

Damanaki unveils plan to save European fish and fisheries: will others buy it?

Title

On Wednesday 13 July, BirdLife Europe welcomed Commissioner Damanaki's proposal for the new Common Fisheries Policy setting a framework for EU fisheries management after 2012. The NGO now urges the European Parliament and Fisheries Ministers to seize this opportunity for reform and have the political courage to push for a radical, ambitious policy which translates high-minded objectives into practical solutions.

BirdLife Europe is encouraged by the general direction of the reform proposal, notably the objective to rebuild stocks by 2015, especially through long term plans for fisheries, in seeking to end the wasteful practice of discarding fish, and laying down the principle of basing fisheries management decisions on scientific advice.

However, the reform proposal falls short of providing the framework, tools and safeguards needed to reduce overcapacity of the fleet and guarantee a genuine shift towards ecologically sustainable fisheries. 'Above all, the CFP can no longer promote fishing which exceeds the environmental limits of fish stocks or any other marine wildlife'. Dr Euan Dunn, Head of Marine Policy at the RSPB, BirdLife UK said: 'BirdLife has long argued that establishing ecosystem-based, long term management plans should be a precondition for any fisheries activity at all, so it is a big step forward that the Commission proposes this approach. As always, however, 'the devil is in the detail' and it is much less clear how the protection of the ecosystem will be delivered in practice.'

'Unless the CFP goes beyond the rhetoric of an ecosystem-based approach and takes targeted measures, we will continue to see the marine environment degraded by fishing and hundreds of thousands of seabirds killed by EU fishing gears every year,' Dr Dunn continued. 'Now is the time for Ministers to steer a fundamentally new course for the CFP which no longer tries to manage our seas as just a production unit for fish but embraces the bigger picture by putting the environment at the heart of the policy. Otherwise Ministers risk perpetuating the short-term business as usual of a globally discredited CFP which has resulted in 72% of European fish stocks being over-exploited, inflicting untold collateral damage on marine ecosystems and dependent fishing communities,' Tatiana Nemcova, BirdLife's fisheries campaigner concluded.
