



GREENPEACE



European Commission
Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Maria Damanaki
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Brussels, October 19th 2011

Subject: Proposal for a European Maritime Fisheries Fund

Dear Commissioner Damanaki,

We understand that the Commission proposal for the future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is currently undergoing inter-service consultation. The Commission Green Paper on the reform of the CFP (COM(2009)163 final) acknowledges that the current CFP has led to a number of serious problems including overfishing, fleet overcapacity fuelled by subsidies, low economic resilience and decline in the volume of fish caught by European fishers. The reform of the EMFF in parallel to the basic regulations and the rest of the CFP package provides an opportunity to effectively address these issues, and we would like to bring to your attention essential elements in ensuring that EU funding will no longer contribute to maintaining overcapacities and to overfishing in European waters and by EU fleets globally.

Funds should be provided for sustainably managing and restoring marine ecosystems and biodiversity. The comments below are based on joint NGO submissions already sent to the Commission on the same subject¹:

1. The European Commission has identified **overcapacity** as the primary cause of the failure of EU fisheries management². It is also estimated that European fishing fleets in many cases exert fishing pressure on stocks which is two to three times the sustainable level³. However, there is no detailed assessment of the actual overcapacity of the EU fleet. This is because many Member States choose not to comply with the legal requirement to report their fleet capacity.⁴ The most recent report from the Commission identifies Spain, France, Ireland, Cyprus, Poland, and Portugal as not providing an assessment of fleet capacity in relation to fishing opportunities and Sweden, Spain and the United Kingdom as not describing their fleets in relation to fisheries.⁵ Accurate information is essential to ensure that funding allocated for investments on board of

¹ Future EU Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) - Preliminary comments by the Pew Environment Group, OCEAN2012, Greenpeace, BirdLife Europe, Seas At Risk and WWF from July 29th 2011 (http://www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/20110727_joint_NGO_Input_into_EMFF_Drafting.pdf) and Reforming EU Fisheries Subsidies, a joint NGO discussion paper and technical resource from October 2011 (<http://www.ocean2012.eu/publications/46-reforming-eu-fisheries-subsidies>).

² (COM(2009)163 final).

³ Commission Working Document (2008): Reflections on further reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

⁴ See IEEP (2009): Overcapacity – what overcapacity?, <http://www.ieep.eu/assets/437/overcapacity.pdf>.

⁵ COM(2011) 354 final.

vessels or on fishing gear does not benefit vessels which are part of fleets operating at overcapacity. Otherwise counterproductive spending of public aid will continue, with vessels targeting depleted fish stocks, such as the Atlantic bluefin tuna, continuing to receive public aid for modernization measures.⁶ We therefore urge you to ensure that the new EMFF includes provisions that explicitly make adequate assessment and reporting of the balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities a precondition for Member States to use EU funds for vessel measures.

2. The practice of **discarding** unwanted fish overboard is an appalling example of bad fishing practice and governance in the EU. However, the objective of any policy to tackle discarding should be to avoid unwanted catches in the first place, rather than to make economic use of what has previously been discarded. In that respect, no future marketing measures should apply to unwanted catches. Also, support for marketing measures of surplus or underexploited species runs the risk of contributing to future overfishing. Therefore, marketing aid should be restricted to support the marketing of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture products.
3. Regarding **aquaculture**, indiscriminate promotion and development, e.g. through the promotion of investments in off-shore aquaculture, will invariably entail negative environmental impacts and may result in problems of excessive production and supply and poor profitability. The new EMFF should only direct support to the development of ecologically sustainable or environmentally friendly aquaculture, particularly for small and medium enterprises. The reformed CFP must ensure that, if it is to contribute to future food security, aquaculture becomes a net producer of fish protein. The most crucial means of achieving this is to ensure that European aquaculture does not rely on or lead to the overexploitation of forage fish in order to feed farmed carnivorous fish. Funding schemes for environmentally friendly aquaculture practices should be designed along similar lines as Article 38 (Natura 2000 payments) and Article 39 (agri-environment payments) of Regulation 1698/2005 (Rural development regulation).
4. We are in favour of using public funds to support a transition to a new sustainable fisheries management system. Funding should be made available for the design and implementation of stakeholder led or co-management systems, which will provide fishery-specific management plans. We do not, however, consider **Transferable Fishing Concessions** (TFC), as proposed in the draft Basic Regulation of the CFP, as an adequate fleet management policy. Europe's fisheries are diverse and need more options than the single approach of TFC. While we acknowledge that rights-based management tools, under certain circumstances, can reduce capacity in numerical terms, we do not agree that the current Commission proposal addresses in a sufficient way the different circumstances of fisheries in the EU. We are also concerned that the proposed system may fail to address capacity reduction in a qualitative way, i.e. ensuring that more socially and environmentally responsible operators are supported or prioritized. These concerns have recently been shared by more than 160 fishers, environment and

⁶ According to the EU Commission, the EU Bluefin Tuna Purse Seiner fleet has received between 2000 and 2008 33.5 Million Euros for modernization and construction and 1 million for permanent cessation. See other examples also in Poseidon (2010) FIGF 2000 – 2006 Shadow Evaluation http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Protecting_ocean_life/FIGF-evaluation.pdf

development organisations, which therefore oppose the mandatory introduction of TFCs as proposed by the Commission.⁷

5. **Data on subsidy spending** should be centrally stored and include a broad range of information⁸. In case subsidies continue to be used to fund measures on/for vessels, information about the vessel's name, registration number, port, flag, targeted stock and details on the type of measure(s) should be disclosed. Regrettably, Member States are not required to release any information on the vessels concerned or the stocks targeted by the benefitting operators. Consequently, information relevant to understanding where aid is spent is widely dispersed, difficult to access, in unsuitable formats and therefore of little use to a rigorous, quantitative analysis of the effect of public aid on the state of fish stocks.⁹ It is therefore of paramount importance, that the new EMFF should ensure that the public has adequate access to all information about their spending, allowing an easy and user-friendly evaluation of the success of whether funds have met their objectives. This will help to clarify potential misperceptions about the use and impacts of EU aid to the fisheries sector.

Thank you for considering these important issues. Should you wish you to discuss these further or if you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleagues listed below.

Yours sincerely,



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⁷ Declaration „Scale matters – Quality Counts“ signed by 168 organisations.

<http://www.ocean2012.eu/publications/43-scale-matters-quality-counts-securing-sustainability>

⁸ The www.fishsubsidy.org and www.farmsubsidy.org websites are good examples of how payments can be disclosed in a meaningful and user-friendly way.

⁹ See Birgitte Alfter (2009), Slipping through the net at <http://www.followthemoney.eu/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/through-the-net.pdf>