The CFP and the eco-system approach to fisheries management

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Pedro **GUERREIRO** (GUE /NGL, PT) on the CFP and the ecosystem approach to fisheries management in response to the Commission's communication entitled 'The role of the CFP in implementing an ecosystem approach to marine management'.

MEPs welcome the Commission's communication and underlines that this initiative represents a contribution to guaranteeing exploitation of fishery resources so as to create sustainable conditions from the **social, environmental and economic points of view**. In this context, they call on the Commission to include in its proposal methods and tools to allow for the mutual exchange of information and data and a continuous learning process among all stakeholders, in order to enable all of them to further develop the ecosystem approach with the objective of showing and proving the benefit for all.

The report underlines that the application of an ecosystem approach to marine management necessarily imposes a multidisciplinary and intersectoral action encompassing the various measures and policies that have an impact on marine ecosystems - going far beyond and upstream of policies adopted in the area of fisheries - without which it will not be possible to achieve the objectives of this approach. MEPs reaffirm that a policy for fisheries must start from the principle of interdependence between the welfare of fishing communities and the sustainability of ecosystems of which they are an integral part. They emphasise, in this context, that it is necessary to recognise the specific character and importance of small-scale inshore fishing and artisanal fishing.

The committee reiterates **the need to study and adopt measures** in relation to a multitude of factors that have a profound impact on the sustainability of marine ecosystems and the state of fishery resources. It proposes that scientific studies be carried out capable of identifying the redistribution of marine species exploited by fisheries because of the impact of the recent change in the physical and chemical parameters of waters due to climatic change.

The report draws attention to the need to develop **aquaculture research projects** in order to replenish stocks of the most endangered species. It considers, in this connection, that it is necessary to invest in training for human resources, provide adequate financial resources and promote cooperation between the various public bodies in the Member States. MEPs stress the need to a**pply mechanisms to subsidise or compensate fishermen** affected by the economic and social repercussions of multiannual recovery and management plans and measures to protect ecosystems.

MEPs consider it vital to **maintain the access derogation to the zone falling within territorial waters** at at least 12 miles, as a way of fostering the sustainability of coastal marine ecosystems, traditional fishing activities and the survival of fishing communities and they call for this derogation to be permanent in nature. They consider it insufficient to measure fishing effort in a uniform way, without taking account of the diversity of fleets and gear; considers that controlling fishing effort should take account of the various species, the various fishing gear and the assessed impact of catches on stocks of each species.

The European Commission is invited to:

- include the fisheries sector in a genuine intersectoral plan for the preservation of the marine environment, in line with the provisions of the 'Marine Strategy Framework Directive'[1], the environmental pillar of the new European Maritime Policy;
- reconsider the present system of total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas as the principal instrument for managing marine resources and its usefulness given the present fishing restrictions;
- study and propose more open control and supervision systems in respect of fisheries landings, illegal catches and the discarding at sea of by-catches;
- study the various instruments for managing fishery resources, whilst ensuring that the current instruments are not altered until an alternative becomes available that will guarantee the more appropriate exploitation of fishery resources;
- propose measures making imported fishery products placed on the internal market subject to the same requirements as those applying to fishery products in the various Member States;
- develop specific policy instruments to encourage fishermen to take all available measures to reduce their by-catches as far as possible;
- promote more environmentally sound fishing practices through the use of more selective fishing techniques which are able to reduce by-catches and fuel consumption during fishing periods;
- speed up the process of the eco-certification of fish as much as possible, in order to promote cleaner and more environmentally-friendly fisheries.

Lastly, the report urges **greater decentralisation of the CFP**, to allow greater involvement of fishermen, their representative organisations and fishing communities in the CFP and fisheries management, while ensuring that minimum standards are to be met that are consistent and coherent across the Community.