



What is the CFP and how can OCEAN2012 help you transform European fisheries?

1. What is the CFP?

[The Common Fisheries Policy \(CFP\)](#) is the European Union's instrument for the management of fisheries and aquaculture occurring in its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), or by its fleet fishing outside EU waters. After a considerable period of negotiation the CFP came into effect in 1983. The 2002 reform attempted to realise the sustainable development of fishing activities from an environmental, economic and social point of view. It also attempted to improve the basis of the decision-making process through sound and transparent scientific advice and the increased participation of stakeholders. Striving for coherence with other EU policies such as environmental and development co-operation policies was an important element, as were attempts to increase accountability and effectiveness. A second reform began on April 22nd 2009 with the publication of the European Commission's [Green Paper](#).

2. Why is reform of the CFP crucial?

[The European Court of Auditors report of 2007](#) was scathing in its assessment of the CFP, and served as the launch of a fundamental overhaul, "... recognising that the policy had not attained its target and had 'not delivered sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources' ... 'the fisheries sector is characterised by economic fragility resulting from over-investment, rapidly rising costs and a shrinking resource base: this is reflected in poor profitability and steadily declining employment'".

In the Green Paper the Commission asserts that over 80 percent of assessed fish stocks in EU waters are deemed overfished and 30 percent outside safe biological limits. Most stocks targeted by EU fleets outside EU waters are showing signs of over-exploitation. Unless the present reform succeeds where the 2002 one failed, fish stocks will be further depleted, exacerbating the crises facing the fisheries sector even further with potentially disastrous consequences for fishery dependent coastal communities, in Europe and in developing countries, and the marine environment. Some scientists have even predicted the global collapse of commercial fisheries by around 2050.

3. What should be the key elements of the reform?

Achieving environmental sustainability is the prerequisite for socially and economically sustainable exploitation of marine resources. The reform must address the CFP's failings:

1. Political short-termism needs to be uncoupled from the determination of available fishing resources. Once policy parameters have been set, scientists should determine the amount of fishing resources available to be caught in any one period. Catch limits should be set by scientists not by politicians. Currently scientific advice on available fishing resources is often not followed: recently catch limits agreed by the Council of Ministers exceeded scientific advice by an average of 48 percent, resulting in the severe overfishing of a large number of fish stocks.
2. Fishing capacity must be brought in line with available fishing resources; at present fishing capacity far exceeds available fish stocks. This is despite four EU programmes over 20 years aimed at correcting this imbalance. Yet overcapacity persists, encouraging overfishing and illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. Member States are obliged to report on fishing capacity in relation to available fishing resources. To make reporting easier the European Commission has laid down guidelines for Member States. Overcapacity in the European fleet is assessed as being greater than 40 percent and in some cases 2-3 times the sustainable level.
3. Access to fishing resources should be based on environmental and social criteria, which would favour less destructive fishing gear and practices, compliance with the law, low fuel consumption, greater employment, good working conditions and high quality products. The criteria would create positive competition amongst fishers, with those who fish in the most environmentally and socially sustainable way being allocated priority access to the resources. Currently, the division of Total Allowable Catches (TACs) into national quotas of fish that can be caught and kept is based on historical catches by the ships flagged by a given Member State i.e. today's quota allocation is calculated on yesterday's overfishing. This process does not take account of vessel ownership, crew nationalities, or even compliance with the law.
4. "... heavy public financial support given to the fishing industry ... artificially maintaining excess fishing capacity.¹" Subsidies and other financial instruments awarded in a discretionary manner by Member States should target facilitating the transition towards environmentally and socially sustainable fisheries. They should support the elimination of fishing capacity which does not comply with the above criteria and is in excess of the amount allowed. At present there are vessels which have been found guilty of serious infringements yet are still in receipt of taxpayers' support through subsidies.

4. What is the timeframe for the reform?

The following key dates should be in everyone's diary:

¹The Green Paper http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/index_en.htm

- April 22nd 2009 – December 31st 2009 [Public \(for everyone\) Consultation](#)
- Spring 2010 Commission summary of Public Consultation,
- First half of 2010 Impact Assessment
- Spring 2011 Commission legislative proposal on CFP Reform submitted to Parliament and Council
- Throughout 2011 and 2012 Policy negotiations with Member States in Council and with the European Parliament
- Autumn 2012 CFP Reform agreement

5. What is OCEAN2012 and how can we support you?

[OCEAN2012](#) - an alliance of organisations dedicated to transforming European fisheries policy, aims to stop over-fishing, end destructive fishing practices and deliver fair and equitable use of healthy fish stocks. The coalition has been initiated and is co-ordinated by the Pew Environment Group and was launched on June 8th 2009, as a response to the failings of the current CFP and to seize the opportunity of reform. OCEAN2012 is proposing a fundamentally new, principle centred approach to fisheries management in EU waters and for the EU fleet globally.

6. What is the crucial next thing to do?

[The public consultation](#) runs until December 31st 2009. Any individual or group can contribute to this. It is imperative that the reformed CFP represents the broader interests of all stakeholders; to do this there must be submissions that reflect diverse interest. The Commissioner has called for a “whole-scale fundamental reform” of the CFP; we must take up this challenge and play our part. OCEAN2012 will submit the coalition’s contribution to the process, however, you may want to make your own points, or emphasise some aspects of the coalition’s position more than others. Contributing to the consultation could not be easier. Click on the link above, and you will find out how you can contribute. You can, as OCEAN2012 will be doing, respond to all questions asked by the Commission, you can just respond to some of the questions, or you can chose to just make some key points that the Commission should take into account when redesigning the policy. OCEAN2012 is also available to support you in drafting a submission.

7. What are the key issues to stress?

As per above explanations:

1. Catch limits should be set by scientists not by politicians;
2. Fishing capacity must be brought in line with available fishing resources;
3. Access to fish resources should be based on environmental and social criteria; and
4. Subsidies and other financial instruments awarded in a discretionary manner by Member States should target facilitating the transition towards environmentally and socially sustainable fisheries.

For details on these four issues please go back to section 3.

8. And what can be done after the consultation is over?

Once the period of public consultation is over on December 31st 2009, organisations can continue to participate in the reform through engagement with their national governments or their elected representatives in the European Parliament. Becoming a member of OCEAN2012 may be an attractive way to keep in touch with the reform process, spot early opportunities for intervention, and join forces with other like-minded groups.

The evidence that continuous overfishing has resulted in less productive fisheries with a loss of jobs and livelihoods is clear for all to see. Fewer and smaller fish are being caught with greater effort required to find them. To get this reform right we need to broaden the debate seeking the participation of all stakeholders; OCEAN2012 is committed to this, the CFP means too much to too many to be allowed to fail as it did in 2002.