



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2009/2106(INI)	Procedure completed
Green Paper on reform of the common fisheries policy		
Subject 3.15 Fisheries policy		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	PECH Fisheries	PPE PATRÃO NEVES Maria do Céu Shadow rapporteur S&D ANDRÉS BAREA Josefa ALDE HAGLUND Carl Verts/ALE LÖVIN Isabella ECR GRÓBARCZYK Marek Józef NI DODDS Diane	01/09/2009
European Commission	Commission DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries	Commissioner DAMANAKI Maria	

Key events			
22/04/2009	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2009)0163	Summary
22/10/2009	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
27/01/2010	Vote in committee		Summary
08/02/2010	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0014/2010	
25/02/2010	Results of vote in Parliament		
25/02/2010	Debate in Parliament		
25/02/2010	Decision by Parliament	T7-0039/2010	Summary
25/02/2010	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
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Committee dossier	PECH/7/00514

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		COM(2009)0163	22/04/2009	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE428.282	10/11/2009	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE430.947	17/12/2009	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE431.048	17/12/2009	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0014/2010	08/02/2010	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0039/2010	25/02/2010	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2010)2012	04/06/2010	EC	

Green Paper on reform of the common fisheries policy

PURPOSE: to launch a debate on the future of the European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

CONTENT: the European Commission adopted a Green Paper on the future of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy. The paper analyses the shortcomings of the current Policy and launches a broad public consultation on how these shortcomings should be tackled. The consultation is the first step of the process which should bring about a radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

The purpose of the Green Paper is twofold: (i) to raise awareness of the challenges faced by the sector in recent years; and (ii) to elicit a public response which can grow into a new, innovative and more consensual approach to fisheries regulation. It raises questions such as:

- How can we ensure the long-term sustainability and the viability of fisheries?
- How can overall fleet capacity be adapted while addressing the social concerns faced by coastal communities?
- How can a culture of compliance be further developed?
- How best can the CFP contribute to fisheries sustainability beyond EU waters?

The Green Paper recalls that the main changes made to the CFP in 2002 included: (i) moving towards a longer-term perspective on fisheries management by introducing recovery and management plans; (ii) increased commitment to ensure the integration of environmental concerns into fisheries management; (iii) increased stakeholder involvement by establishing the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs); (iv) a new fleet policy, doing away with compulsory targets for capacity reduction and replacing them with national ceilings under which Member States are free to choose how they conduct their fleet policy; (v) introducing fishing effort, such as limiting the days a vessel can operate at sea, as a fundamental tool in fisheries management, notably in the context of multiannual recovery plans; (vi) a more selective use of public funds to support the development of the sector by discontinuing the use of public aid to construct new vessels, by a structural policy more coherent with CFP objectives and with more emphasis on diversification in coastal communities; (vii) new bilateral fisheries agreements aimed at developing partnerships with the third countries concerned.

The Paper analyses all the facets of fisheries policy today and explains why some problems persist despite the progress made since the reform of 2002.

On the whole, the Paper states that the objectives agreed in 2002 to achieve sustainable fisheries have not been met overall.

One of the main problems is the depleted state of European fish stocks: 88% of stocks are overfished (against a global average of 25%) and 30% are "outside safe biological limits", i.e. they cannot reproduce at normal rate because the parenting population is too depleted. Yet in many fisheries we keep fishing 2 or 3 times more than what fish stocks can sustain. This is mostly as a result of fleet overcapacity. Such overcapacity is in fact economically inefficient because not only does it deplete stocks but it also constantly drives the industry's profits down. Solutions need to be found to restore the worst-off stocks and at the same time guarantee that fish can continue to be a reliable source of revenue for fishermen.

Above and beyond overcapacity, the Paper identifies four other structural shortcomings of the present approach:

- the lack of precise policy objectives, especially with regard to ecological responsibility and integration with general maritime issues;
- a decision-making system that is too centralised and focused on short-term solutions which more often than not undermine long-term sustainability;
- a framework that does not give sufficient responsibility to the industry;
- the absence of political will towards compliance with the fishing limitations.

