2006-2008 action plan for simplifying and improving the Common Fisheries Policy

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The Commission adopted in 2005, the 2006-2008 Action Plan for simplifying and improving the Common Fisheries Policy. This paper takes stock of what has been achieved to date, with a view to considering new initiatives and addressing possible shortcomings. It also considers what has been done at national level on simplification, since better regulation is a common goal of the Community and Member States. However, since the Commission services have received limited feedback from the Member States, it is currently not possible to report on their results.

In accordance with the objectives set out in the Action Plan, the following issues are examined:

- the screening of the body of the Community law relating to fisheries;
- the main legislative initiatives adopted to date;
- the reduction of administrative burdens imposed on fishermen by the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) rules.

With regard to **legislative initiatives**, the Commission notes that the most noteworthy initiative was the introduction of a new working method for preparing annual Council Decisions on fishing opportunities, through enhanced consultation with stakeholders and better coordination with scientific advisers. Well in advance of the yearly legal proposals, the Commission now presents a Communication containing a Policy Statement on the fishing opportunities for the following year. This working method has proven to be effective in improving outcomes, especially through the **consultation of stakeholders** on the preparation of texts which are of great importance to the industry.

The paper also discusses **data management** and consultation of stakeholders. With regard to the former, the Commission notes that the Simplification Action Plan put particular emphasis on an extended use of information technology, with a view to promoting a paperless environment, namely on the recording and transmission of data relating to fishing activities as well on the management of authorisations for EU and non-EU vessels to fish. Specific and detailed communication means have been elaborated, such the Electronic Reporting System (ERS) and the Fishing Authorisation Permits (FAP). These IT tools will complement those designed to manage the handling of data relating to fleet, fishing vessel activities and marketing of fish products.

The Commission concludes that although commitments listed in the Action Plan have been met, efforts to simplify the regulatory environment concerning fishing and related activities will be continued, since the tasks set by the better regulation agenda are of a permanent nature. Specific initiatives on the simplification of the CFP will be inserted in the Commission's Annual Programme. For instance, the 2009 programme mentions the revision of rules governing market organisation with a view to improving legal clarity and reducing administrative burden through extended use of electronic reporting. Cutting pointless reporting obligations will also remain a main objective as well as regrouping legal provisions in fewer acts, while improving their clarity and accessibility. Simplification goals will be kept in mind when drawing up the reformed CFP, while the impact of procedural rules that the Lisbon Treaty will have on the legislative process, will also be taken into due consideration.

The Commission encourages Member States to commit themselves to a simplified regulatory environment, by cancelling needless requirements established by domestic legislation and by promoting the use of ICT.