



New EU fisheries fund: a shift towards sustainability?

Brussels, 2 December 2011 – Today, the European Commission has made a step in retargeting EU fisheries subsidies towards sustainable fishing and supporting marine life and ecosystems, while increasing transparency and conditionality of the fund. Worryingly, however, a large proportion of the fund can be potentially used for unsustainable aquaculture and continue driving overfishing.

“After 30 years of building more and superior boats and devastating our fish stocks, it’s high time that EU public money will now be spent to restore marine ecosystems, the very basis of the fishery sector, thus we welcome the shift in this direction. However, unless the fund has ended all drivers of overfishing, the problem will not be solved.” (1) said Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy at BirdLife Europe (2).

“The Natura 2000 network is the EU’s backbone for the protection of marine biodiversity and ecosystems of which its establishment at sea is sorely lagging behind the land-based network. Commissioner Damanaki’s proposal represents a potential for funding of these precious sites, and we hope that Member states will seize this opportunity.” Bruna Campos, BirdLife Europe’s EU financial perspectives officer added.

“With more than 200,000 birds dying every year as bycatch and huge amounts of fish being discarded in EU fisheries operations, BirdLife Europe is pleased to see the support for improving selectivity of gear. However, better safeguards are needed to ensure that under the veil of well-intentioned improvements, the EU does not continue to support modernisation of vessels that are driving fish to commercial extinction”, Mr. Brunner continued.

BirdLife Europe now calls on Member States and the European Parliament to support investment in the health of our ecosystems, including marine Natura 2000 (3). The proposal must be strengthened to build in robust safeguards for ensuring that only sustainable aquaculture is supported, and that any investments in modernisation represent a genuine improvement and are eligible only to operators who fish in a sustainable way.

ENDS

For more information, please contact:

Elodie Cantaloube, Media and Communication Assistant at BirdLife Europe

Tel. +32 (0) 2 541 07 81 and +32 (0) 494 542 844

E-mail: elodie.cantaloube@birdlife.org

Notes for the editor

(1)

Perverse subsidies from the European Fisheries Fund have had detrimental impacts on nature and biodiversity. Studies have shown that the policy inaction on biodiversity will cost the economy at least four times more than the investment needed to avert the crisis. The recent published UNEP report on Green Economy is one of the recent studies to have also shown that the health of ecosystems is a foundation for the economy and necessary for ensuring the long term welfare of human populations.

(2) ***Stichting BirdLife Europe***

BirdLife International is a global Partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. The BirdLife Partnership operates in 117 countries and territories worldwide. BirdLife Europe supports the European and Central Asian Partnership for BirdLife International and is present in 45 countries and all EU Member States. <http://europe.birdlife.org>

(3)

Measures to be financed under the European Commission's proposed regulation include the management, restoration and monitoring of the Natura 2000 network in accordance with national financial plans for Natura 2000 (Prioritised action Frameworks).