Fisheries subsidies should support implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy

Plenary vote on October 23rd 2013 on the EU Maritime and Fisheries Fund

(A7-0282/2013 - 2011/0380(COD))

Rapporteur: Alain Cadec (EPP)

In February, the European Parliament took a momentous step by voting in favour of a new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) regulation. The new rules have the ambition to end overfishing and put European fisheries on the path to sustainability and profitability. The upcoming plenary vote on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) - the financial instrument of the CFP - is a unique opportunity to ensure that EU taxpayer's money will support the implementation of a reformed CFP and achieve its ambitious objectives.

To this end, BirdLife Europe, Greenpeace, Oceana, OCEAN2012 and WWF are calling on MEPs to vote for an EMFF which:

- **Increases financial aid for data collection and control and enforcement; and**
- **Ends subsidies which provide incentives for overfishing.**

Increasing financial aid for data collection and control and enforcement

Currently, the EU's annual subsidies for the fishing sector amount to approximately €836 million for structural measures and €156 million for fisheries partnership agreements. At the same time, only €50 million per year each is allocated for research and data collection, and for control and enforcement measures. The EU's Court of Auditors recently criticised this as being too little.[1]

Effective data collection, control and enforcement are essential pre-conditions for responsible fisheries management. Yet, suitable data is missing for half of the stocks in the North-East Atlantic and adjacent waters[2] and many member States have received scathing reports for their inadequate monitoring and enforcement[3]. Moreover, the lack of effective control and enforcement prevents a fair level playing field for all fishing operators and risks undermining the implementation of the agreed discard ban.

The Commission's proposal suggests only limited change to the current spending pattern (EMFF Article 15). These proposed changes are not sufficient to support the improved management that was agreed between the Parliament and Council in June.

NGO recommendation:

- *Double the amount of money earmarked for data collection, control and enforcement compared to the Commission's proposal.*
- *Provide member States with the flexibility to shift additional aid from structural measures (Art. 15(2)) into control and enforcement activities (Art. 15(3)) and data collection (Art. 15(4)). This could easily be done by changing the allocation of overall funding and adding the word "minimum" and "maximum" to corresponding paragraphs.*

[1] See for instance European Court of Auditors (2007) Special Report No 7/2007.
[2] Communication from the Commission to the Council concerning a consultation on fishing opportunities for 2014; COM(2013) 319 final
[3] European Court of Auditors Special Reports on fisheries No 7/2007 and 12/2011.

Ending aid that incentivises overfishing

During recent funding periods, subsidies have been used to increase the EU's fleet capacity (often beyond sustainable limits) by subsiding new vessels, new engines and paying to let vessels lay idle in port (temporary cessation). For instance, member States have paid millions of euro to build up and modernise the EU bluefin tuna fishing fleet, despite the critical status of the stock, a consistent reduction in the allowable quota and agreement by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) to reduce fleet capacity.

In fact, EU subsidies are largely responsible for the EU's fishing capacity outgrowing sustainable levels – in some fisheries by a factor of two to three as estimated by the European Commission. Overfishing is widespread in EU waters. More and bigger vessels mean more economic competition for a dwindling resource base. Currently, 39 percent of assessed stocks in the Atlantic and 88 percent in the Mediterranean are overfished[4]. It has been estimated that overfishing could cost us more than €3billion every year in lost income opportunities, whereas recovered stocks could support more than 100,000 jobs[5]. Eliminating aid that provides incentives for overfishing is crucial to rebuilding fish stocks and securing a viable future for the sector.

NGO recommendations:

- *Vote against aid for fleet renewal (Art. 32 b new), as adopted by the fisheries committee with an extremely slim 12:11 margin,*
- *Vote against amendments which introduce measures that support maintaining and increasing overcapacity, including aid for engine replacement (article 39), temporary cessation (article 33 a new), mutual funds (article 33 b new), young fishers buying their first vessels (article 32 a new).*

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[4] COM(2013) 319 final Communication from the Commission to the Council concerning a consultation on Fishing Opportunities for 2014
[5] nef (new economics foundation) (2012), Jobs Lost at Sea—London http://www.neweconomics.org/node/1968.