These issues have to be considered in a context where Europe imports two-thirds of its demand in fisheries products.

As regards the main structural failings, the Commission considers the following:

- a deep-rooted problem of fleet overcapacity;
- imprecise policy objectives resulting in insufficient guidance for decisions and implementation;
- a decision-making system that encourages a short-term focus;
- a framework that does not give sufficient responsibility to the industry;

- lack of political will to ensure compliance and poor compliance by the industry.

With an aim to further improving the management of the EU fisheries, the Paper focuses on the following:

- the introduction of a differentiated fishing regime to protect small-scale coastal fleets;
- making the most of our fisheries;
- relative stability and access to coastal fisheries;
- reserve access to the 12 nm zone for small-scale fishing vessels;
- ensure that Europe's fishing industry (whether fisheries or aquaculture) receives a larger share of the price the consumer pays for the fish at the counter;
- integrate the Common Fisheries Policy in the broader maritime policy context;
- improve the knowledge base and scientific data to support the policy;
- redefine the external dimension of the CFP;
- discuss the role of aquaculture in a reformed CFP.

Work on the reform will not stop work on making the CFP more effective within its existing framework. Much can and will be done during the time leading up to the implementation of the reform. This includes:

- reforming the control policy to ensure that decisions are properly implemented and that there is a level playing field across Member States;
- continued drive to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported fisheries, in order to combat such fisheries in European waters and the importation of any products originating from such fisheries;
- new initiatives to eliminate discards and protect sensitive species and habitats;
- continued integration of the CFP within the IMP, including support to implement the Marine Strategy to ensure environmental protection of marine ecosystems;
- a new strategy on aquaculture addressing the bottlenecks that prevent this sector from developing;
- establishing and implementing additional long-term management plans to reduce the fishing pressure on overexploited stocks and restore them to MSY;
- enhanced transparency for consumers and further improvements to the traceability of production along the market chain.

These initiatives will aim at fixing urgent short and medium term problems while the reflection on the longer term review of the policy framework takes place. To the extent possible, they will be developed in line with the emerging orientations for this reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

An impact assessment will then be conducted and after further consultations with stakeholders, the Commission will draft a proposal for a new basic regulation which will be presented to Council and the European Parliament together with all other legal base proposals in the context of the new Financial Framework after 2013.

Green Paper on reform of the common fisheries policy

The Committee on Fisheries adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Maria do Céu PATRÃO NEVES (EPP, PT) on the Green Paper on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. The committee considers that the current reform is crucial for the future of the European fishing industry and that any failure to adopt and implement a radical reform could result in there being neither fish nor a fishing industry by the time of the next reform. It stresses that the CFP reform process should be finalised at the beginning of 2011, in order to ensure that it is duly taken into account in discussions on the forthcoming EU financial framework and that the reformed CFP is fully implemented. MEPs consider it necessary to establish a transitional period so that this reform of the CFP can be properly harmonised with the current framework of this common policy.

Specific aspects of the report can be summarised as follows:

Financial measures: MEPs consider that the financial resources to be negotiated within the framework of the new multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020 should include an increased CFP budget that will create the financial conditions required for the full implementation and practical development of the reform guidelines that have been adopted.

Protection and conservation of resources and scientific knowledge: MEPs consider that CFP commitments to reversing the economic and social consequences of reduced fishing possibilities as well as the high levels of pollution and greater international competition must be compatible with the long-term sustainability of the sector. The Commission is called upon to ensure that the CFP reform includes the measures adopted to combat climate change and provides for adequate funding to implement these measures. MEPs maintain that the abovementioned long-term sustainability of the sector will only come about within the context of a decentralised fisheries policy, with decisions being taken on the basis of what is most appropriate to the situations in individual fisheries and maritime regions. MEPs point to the need for greater investment at national and European level in applied research and scientific knowledge in the fisheries field.

