

Common fisheries policy (CFP)

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The Council held **two public debates** in the framework of the common fisheries policy (CFP) reform.

- The first discussion focused on achieving environmental sustainability through maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and the integration of environmental law requirements into the proposal covering the basic provisions of the CFP.
- The second debate explored further the proposal for a regulation on the European maritime and fisheries fund ([EMFF](#)), replacing the existing European fisheries fund.

As regards the **environmental aspects of the CFP and MSY**, the debate focused on the following issues:

- **Inclusion of MSY as an objective in the CFP**: all the Member States agreed to the inclusion of MSY as an objective in the CFP, to ensure the sustainability of resources and better prospects for the fishing sector. However, most delegations urged a **gradual approach**: the deadline for reaching the MSY for certain fish stocks could be set in 2015, in line with the EU's international commitments (Johannesburg), if scientific advice was available and no third countries were involved in the fishery. In other cases, in particular when the scientific information available was poor, a deadline could be set in 2020 at the latest.

Most Member States favoured a focussed political objective in the basic regulation, while details on implementation should be addressed through individual multiannual plans.

- **Mixed fisheries**: most of the Member States considered it a challenge to reach MSY simultaneously for all stocks caught in a mixed fishery. This held in particular for the Mediterranean, where mixed fisheries constituted the rule and where fisheries were shared with third countries. Most delegations acknowledged the need to reconcile the targets for the various stocks in a pragmatic way, based on specific scientific advice.

- **Overfishing**: to avoid more vulnerable stocks being overfished, delegations requested the introduction of technical measures (gear selectivity, closed areas or seasons) within the multiannual plans implementing the MSY objective. Some delegations underlined that the scientific methods for managing mixed stocks were in an infant state and that therefore a flexible framework was needed. Others pointed out that the interaction of stocks also played a role, and that an under-fished stock could present a problem with regard to other stocks on which it fed.

- **Environment**: while Member States broadly considered that EU environmental requirements should be incorporated in the CFP, some delegations pointed out that socio-economic factors should balance environmental requirements. Relevant elements of the marine strategy framework directive and Natura 2000 directive should be taken into account in the CFP if the provisions were made consistent.

The EMFF could be a tool for better integrating the environmental requirements. In some cases, the regional level could play an important role in this matter, with the Commission being responsible for disseminating good practice.

Timetable:

- In July 2011, the Council held an initial public exchange of views on Commission proposals for the reform of the CFP.

- The Council held policy debates in March 2012 on the three main proposals for regulations in the CFP reform "package". The debate on the proposal for a regulation on the CFP focussed on the issue of a discard ban.
- At the last Council meeting in April 2012, the policy debates covered regionalisation and transferable fishing concessions (TFCs), two specific issues raised in the basic provisions of the CFP.

A final debate on the "general approach" to reform of the CFP will be organised by the Presidency in June 2012.