses to be maintained. Protection must certainly be retained against all forms of unfair competition resulting from ultra-low wages, fishing methods that are incompatible with resource conservation and fisheries products of suspect quality obtained under dubious conditions of hygiene. Given the Community's deficit in fisheries products, the report argues that a system should be introduced differentiating the treatment of products of joint ventures with Community capital from that of third-country imports proper. In addition, measures should be taken to deal with the problem of vessels flying flags of convenience, whose practices distort competition on the market. Lastly, the resolution calls for the legislative proposal to provide for an internal information system for improved market monitoring as well as technical health controls to enable the quality of Community products to be certified.?

Fisheries products in the Union: responsibility, partnership, competitiveness

Adopting the report by Mr John Joseph McCARTIN (PPE, Irl.) on the future for the market in fisheries products, the European Parliament urges that producer organizations be given funding in recognition of their role in centralizing supply and balancing supply and demand. It calls on the Commission to consider whether the introduction of financial compensation for voluntary reductions of fishing effort could be a good way of

compensating ship owners and fishermen for the purpose of better resource management. Parliament takes the view that the possibility of relying on the market forces for the matching of supply and demand, rather than steering prices and intervention, should be investigated. In any event, market policy must be seen in its proper CFP content and any contradictions between its various strands should be eliminated. It also calls for the introduction of storage premium mechanisms to accompany withdrawal aid. It also considers that withdrawal/destruction methods must be reduced and that measures should instead be taken to enhance markets other than the market in fresh fish. It also expresses concern regarding the future of local producers and stresses the importance of small fishing fleets. Noting the advantages of catch plans as an instrument for achieving greater regularity of supply, Parliament calls on the Commission to indicate how it intends to reduce withdrawals. In addition to funding for catch plans, Parliament considers that producer organizations should receive funding to enable them to provide technical assistance to producers (research and measures to promote selective fishing activities, the development of instruments to improve quality on board vessels and of communications equipment). Given the importance of controls, Parliament puts forward the possibility of allowing fisheries products to be landed only at designated ports equipped to carry out the necessary controls. Similarly concerning product quality, Parliament considers that a close link must be established within distribution networks in order to ensure product quality and facilitate certification. It calls on the Commission to ensure that reference prices can be maintained together with safeguard clauses as an emergency response to any serious market disturbances. Measures must also be taken to protect fishermen and the processing industry in the Community from any form of unfair competition particularly from third country suppliers who are able to sell at lower prices since their wages are lower, their working conditions less healthy and the methods used incompatible with Community fisheries resource conservation requirements. In this connection, Parliament opposes a reduction or possible abolition of customs duties on products from third countries and calls for reciprocity should such steps be taken. It urges that, in the context of trade with third countries, reference be made to the problem of catches in international waters by vessels flying flags of convenience. In conclusion Parliament urges that future legislation reforming the common organization of fisheries take account of the five following aspects which are essential for its functioning. - an internal information system allowing closer monitoring of market developments including, if necessary, a list of species most sensitive to price fluctuations. - suitable health inspection procedures to ensure the quality and safety of processed products in the Community (one proposal by Parliament is the use of identification tags) and the creation of a Community reference laboratory; - compliance with minimum legal requirements regarding the labelling of fisheries products to ensure that consumers are better informed. - public funding for the promotion of regional fisheries products complying with quality specifications as certified by an independent authority. - support measures for Community production in the light of current market trends where it is necessary to distinguish between the situation with regard to fresh products, frozen products or products intended for processing. Finally, Parliament calls on the Commission to assess regularly the functioning of the market in fisheries products and to identify existing links between marketing measures, resources and monitoring.?