Profitability and professional advancement: the report points out that the reform of the CFP should take account of the fact that the EU has decided that the exploitation of fish stocks should be managed by means of the objective of maximum sustainable yield, but stresses that this should be reconciled with a multispecies approach that takes into consideration the situation regarding all the species involved in a fishery and avoids the current approach of applying MSY stock by stock. Members stress how important the fishing industry is in the socio-economic situation, in employment and in promoting economic and social cohesion in the outermost regions (ORs). They recall that the Community's ORs are lagging behind in socio-economic terms. They urge the Commission to recognise the specific features of, and the differences between, the ORs and island regions, and to promote support measures geared to the biological and social sustainability of fisheries in those regions. MEPs also support the continuation of POSEI-Fisheries (scheme to compensate for the additional costs incurred in the marketing of certain fishery products from the outermost regions). The Commission is urged to draw up specific Community programmes to support small-scale coastal and non-industrial fisheries and shell-fishing.

The Commission and the Member States are urged to promote proper training for fishermen and skippers, including mandatory education schemes in 'best practice' in fishing. MEPs believe that all fishing and shell-fishing operators, men and women alike, need to be guaranteed easier access to European Union financial instruments and accorded the same status in all Member States, so as to guarantee them social

security cover and protection within the social welfare systems of each Member State. They stress that a strategy must be put in place to provide financial support to fishing professionals who, because fishing capacity has to be adjusted according to the availability of fish stocks, or to fish stock recovery plans, might see a decline in activity or might lose their job. MEPs call on the Commission to step up the provision of information to consumers on the origin and quality of fishery products and to draw up a specific eco-labelling programme with a view to enhancing the image of fishery products and promoting consumer health.

Management models, decentralisation, greater responsibility, and supervision: the report maintains that the management system for the fisheries sector must abandon the traditional top-down approach, laying emphasis instead on the principle of regionalisation and subsidiarity (horizontal decentralisation) without leading to regional discrimination or to disruption of the common implementation of fisheries policy, on the redefinition and increased flexibility of the principle of relative stability and on the participation of professionals in the sector and other stakeholders. It firmly rejects any attempt to adopt a single Community fisheries management model. MEPs urge the Commission to work for a separate, clearly defined, liberal and de-bureaucratised and simplified model for managing small-scale, coastal fisheries, where the European institutions set the overarching targets to be achieved by the Member States according to their own strategies. It is also urged to carefully examine the possibility of adopting new fisheries management models that are complementary to the TAC and quota system, for example in connection with fishing effort management and the use of transferable individual fishing rights.

Such arrangements would facilitate the introduction of the no-discards policy and enable the fleet to be adapted in a more flexible way, in line with the actual diversity and distribution of stocks. MEPs consider that voluntary schemes could be introduced for the use of transferable fishing rights for industrial fleets and any other segments that may be considered appropriate for this model, and that safeguard clauses should be included to guard against any possible excessive concentration of rights.

The committee takes the view that the greater the level of participation is, the clearer the objectives are and the more economic and social support is provided to those affected, the greater will be the understanding, acceptance and implementation of the various measures for managing fishery resources. It stresses the need to implement mechanisms for subsidising or compensating fishermen affected by the economic and social repercussions of multiannual recovery and management plans and ecosystem protection measures. In this context, the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), as well as other stakeholders and the Community Fisheries Control Agency should be placed in a position, logistically and financially, to exercise their updated responsibilities effectively and to the full.

Management of Community fishing fleets: MEPs stress that the scope of the reform of the CFP should seek solutions that ensure a stable and permanent balance between fishery resources and fleet capacity. They urge the Commission to conduct a detailed and exhaustive survey on the size, characteristics, and spread of the current Community fleet, each category being defined according to sound criteria, so that there can be no discrimination between similar fleets or between fleets from different Member States operating in the same waters. Members also take the view that the present EFF and future structural funds for the fisheries sector must continue to support fleet renewal and modernisation, above all with regard to small-scale coastal and artisanal fishing. They are in favour of setting up a Scrapping Fund as an effective and short-term solution to the problems of overcapacity, with rules to avoid its use being blocked by the Member States.

