The CFP and the eco-system approach to fisheries management

2008/2178(INI) - 13/01/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 557 votes to 48 with 12 abstentions, a resolution 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'.

The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration by Pedro **GUERREIRO** (GUE/NGL, PT) on behalf of the Committee on Fisheries.

Sustainable management of fisheries: Parliament welcomes 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, it calls 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.

Integrated approach: any and every fisheries policy should take account of a multitude of dimensions - social, environmental and economic - that require an integrated and balanced approach that is incompatible with a vision that creates a hierarchy among them according to an a priori definition of priorities. 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.

Studies and scientific research: Parliament 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 stresses that scientific fisheries research is an essential tool for fisheries management that is indispensable for identifying the factors that influence the development of fishery resources, with a view to carrying out a quantitative assessment and developing models that make it possible to forecast their development, but also for improving fishing gear, vessels and working and safety conditions for fishermen, in conjunction with their knowledge and experience.

Parliament 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 climate change. It considers that considers that these studies should serve as a basis for reformulating a number of existing stock recovery plans, for example the recovery plan for hake and langoustine off the Iberian Peninsula. The resolution draws attention to the need to develop aquaculture research projects in order to replenish stocks of the most endangered species.

Access to the territorial zone: 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.

Measure fishing effort: MEPs consider it insufficient to measure fishing effort in a uniform way, without taking account of the diversity of fleets and gear. They consider 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. They also stress that there are significant differences between the various marine areas and their respective fishery resources, and also between the various fleets and fishing gear used and their impact on ecosystems, which requires fisheries management measures, such as technical modifications to nets, the closure of certain fishing areas and the reduction of fishing effort, that are diversified, specific and adapted to each case. The resolution stresses the need to apply mechanisms to subsidise or compensate fishermen affected by the economic and social repercussions of multiannual recovery and management plans and measures to protect ecosystems.

The **European Commission** is invited to:

- include the fisheries sector in a genuine intersectoral plan for the preservation of the marine environment;
- 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.

Parliament underlines that the **participation of the fisheries sector** in the definition, implementation and evaluation of different measures in the framework of the CFP is fundamental for an accurate assessment of the state of fisheries resources by the competent scientific bodies.

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.