



Overfishing: you can end it!

NGO briefing: REFORM OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY (CFP)

PLENARY VOTE 6 February
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Overfishing is damaging the marine environment and threatens the viability of communities that depend on fishing. Europe's fish populations are in a worse shape than most – with 47 percent of Atlantic and around 90 percent of Mediterranean stocks considered overfished. Europe has lost around 30 percent of its fishing jobs in the last decade, yet the fleet's fishing power has increased. As stocks have declined, Europe has become increasingly dependent on imports, aquaculture and foreign fishing grounds.

But it is not too late: The on-going reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is the first big opportunity for the European Parliament to co-legislate on fisheries. In December, the Fisheries Committee took a momentous step towards turning the tide on overfishing in Europe, by agreeing to a strong and well-designed set of reform proposals that could overhaul the EU's failed fisheries policy.

We recommend that you support overall the Fisheries Committee proposal for reform so as to deliver long-lasting benefits for Europe's citizens, fishermen and the marine environment.

Our organisations stand for a CFP reform that:

- # ends overfishing by 2015 and makes the shift towards environmentally sustainable fishing practices;
- # applies precautionary and ecosystem-based fisheries management;
- # favours those who fish sustainably; and
- # uses public funds as part of the solution and not as a driver of overfishing.



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS IN MORE DETAIL

We urge you to **SUPPORT** the majority of amendments in the Committee's report, in particular provisions that will:

- 1) require action to **end overfishing no later than 2015**, in order to recover fish stocks to sustainable levels by 2020 at the latest (e.g. AM 60, 106 and 120);
- 2) **minimise adverse impacts** on the marine environment (e.g. AM 97, 102, 104 and 108);
- 3) **promote selective, low-impact and small-scale coastal fishing activities** (e.g. AM 61, 102 and 118);
- 4) **reduce excess fishing capacity** in order to eliminate a significant driver of overfishing, including the broadened definition of fishing capacity (e.g. AM 60, 85, 108 and 138);
- 5) **make the allocation of EU subsidies to EU Member States and operators conditional on compliance** with the rules of the CFP and relevant legislation (e.g. AM 198 and 199);
- 6) introduce **regionalised management solutions** through the swift implementation of multiannual plans, with a view to improving data collection, ecosystem-based management and stakeholder participation (e.g. AM 62, 105, 106 (except paragraph 2a), 108 and 121);
- 7) lead to the establishment of **fish stock recovery areas** (AM 103) and the transfer of **powers and responsibilities to Member States to regulate fishing in protected Natura 2000 sites** in accordance with existing environmental legislation (AM 109-114); and
- 8) ensure that the **EU's distant water fisheries** have to respect the same principles and standards as domestic fisheries, with an emphasis on preventing overfishing and the associated socio-economic and environmental impacts on poorer nations (e.g. AM 161, 164 – 174 and 176). This should apply to all vessels, including those that fish under e.g. private or charter agreements.

We urge you to **STRENGTHEN** the following parts of the report in plenary amendments, to improve clarity and legal certainty:

- 1) insert a clear reference to the EU target of **achieving a good environmental status** of the marine environment in Article 3 and 11, consistent with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, by re-tabling/supporting ENVI Committee amendment ENVI 23 or equivalent text, and by re-tabling/supporting text that requires multiannual plans to consider the fisheries-related descriptors of good environmental status.
- 2) strengthen the clarity and emphasis of provisions that **promote low-impact and small-scale fisheries** by re-instating the following text from rapporteur (AM61) in Article 6: *"Member States shall envisage exclusive or preferential access for small scale, artisanal or coastal fishermen, taking into account social and environmental factors including the potential benefits to be derived from awarding exclusive or preferential access for local or micro businesses and for fishermen pursuing selective and low-impact fishing practices."* This text was narrowly defeated in the PECH Committee by 12:12 votes.
- 3) require multiannual plans to contain an **assessment of the impacts of fishing** on the ecosystem and the marine environment. We therefore recommend to amend Article 11 accordingly.
- 4) plug the loopholes in provisions on **banning the wasteful practice of discarding fish at sea** (AM119), by deleting the option to have de-minimis exemptions from the obligation to land all catches (paragraph 1c. b of AM 119). We believe that - even if limited in scope - these exemptions will lead to a situation in which it will be impossible to verify through inspections or video evidence whether a discard event is covered by the de-minimis allowance or not.

5) establish provisions that would require Member States to create and maintain national public registers of all those entities that have been allocated fishing licences, quota and/or effort allocations. Regardless of whether you support the establishment of pooled or individualized fishing concessions, we believe it is important to establish such registers of holders of fishing licences and opportunities.

We urge you to **REJECT** the following Fisheries Committee amendments:

- 1) the definition of “ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management” (AM 69) proposed by the Fisheries Committee. We recommend to re-table/support the ENVI Committee text (part of ENVI 37), which is closely aligned with international definitions, such as those of the Food and Agriculture Organisation ([FAO](#)) and the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#), as well as the Commission Communication on the role of the CFP in implementing an ecosystem approach ([COM\(2008\)187](#)).
- 2) sub-paragraph 2a of Article 10 in AM 106, moderating the application of multiannual plans, creates uncertainty and potentially weakens the implementation of measures. The scope of this sub-paragraph is too far-reaching and any challenges that may be encountered e.g. in mixed fisheries, should be considered when designing specific management solutions, but should not lead to delays in the establishment and implementation of multiannual plans.



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