Aquaculture and processed products: MEPs are convinced that a strong, high-quality aquaculture sector that is environmentally sustainable has the potential to boost growth in related sectors and to help promote development in coastal, offshore and rural areas. They consider that the protection and the competitiveness of Community aquaculture should be strengthened. They consider it necessary to introduce rules establishing good market practices and fair competition regarding fishing products from outside the EU, excluding products which fall under regulations included in EU agreements with third parties. In addition, the Commission is called upon to: (i) to clearly define overcapacity and to ascertain the reasons for overcapacity; (ii) to examine specific mechanisms to support the development of such offshore salt-water fish farming; (iii) to present proposals that promote the search for new aquaculture species.

Markets and marketing of fish: MEPs hope that the Commission communication on the future of the current COM will be presented without further delay. They believe that an urgent far-reaching revision of the COM in fisheries products should be carried out in order to boost its contribution to guaranteeing earnings in the sector, ensuring market stability, improving the marketing of fisheries products and increasing the value added generated. In addition, the call for the compilation of a study providing a detailed analysis of the general situation concerning the concentration of demand in the fisheries products market, in order to check for the existence of market strategies that might breach competition rules and push down the prices for most species. The report highlights the need to create market intervention mechanisms, particularly in fisheries, in order to prevent the excessive concentration of fishing rights among a small number of operators (safeguard clauses). MEPs ask the Commission to analyse the possible impact and repercussions of reducing catches on the European market and the resultant import of substitutes from third countries to make up for market shortages. MEPs believe that everything possible should be done to avoid increasing the EU's already very heavy dependence on third-country imports for its supplies of fisheries and aquaculture products.

External relations: MEPs consider that CFP external action should be guided by the objective of defending Community fisheries interests in line with EU external policy. They state that schemes need to be devised for promoting fishery products coming from environmentally sustainable and socially fair sources within and outside the EU. Furthermore, they maintain that new fisheries agreements with third countries should be given an overall assessment, against criteria, as laid down by the European Parliament. MEPs believe that the financial compensation granted under fisheries agreements with third countries should be used to promote and develop the fisheries sector in those countries. Members consider that given the growing complexity of the situation, there is a need for an increase in DG MARE's human and material resources, and that the possibility of decentralising executive management to the Member States should be investigated.

Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP): Members consider that the CFP requires a global approach to the management of fish stocks and must be coordinated with environmental and development policies and the IMP. They believe that fishing activity should be suitably integrated and structured within a wider context of maritime activities such as maritime transport, marine tourism, offshore wind farms and aquaculture, and that it should be included in clusters of maritime activities. However, Members are convinced that real integration of the CFP into the IMP requires political will and that national, regional and local fishing entities are willing to enter into the necessary commitments. They stress that a CFP must not be subordinate to other Community policies. The report highlights the need to earmark adequate financial resources for the IMP and reiterates the principle that new priorities must be matched by new funding. It rejects however the notion that the IMP should be financed from the EFF.

Lastly, Members call for the 12-nautical mile regime to be permanent in nature given that it is one of the few areas in which the CFP has been relatively successful and where the Member States have had control.

The European Parliament adopted by 456 votes to 50, with 65 abstentions a resolution on the Green Paper on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Parliament considers that the current reform is crucial for the future of the European fishing industry and that any failure to adopt and implement a radical reform could result in there being neither fish nor a fishing industry by the time of the next reform. It stresses that the CFP reform process should be finalised at the beginning of 2011, in order to ensure that it is duly taken into account in discussions on the forthcoming EU financial framework and that the reformed CFP is fully implemented. MEPs consider it necessary to establish a transitional period so that this reform of the CFP can be properly harmonised with the current framework of this common policy.

Specific aspects of the resolution can be summarised as follows:

Financial measures: Parliament considers that the financial resources to be negotiated within the framework of the new multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020 should include an increased CFP budget that will create the financial conditions required for the full implementation and practical development of the reform guidelines that have been adopted.

