

Common fisheries policy (CFP)

2011/0195(COD) - 06/02/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 502 votes to 137, with 27 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy.

Parliament adopted its position at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amending the Commission proposal as follows:

Objectives: the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) should ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities contribute to long-term environmental, economic, and social sustainability. It should include rules regarding the traceability, security and quality of Union imported products and food security. It should also cover structural measures and the management of the fleet capacity.

The CFP should in particular:

- prevent, minimise and as far as possible eliminate unwanted catches;
- ensure that all catches of harvested and regulated stocks are landed, taking the best scientific advice into account, and avoiding the creation of new markets or expanding existing ones;
- provide conditions for efficient environmentally sustainable fishing activities in the Union;
- promote an equitable distribution of marine resources in order to contribute to a fair standard of living and social standards for those who depend on fishing activities;
- ensure systematic, harmonised, regular and reliable data collection and transparent data management and address the issues arising from data-poor stock management;
- promote small-scale coastal fishing activities.

Maximum sustainable yield (MSY): the Common Fisheries policy shall ensure that, by 2015, fishing mortality rates are set at levels that should allow fish stocks to recover, by 2020 at the latest, above levels that are capable of producing the maximum sustainable yield and allow all recovered stocks to be maintained at these levels.

Multiannual plans should be the main instrument for this objective to be achieved. It should also be possible for multiannual plans to contain provisions that limit yearly fluctuations of the total allowable catch for recovered stocks in order to create more stable conditions for the fishing sector.

Governance: the amendments insist on the fact that the Common Fisheries Policy shall apply the following principles of good governance: (i) the need to take a decentralised and regionalised approach to fisheries management; (ii) the appropriate involvement of stakeholders, in particular of Advisory Councils and social partners, at all stages - from conception to implementation of the measures; (iii) the need to carry out environmental and strategic impact assessments.

Establishment of fish stock recovery areas: in order to secure the conservation of living aquatic resources and marine ecosystems, and as part of a precautionary approach, Member States shall establish a coherent network of fish stock recovery areas in which all fishing activities are prohibited, including, in particular, areas important for fish reproduction.

Avoidance and minimisation of unwanted catches: Parliament considers that the obligation to land all catches should be introduced on a fisheries-by-fisheries base, in accordance with a timetable setting specific dates for different fisheries, starting in 2014.

The amended text stipulates that before the introduction of the obligation to land all catches in the respective fishery:

- Member States shall, where necessary, conduct pilot projects, based on the best available scientific advice and taking into account the opinions of the competent Regional Advisory Councils, with the aim of fully exploring all practicable methods for the avoidance, minimisation and elimination of unwanted catches in a fishery;
- the Union shall provide financial support for the design and implementation of pilot projects, as well as for the use of selective gears in order to reduce unwanted and unauthorised catches.

Parliament also proposes rules to ease the impact of the landing rule on operators, including, inter alia, de minimis exceptions for small-volume by-catches if they cannot be processed on land, and an exemption for by-catches with a high survival rate after discarding at sea.

Establishment of fish stock recovery areas: in order to secure the conservation of living aquatic resources and marine ecosystems, and as part of a precautionary approach, the report suggests that Member States should establish a coherent network of fish stock recovery areas in which all fishing activities are prohibited, including, in particular, areas important for fish reproduction.

Transferable fishing concessions: Parliament proposes to delete the provision which provides for the establishment by each Member State of transferable concession systems. On the other hand, a provision is included which allows each Member State to choose its method of allocating the fishing opportunities assigned to it, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, without an allocation system being imposed at Union level. In this way, Member States will remain free to establish or not to establish a system of transferable fishing concessions. When allocating the fishing opportunities available to them, Member States shall use transparent and objective environmental and social criteria.

Reducing overcapacity: Members propose that the Commission should undertake fleet assessments in order to obtain credible results concerning the precise level of overcapacity at Union level, thus making it possible to propose appropriate and targeted instruments for its reduction.

If the assessment shows a discrepancy between their fishing capacity and their fishing opportunities, the Member States shall within a year adopt a detailed programme, including a binding timetable, for any necessary adjustment of the fishing capacity of their fleets in terms of vessel numbers and characteristics with the objective of achieving a stable and enduring balance between their fishing capacity and their

fishing opportunities.

Science base for fishery management: despite the obligation of Member States to provide scientific data on their fisheries, many Member States have failed to do so. Member States that do not comply with this obligation should identify which fisheries they have failed to analyse. Failure by a Member State to comply with the data collection requirements shall result in the withdrawal of public aid and the subsequent imposition of additional penalties by the Commission.

International fisheries organisation: with a view to ensuring the sustainable exploitation and management of maritime biological resources, the Union shall promote the effective implementation of international fisheries instruments and regulations, participate in and support the activities of international organisations dealing with fisheries. In particular the Union shall:

- actively support, promote and contribute to the development of the best available scientific knowledge;
- promote measures to ensure that fishery resources are maintained;
- promote and support, in all international spheres, the necessary action to eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing;
- encourage and take an active part in joint international efforts to combat piracy at sea;
- ensure that fishing activities outside Union waters are based on the same principles and standards as those applicable in Union waters, while promoting the application by the RFMOs of the same principles and standards as are applied in Union waters.

Sustainable fisheries agreements: with a view to strengthening the competitiveness of the Union fishery and aquaculture sector, the resolution insists on the need to ensure reciprocity in trade with third countries in order to guarantee market conditions equal to those within the European Union, not only in terms of fishery sustainability, but also of health controls.