

Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU)

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The Commission presents a **communication** on the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU).

The report notes that IUU fishing poses a serious environmental threat to fish stocks and can lead to the collapse of fisheries. The estimated global value of IUU fishing is at least 10 billion euros per year. Between 11 and 26 million tonnes of fish are caught illegally each year, which corresponds to at least 15% of world catches. Significant resources, revenue, nutrition and livelihoods are lost as a result.

The IUU Regulation seeks to prevent, deter and eliminate the trade of fishery products deriving from IUU fishing into the EU. In order to achieve these goals, the EU introduced a number of **tools to improve traceability and to facilitate communication and cooperation** between the EU, Member States and third countries, as well as Regional Fisheries Management Organisations. These include the EU Catch Certificate Scheme, the system of Mutual Assistance between Member States, the process of cooperation with third countries and the listing of IUU vessels. This communication briefly presents the key achievements of the IUU Regulation

The EU's fight against IUU fishing can be divided into **4 intertwined key areas of action**: (i) cooperation with Member States; (ii) cooperation with third countries; (iii) investigations into presumed IUU vessels and international and stakeholder cooperation.

Cooperation with Member States: the report notes that, amongst other things, the IUU Regulation's provisions allow imports to be refused if the verifications carried out by Member States identify a consignment as stemming from IUU fishing activities. Since 2010, Member States refused more than 200 import consignments. Member States exchange information in cases of refusals of import consignments and target controls of fishing vessels, operators and import activities. For example, such messages were sent to Member States regarding non-compliant behaviour by third country fishing vessels operating in West Africa. This resulted in more than 4.2 million EUR in fines imposed by various coastal States. Another concrete example concerned fake licenses granted by a third country which led to the recovery from the third country concerned of more than 2 million EUR of licencing fees.

Cooperation with third countries: the IUU Regulation introduces tools and implements a methodology to ensure all countries fulfil their obligations with regards to IUU fishing and fisheries management. The report discusses the States which have been listed under the pre-identification system (yellow card) as well as those States identified as having failed to resolve the IUU fishing problems in line with international obligations (red card). The report goes on to note that in October 2014 the Commission lifted the pre-identification status of Fiji, Panama, Togo and Vanuatu following structural reforms in fisheries management and solid guarantees for the effective implementation of these reforms (green card).

Investigations into IUU activity: since 2010 the Commission has investigated over 200 cases of presumed IUU fishing by vessels from 27 countries. As a direct consequence of these investigations eight flag States

(Belize, Brazil, Comoros, Lithuania, Panama, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Korea and Spain) and four coastal States (Liberia, Republic of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau) have imposed sanctions amounting to more than 8 million EUR of fines and fees against more than 50 vessels.

International and stakeholder cooperation: IUU fishing cannot be fought by the EU in isolation, international cooperation is essential to accelerate change globally. The EU signed Joint Statements on combating IUU fishing with the US in September 2011 and with Japan in July 2012. The EU is willing to cooperate on IUU fishing issues with any country that shares its values for conservation and the sustainable use of fisheries resources.

On cooperation with stakeholders, the report notes that **NGOs play a significant role** in the fight against IUU fishing through their work in the field identifying and recording illegal fishing activities.

Cooperation with industry is important as they are in the front line with regards to the implementation of the IUU Regulation. Industry now pays increased attention to all components of the supply chain in order to ensure that only legally caught fishery products enter the EU. Legal suppliers have benefitted from this change of policy while illegal operators have lost out. Based on information received from industry, either directly or through national authorities, the Commission has become aware of a number of practical issues that could be addressed in order to enhance the effectiveness of the IUU Regulation.

Next Steps: the report concludes with considerations on next steps and future measures to be taken in the context of implementing the Regulation.

Internally, the Commission will **continue to work to improve the current systems in place and to simplify and modernise the implementation of the IUU Regulation**. A number of **technical improvements** have been identified that can be introduced on the basis of the current legal text. These improvements will be done during 2015-2016.

The aim is to:

- **improve the cost-effectiveness of the current system**, making it simpler by moving from a paper-based system to an electronic one. This will increase the **traceability of transactions and protect the system from document fraud**;
- **modernise the catch certificate scheme through an IT system** and create a harmonised system to exchange and cross-check information in cooperation with EFCA. This new IT system will allow loopholes in import controls to be closed and a better monitoring of the total use of any single catch certificate split across several consignments, thus avoiding the laundering of IUU fishery products.

The **harmonised risk analysis** will bring about a more cost-effective approach to the control of catch certificates and reduce the administrative burden for Member State customs authorities

Externally, the Commission will continue working with third countries through bilateral cooperation, dialogue and formal process within the pre-identification, identification and listing procedures aiming at correcting the established IUU fishing problems.