Protection and conservation of resources and scientific knowledge: MEPs consider that CFP commitments to reversing the economic and social consequences of reduced fishing possibilities as well as the high levels of pollution and greater international competition must be compatible with the long-term sustainability of the sector. The Commission is called upon to ensure that the CFP reform includes the measures adopted to combat climate change and provides for adequate funding to implement these measures. MEPs maintain that the abovementioned long-term sustainability of the sector will only come about within the context of a decentralised fisheries policy, with decisions being taken on the basis of what is most appropriate to the situations in individual fisheries and maritime regions. MEPs point to the need for greater investment at national and European level in applied research and scientific knowledge in the fisheries field. Parliament believes that local fishing communities should always be given primary access to fish stocks, although access rights should be based on updated criteria and no longer solely on the criterion of historical catches, and that environmental and social criteria should gradually be introduced to determine who has the right to catch fish. They could include, for instance, the selectivity of the fishing gear, the contribution to the local economy or CO₂ emissions.

Profitability and professional advancement: the resolution points out that the reform of the CFP should take account of the fact that the EU has decided that the exploitation of fish stocks should be managed by means of the objective of maximum sustainable yield, but stresses that this should be reconciled with a multispecies approach that takes into consideration the situation regarding all the species involved in a fishery and avoids the current approach of applying MSY stock by stock. Members stress how important the fishing industry is in the socio-economic situation, in employment and in promoting economic and social cohesion in the outermost regions (ORs). They recall that the Community's ORs are lagging behind in socio-economic terms. They urge the Commission to recognise the specific features of, and the differences between, the ORs and island regions, and to promote support measures geared to the biological and social sustainability of fisheries in those regions. MEPs also support the continuation of POSEI-Fisheries (scheme to compensate for the additional costs incurred in the marketing of certain fishery products from the outermost regions). The Commission is urged to draw up specific Community programmes to support small-scale coastal and non-industrial fisheries and shell-fishing.

The Commission and the Member States are urged to promote proper training for fishermen and skippers, including mandatory education schemes in 'best practice' in fishing. MEPs believe that all fishing and shell-fishing operators, men and women alike, need to be guaranteed easier access to European Union financial instruments and accorded the same status in all Member States, so as to guarantee them social security cover and protection within the social welfare systems of each Member State. They stress that a strategy must be put in place to provide financial support to fishing professionals who, because fishing capacity has to be adjusted according to the availability of fish stocks, or to fish stock recovery plans, might see a decline in activity or might lose their job. MEPs call on the Commission to step up the provision of information to consumers on the origin and quality of fishery products and to draw up a specific eco-labelling programme with a view to enhancing the image of fishery products and promoting consumer health.

Management models, decentralisation, greater responsibility, and supervision: the resolution maintains that the management system for the fisheries sector must abandon the traditional top-down approach, laying emphasis instead on the principle of regionalisation and subsidiarity (horizontal decentralisation) without leading to regional discrimination or to disruption of the common implementation of fisheries policy, on the redefinition and increased flexibility of the principle of relative stability and on the participation of professionals in the sector and other stakeholders. It firmly rejects any attempt to adopt a single Community fisheries management model. MEPs urge the Commission to work for a separate, clearly defined, liberal and de-bureaucratised and simplified model for managing small-scale, coastal fisheries, where the European institutions set the overarching targets to be achieved by the Member States according to their own strategies. It is also urged to carefully examine the possibility of adopting new fisheries management models that are complementary to the TAC and quota system, for example in connection with fishing effort management and the use of transferable individual fishing rights.

Such arrangements would facilitate the introduction of the no-discards policy and enable the fleet to be adapted in a more flexible way, in line with the actual diversity and distribution of stocks. Parliament takes the view that the greater the level of participation is, the clearer the objectives are and the more economic and social support is provided to those affected, the greater will be the understanding, acceptance and implementation of the various measures for managing fishery resources. It stresses the need to implement mechanisms for subsidising or compensating fishermen affected by the economic and social repercussions of multiannual recovery and management plans and ecosystem protection measures. In this context, the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), as well as other stakeholders and the Community Fisheries Control Agency should be placed in a position, logistically and financially, to exercise their updated responsibilities effectively and to the full.

