

NGOs urge improvements to Fisheries Committee draft report on the EU Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

Rapporteur: Alain Cadec

BirdLife Europe, Greenpeace, Oceana, OCEAN2012 and WWF work together for an ambitious reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which should:

- restore fish stocks to healthy levels;
- end overfishing by shifting to environmentally sustainable fishing practices; and
- reduce damage to marine ecosystems.

Efforts to eliminate EU subsidies that incentivise and support overfishing, and shift funds to support sustainable fisheries and healthy marine ecosystems play a crucial role in achieving these objectives. The Commission's proposal for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) sets out some new directions, but it falls short of making the necessary structural shift towards sustainable funding.¹ Alain Cadec's draft report includes several improvements to the Commission proposal but fails to live up to the need for a fundamental reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and its associated funding instrument. At the same time the NGO are concerned by the proposals that revoke decisions that have been taken in the last CFP reform of 2002 including reintroduction of the fleet renewal. Worryingly, the draft report also ignores a number of international commitments regarding the elimination of harmful subsidies made at the 2002 World Summit of Sustainable Development, in the World Trade Organisation and at the 2010 conference of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya.² We therefore urge the Parliament to take a more determined stance on reforming the EU fisheries subsidies regime.

We welcome in the draft report:

- the emphasis on projects and sustainable investment for small scale fishermen and artisanal fishermen (am 8 and 23);
- the inclusion of reporting from Member States on the capacity of the fleet in the operational programmes to achieve an effective balance between the fishing capacity and the fishing opportunities (am 69);
- the support for training of fishermen to improve the selectivity of the fishing gears and equipment (am 20);
- the alignment of the EMFF objectives with those of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (am 68);
- the involvement of stakeholders in the development of multiannual plans (am 103 and 104);
- the proposal to increase the co-financing rate for data Collection to 75% (am 147);

¹ NGO Reaction to the Commission's proposal is available at http://assets.ocean2012.eu/publication_documents/documents/176/original/joint-NGO-reaction-EMFF.pdf

² Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, paragraph 31(f); WTO (2005) Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration, Annex D paragraph 9; Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, agreed by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya in October 2010.

We oppose in the working document:

- the proposal to fund fleet renewal (am 48 and 98) by funding the replacement of obsolete vessels by modern ones;
- the proposal to provide aid for fleet measures which are able to increase fishing capacity (am 76, 88 and 122);
- the proposal to fund engine replacement (am 116). There are no safeguards that ensure that these investments will not increase a vessels' ability to catch fish. Vessels equipped with 'fuel efficient' engines have an incentive to increase their fishing effort, by spending more hours at sea. Even if, technically, engine replacements should not increase the fishing vessel's capacity, in reality this has been extremely difficult to control, given the rampant under-declaration of engine power in the EU;
- the proposal to provide aid for temporary cessation or aid to compensate fishermen for the costs of fuel. Both types of aid do not help to address the structural problem of fleet overcapacity but instead contribute to its worsening (am 130 and 131); and
- the proposal to provide aid for storage support (am 137). The market intervention mechanisms of the current CMO have low impact and poor performance and tackle the symptoms rather than the real problems. Storage aid should be phased out.

We recommend:

- To use public aid for supporting public goods and services by significantly shifting aid from structural measures to control and enforcement and data collection. Moreover, Member States should have the flexibility to shift more (but not less) EU aid into these types of activities;
- To limit modernization aid to health and safety measures, innovation, or investment in more selective gear as mentioned in article 28, 33 and 36 of the EMFF proposal. Beneficiaries should only receive aid under these measures when explicit reference is made to the conditionality principle to ensure that the vessel concerned is not part of a fleet operating at overcapacity, the fishing capacity in relation to available fishing opportunities is adequately assessed and the investment does not increase the vessel's ability to catch fish;
- To broaden the definition of stakeholders that participate in the development and implementation of multi-annual plans (MAPs) to include more representatives of civil society than the fishermen and producer organizations (am. 107);
- To make funding for Member States conditional upon compliance with the rules and objectives of the CFP, including data collection requirements; and
- To amend the proposal to ensure that aquaculture industry develops into a net producer of fish protein, based on sustainability and sound environmental processes.

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