Conservation of fishery resources and protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures

2016/0074(COD) - 28/11/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Fisheries adopted the report by Gabriel MATO (EPP, ES) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1343/2011 and (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005.

As a reminder, the Regulation lays down technical measures concerning the taking and landing of fisheries resources and the operation of fishing gears and the interaction of fishing activities with marine ecosystems. It aims to simplify the existing rules and to make the technical measures more likely to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

The committee recommended that the European Parliaments position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission proposal as follows.

Technical measures: whereas the Commission proposes to rely exclusively on technical measures to achieve the objectives of the CFP, Members considered that technical measures shall contribute to achieving the aforementioned objectives, namely:

- ensure sustainable exploitation patterns to provide protection for juveniles and spawning aggregations of marine species;
- ensure that incidental catches of sensitive marine species, in particular those listed under Directives 92/43/EEC and 2009/147/EC, that result from fishing are minimised and where possible eliminated;
- ensure, including by using appropriate incentives, that the negative environmental impacts of fishing on marine habitats are minimised and where possible eliminated.

Recreational fisheries can have a significant impact on the marine environment, stocks of fish and other species, and should therefore be subject to technical measures.

Performance indicators: Members proposed replacing the term targets with performance indicators. In this context, they did not follow the Commission's proposal to set the 5 % tolerance margin for catches under the minimum size as a target.

To evaluate the effectiveness of technical measures, Members proposed using performance indicators relating to the reduction of catches of fish below the minimum conservation reference size and incidental catches of sensitive species

In order to establish these performance indicators, the Commission may adopt delegated acts to define key fisheries and the levels of such catches that apply to those key fisheries taking into account the best available scientific advice, in particular that of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF).

Innovative fishing gears: Members considered that the commercial scale use of innovative fishing gears, such as electrical pulse trawl, should not be permitted where scientific assessment indicates that their use will lead to negative direct or cumulative impacts on marine habitats, especially sensitive habitats or non-target species, or compromise the achievement of a good environmental status of marine waters

Such an assessment shall be based on use of the innovative gear during a trial period which shall be limited to no more than 5 % of the vessels currently in that metier for a period of at least four years.

Derogation from the landing obligation: Members suggested that fishing vessels which participate voluntarily in a system of full documentation of catches and discards shall not be required to land non-marketable catches, provided that they are recorded and counted against quotas where applicable.

Regionalisation and reference standards: under the proposed Regulation, technical measures shall be established at regional level for the North Sea, North Western waters, South Western waters, Baltic Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and Outermost Regions.

In order to take into account the particularities of a region, Members pointed out that technical measures deviating from regional rules may be adopted as part of a multiannual fishing plan or, in the absence of such a plan, through delegated acts of the European Commission.

The Commission may adopt such delegated acts also in the absence of a joint recommendation.

Member States may submit joint recommendations to this end. Joint recommendations shall be based on the best available scientific evidence.

Members stressed that the process of regionalisation should make it possible to combine effectively the common rules and local situations and situations per zone. It should not result in a kind of renationalisation of the CFP, and it is important that the Advisory Councils should continue to ensure that regionalisation takes place under a Union approach.