The resolution encourages the EU to accept its responsibility as the world's largest fish importer and market and to take the lead in addressing the global problem of illegal fisheries, using all available opportunities to move the fight against IUU fishing to the top of the international agenda, given the severe environmental damage it causes, including the weakening of the resilience of marine ecosystems to the impact of climate change, and the threat it poses to food security.

Management of Community fishing fleets: Parliament stresses that the scope of the reform of the CFP should seek solutions that ensure a stable and permanent balance between fishery resources and fleet capacity. They urge the Commission to conduct a detailed and exhaustive survey on the size, characteristics, and spread of the current Community fleet. Members also take the view that the present EFF and future structural funds for the fisheries sector must continue to support fleet renewal and modernisation, above all with regard to small-scale coastal and artisanal fishing. They are in favour of setting up a Scrapping Fund as an effective and short-term solution to the problems of overcapacity, with rules to avoid its use being blocked by the Member States.

Aquaculture and processed products: Parliament is convinced that a strong, high-quality aquaculture sector that is environmentally sustainable

has the potential to boost growth in related sectors and to help promote development in coastal, offshore and rural areas. It considers that the protection and the competitiveness of Community aquaculture should be strengthened. It also considers it necessary to introduce rules establishing good market practices and fair competition regarding fishing products from outside the EU, excluding products which fall under regulations included in EU agreements with third parties. In addition, the Commission is called upon to: (i) to clearly define overcapacity and to ascertain the reasons for overcapacity; (ii) to examine specific mechanisms to support the development of such offshore salt-water fish farming; (iii) to present proposals that promote the search for new aquaculture species.

Markets and marketing of fish: MEPs hope that the Commission communication on the future of the current COM will be presented without further delay. They believe that an urgent far-reaching revision of the COM in fisheries products should be carried out in order to boost its contribution to guaranteeing earnings in the sector, ensuring market stability, improving the marketing of fisheries products and increasing the value added generated. The resolution highlights the need to create market intervention mechanisms, in order to prevent the excessive concentration of fishing rights among a small number of operators (safeguard clauses). MEPs ask the Commission to analyse the possible impact and repercussions of reducing catches on the European market and the resultant import of substitutes from third countries to make up for market shortages.

External relations: Parliament considers that CFP external action should be guided by the objective of defending Community fisheries interests in line with EU external policy. They state that schemes need to be devised for promoting fishery products coming from environmentally sustainable and socially fair sources within and outside the EU. An amended added in plenary insists that, as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the EU should accept access to fish stocks in third-country waters only when it has been scientifically demonstrated that there is a surplus that cannot be caught by the third country's fishermen and that that surplus can be harvested sustainably, in keeping with at least the same standards as apply in the EU (gear selectivity, etc.). Furthermore, they maintain that new fisheries agreements with third countries should be given an overall assessment, against criteria, as laid down by the European Parliament. MEPs believe that the financial compensation granted under fisheries agreements with third countries should be used to promote and develop the fisheries sector in those countries.

Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP): Parliament considers that the CFP requires a global approach to the management of fish stocks and must be coordinated with environmental and development policies and the IMP. It believes that fishing activity should be suitably integrated and structured within a wider context of maritime activities such as maritime transport, marine tourism, offshore wind farms and aquaculture, and that it should be included in clusters of maritime activities. However, Members are convinced that real integration of the CFP into the IMP requires political will and that national, regional and local fishing entities are willing to enter into the necessary commitments. They stress that a CFP must not be subordinate to other Community policies. The resolution highlights the need to earmark adequate financial resources for the IMP and reiterates the principle that new priorities must be matched by new funding. It rejects however the notion that the IMP should be financed from the EFF.

Lastly, Parliament calls for the 12-nautical mile regime to be permanent in nature given that it is one of the few areas in which the CFP has been relatively successful and where the Member States have had control.