

# Management of deep-sea fish stocks

2007/2110(INI) - 27/03/2008

The Committee on Fisheries adopted an own initiative report by Rosa **MIGULEZ RAMOS** (PES, ES) on the management of deep-sea fish stocks, in response to the Commission's Communication on this issue.

MEPs believe that, before new management measures are adopted, an analysis should be made to establish why existing measures are not applied and the reasons that lead to the Member States failing to fulfil their obligations, or fulfilling them late or using different methodologies.

The report agrees with the Commission that the systematic collection of reliable data is the cornerstone of stock assessment and scientific advice. Therefore, MEPs call on the Commission, the Member States and the fishing industry to fill in the gaps that exist so that effort control measures can be adapted to each fishery, recognising that most deep-water fisheries are mixed fisheries.

The Committee on Fisheries stresses the need to introduce a ban on discards in the deep-water fisheries. Within the framework of measures to reduce by-catches and ban discards, the Commission should impose a ban on all fishing activity over seamounts, hydrothermal vents and within five miles of all identified cold-water corals. Bottom-trawling at depths below 1000m should also be banned, whilst at the same time monitoring and control procedures should be strengthened.

MEPs propose that fishing should not be permitted in deep-sea areas where there has not yet been any fishing activity until those areas have been investigated and the scientific evidence confirms that sustainable fishing might occur without risk of biodiversity depletion or habitat damage. They agree with the Commission on the need to adopt an ecosystem-based approach for this type of fisheries, whilst warning that the measures must have a minimum level of credibility and must not be applied wholesale but on the basis of environmental impact assessments.

The Commission is called upon to:

- carry out a socio-economic assessment of deep-sea fisheries and an analysis of the impact that new fishing effort reductions will have on the industry, as well as the impact of continued depletion of the fish stocks that the fisheries depend on;
- introduce new programmes for the collection of scientific information, if necessary using research vessels;
- improve monitoring and control procedures in the Member States;
- make every effort to ensure the implementation and possible improvement of existing international deep-sea fishing agreements.

The Commission and Member States are called upon to:

- develop common guidelines, exchange best practices, improve the use of available Community technology and involve think tanks and NGOs in order to implement better measures to reduce illegal fishing and the sale of illegal catches on European markets;
- promote more environmentally-friendly catching methods which do not harm either the environment or ecological biodiversity as a result of unwanted by-catches.