Multi-annual plan for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks

2017/0043(COD) - 13/11/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 342 votes to 295, with 24 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multi-annual plan for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks.

The European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amended the Commission's proposal as follows.

Objective of the plan: the objective of the multiannual plan shall be to contribute to achieving the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), and especially restoring and maintaining fish stocks **above biomass levels capable of producing the maximum sustainable yield (MSY)**, implementing the landing obligation, achieving a sustainable fisheries sector and providing an effective management framework.

The plan should include measures to phase out discards, to count fish under the minimum conservation reference size and to reduce and, if possible, eliminate the **negative impacts of fishing activities** on the marine environment, particularly threatened habitats and protected species including marine mammals, seabirds and reptiles. Members pointed out that this Regulation shall not be considered as a precedent for other multiannual plans in the Mediterranean Sea unless otherwise provided.

Scope: the provisions of the multi-annual plan shall only apply to stocks of sardine and anchovy. While the European Commission is proposing to separate the management of sardine and anchovy, Members are in favour of **subjecting these two species to joint management** since they are caught together. Measures under the plan would be taken on the basis of the best available scientific advice.

Reference levels of the plan: one of the main provisions of the proposal is based on biological reference points. In the Commission's proposal, these reference points are based on the fishing mortality value (F), which corresponds to exploitation of resources at maximum sustainable yield (FMSY).

Parliament proposed that the reference point to be used in the multiannual plan for the Adriatic Sea shall be **stock biomass and not fishing mortality**. It believed that using only biomass is more appropriate and a more certain value for managing small pelagic species which are more dependent on environmental conditions than exploitation, at least until improvement of scientific assessment.

Management measures: while the Commission proposes to regulate fishing by laying down total catch volumes and establishing a quota system, Members proposed to replace, the ‘fishing opportunities’ (referring to the TAC system) by ‘management measures’, a concept better suited to the effort based management system.

When scientific advice indicates that **recreational fisheries** have a significant impact on the fishing mortality of a particular stock, the Council shall take them into account and may limit recreational fisheries when setting fishing opportunities in order to avoid exceeding the total target of fishing mortality.

Three years after the implementation of the management measures, a scientific study should be carried out to verify the effectiveness of the measures taken.

Socio-economic objectives: the amended text emphasised that the Adriatic Sea small pelagic fishery has a very important socio-economic impact for the Member States' coastal community's livelihood and future of coastal communities in Member States. Regionalisation should be used to adopt measures that take into account the specificities of each fishing area and preserve its environmental conditions.

Artisanal fishing gear traditionally used in fishing communities should be safeguarded when defining the technical measures resulting from the multiannual plan. In order to enable the industry to cope with the fishing effort reduction measures and the consequent reduction in income for businesses and for seafarers, there should be arrangements for priority access to appropriate support from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

Specific conservation measures: the plan should also provide for certain accompanying technical, as well as temporal and spatial measures to be adopted, by means of delegated acts, and taking into account the best available scientific advice.

Parliament also proposed:

- in 2019, the **catch limit** for small pelagics shall be set at the 2014 catch level and from 2020 onwards, the catch limits for small pelagics shall be gradually reduced each year for the Member State concerned by 4% compared to the previous year, until 2022;
- that the **fishing effort of fishing vessels** targeting small pelagics shall not exceed 180 fishing days per year and 20 fishing days per month, with an annual maximum of 144 fishing days targeting sardine and an annual maximum of 144 fishing days targeting anchovy;
- the implementation of spatio-temporal closures each year to protect spawning and nursery areas for (i) sardines from 1 October to 31 March and (ii) anchovy from 1 April to 30 September;
- the application of **additional closures** for vessels of an overall length of over 12 metres, separately for each type of fishing gear, shall be implemented for not less than six months.

Member States should provide incentives to fishing vessels deploying selective fishing gear or using fishing techniques with reduced environmental impact.