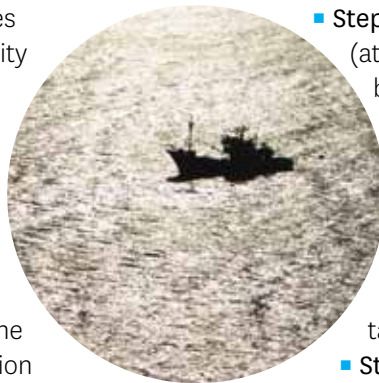


Transforming european fisheries - time for change

The European Union (EU) could be championing sustainable fishing at home and abroad. Instead, most EU fish stocks are overfished and the level of imports, combined with EU fleet activities far beyond EU waters, mean the impacts of mismanagement are being felt not only by fishing communities within the Union, but also by those in distant countries who rely on fish as their main source of food as well as income.

The 2012 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) provides a unique opportunity to stop overfishing, end destructive fishing practices and deliver fair and equitable use of healthy fish stocks. Any failure to show the required political will for a root and branch reform will only exacerbate the state of stocks, degradation of marine ecosystems, and the further decline of the fishing industry. The European Commission itself, in its 2009 Green Paper, stated that “dramatic change ... is needed to reverse the current situation.”



- **Step 1:** setting overall, long-term policy objectives (at which level of abundance should fish stocks be maintained? What social and environmental criteria should be applied when allocating access to fishing opportunities?). This should be done by Council and Parliament.
- **Step 2:** determining the available fish resources (how much fish can be caught?). This should be done by scientific bodies, taking into account traditional knowledge.
- **Step 3:** determining the amount and type of fishing power (how to fish?). This should be done by scientific and management bodies.
- **Step 4:** allocating access to the resource (who should be allowed to fish and where?). This should be done on a local and/or regional level and based on a set of environmental and social criteria agreed under Step 1.

Desired policy

OCEAN2012 is an alliance of organisations dedicated to transforming European fisheries. It is proposing a fundamentally new, principle-centred approach to fisheries management in EU waters and for its fleet globally. OCEAN2012 is committed to shaping a Common Fisheries Policy that:

- enshrines environmental sustainability as the overarching principle without which economic and social sustainability is unobtainable;
- ensures decisions are taken at the most appropriate levels and in a transparent way, ensuring effective participation of stakeholders;
- delivers sustainable fishing capacity at EU and regional level;
- makes access to fisheries resources conditional on environmental and social criteria;
- ensures public funds are only used in a way that serves the public good and alleviates social impacts in the transition to sustainable fisheries.

Who should be allowed to fish what, where, how and when?

The answers to these fundamental questions form the core of the changes we suggest for the reform of the CFP. OCEAN2012 proposes that there are different hierarchical steps in decision making.

OCEAN2012 has prepared a set of five briefing papers with in-depth focus on what we consider the main areas of change, reflecting the steps we believe must be taken in the reform process:

Briefing paper 2: Focus on the environment - for people's sake

The primary purpose of the reformed CFP emerging in 2012 must be to secure environmentally and socially sustainable fisheries in Community waters and wherever EU fleets are active. Environmental objectives must be prioritised so that social and economic objectives can be met in the long term. Taking action now to restore healthy marine ecosystems may mean social and economic costs in the short-term. Not doing so puts the sustainability of the resource and the future of the sector as a whole at risk. The precautionary approach (as defined by the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement) and the ecosystem approach (as defined in the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive) must underpin any future CFP. Furthermore, OCEAN2012 proposes that the current management tool for fisheries, Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), be used only as a transitional target, with more conservative management objectives needed to secure long-term abundant stocks.

Briefing paper 3: Ensure good governance

The failure of the CFP to achieve its objectives can be attributed in large measure to the way in which decisions are made. Today, even very detailed management measures are decided at the highest political level, by the Council of Ministers and European Parliament. Both bodies are largely moved by short term, often national or regional, economic interest. In order to achieve long-term sustainable fisheries, OCEAN2012 proposes that the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament focus on the overarching vision and objectives of the CFP and leave the detailed implementation to more appropriate bodies such as the Commission, Member States, or decentralised management bodies. We strongly urge that scientific advice on catch limits, set by the Council and currently exceeded by on average 50 percent each year, be heeded. Good governance also includes transparency, strong stakeholder involvement, public access to catch, vessel and fleet data, and robust evaluation and compliance mechanisms.

Briefing paper 4: Reward responsible fishing with priority access

The current quota allocation regime (known as relative stability) has delivered a legacy of overfishing. Access to fishing resources under the new CFP should be based on environmental and social criteria, favouring 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 between fishers, with those who fish in the most environmentally and socially sustainable way permitted to fish the most. In the longer term, such an approach would transform EU fisheries. Decisions on the allocation of access to fisheries could be significantly decentralised, made on an ecosystem/regional/local basis depending on the fishery and fish stocks. Operators of local fishing communities in a given area that fulfil the access criteria should have primary access. Fishing interests from outside the area, fulfilling the criteria, would be eligible to apply for access.

Briefing Paper 5: Bring capacity in line with available resources

The exact level of overcapacity in the EU fleet is by and large unknown, but in some cases it is estimated at two to three times the sustainable level. It is essential that

fishing power matches fishing opportunity and effort, in order to ensure economically viable fisheries and to prevent illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing and inefficiency. Overcapacity is not only a “size” problem but also a qualitative problem; as different fleet segments and gears have different impacts on the marine environment, different fuel requirements, deliver different qualities of fish and so result in different social outcomes. OCEAN2012 recommends that for each fishery, rather than for each Member State as at present, reduction targets based on both quantitative and qualitative aspects are established, independent of national interest, and delivered via relevant instruments and competencies with legally-binding and time-bound limits to balance fleet power with available resources per area, achieving a sustainable fishing fleet as quickly as possible. Fleet power per fishery must also be regularly re-estimated to bring it in line where necessary with the most recent stock assessments.

Briefing paper 6: Subsidies: public funds for public services

Repeated attempts to reform the EU’s fisheries subsidies system have failed to overturn the status quo – essentially too many, or too powerful, boats chasing too few fish. The new CFP must bring a fundamental shift in funding priorities to reflect the fact that public money should be used to protect a public asset – EU fish stocks. Subsidies and other financial instruments awarded in a discretionary manner by Member States should facilitate the transition towards environmentally and socially sustainable fisheries. They should support the elimination of fishing capacity that does not comply with the above criteria and is in excess of the amount allowed. There should be no financial assistance for programmes that maintain or increase capacity.

The CFP – a global model

OCEAN2012 believes that achieving these reform objectives would help create sustainable fisheries, to the long-term benefit of the marine environment, its fish stocks and the communities that depend on them. If formulated and implemented as described above, the European Union’s fisheries policy could become a global model and provide huge positive influence on fisheries management around the world.

OCEAN2012 is an alliance of organisations dedicated to transforming European Fisheries Policy to stop overfishing, end destructive fishing practices and deliver fair and equitable use of healthy fish stocks.

OCEAN2012 was initiated, and is co-ordinated, by the Pew Environment Group, the conservation arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-governmental organisation working to end overfishing in the world’s oceans.

The founding members of OCEAN2012 are the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), the Fisheries Secretariat (FISH), nef (new economics foundation), the Pew Environment Group and Seas At Risk (SAR).