Multi-annual plan for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted the report by Clara Eugenia AGUILERA GARCÍA (S&D, ES) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multi-annual plan for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea.

The committee recommended that the position of the European Parliament adopted at first reading in the framework of the ordinary legislative procedure amend the Commission proposal as follows.

Economic, social and environmental sustainability

The objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy are, amongst others:

- to ensure exploitation of marine living biological resources that provide long-term sustainable economic, environmental and social conditions;

- to contribute to (i) supplying the Union market with food of high nutritional value; (iii) reducing the Union market's dependence on food imports; (iii) encouraging the creation of employment and economic development in coastal areas, and (iv) ensuring a fair standard of living for the fisheries sector, including the artisanal and small-scale fisheries sector.

Objectives of the plan

The plan should contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the CFP, and in particular restoring and maintaining fish stocks above levels of biomass capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for the target stocks, ensuring a fair standard of living for those who depend on fishing activities, bearing in mind coastal fisheries and socio-economic aspects.

The maximum sustainable yield exploitation rates shall be achieved as soon as possible and on a progressive, incremental basis by 2020 for all stocks to which the Regulation applies, and maintained thereafter.

The plan should:

- be based on a fishing effort management regime aimed at contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the CFP;

- implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management to ensure that the negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem and, in particular, on vulnerable habitats and protected species are minimised.

Closed areas

Members took the view that the Commission's proposal to establish fishing closure for trawls operating below the 100 m isobath from 1 May to 31 July could, in certain cases, constitute a disproportionate and

unjustified measure, if it is not based on scientific evidence. They believed that the plan provided for should establish a closure for trawls operating within the 100 m isobath for three months each year on a case-by-case basis, when necessary and justified by science, through regionalisation.

Fishing effort regime

Members believed that fishing efforts would be better managed jointly in each geographical sub-area.

While the Commission's proposal provided for a "substantial" reduction in fishing effort in the first year of implementation of the plan, without further details, Members proposed a 10% reduction in fishing effort in the first year, except in geographical areas where a reduction of more than 20% in fishing effort has already been achieved.

Where the best available scientific advice shows an increase of more than 10 % in catches of a particular stock with fishing gears other than trawls, fishing effort levels shall be set for such particular gear or gears on the basis of such scientific advice.

Where the best available scientific advice shows that recreational fisheries have a significant impact on the fishing mortality of a particular stock, the Council shall limit recreational fisheries when setting fishing effort in order to avoid exceeding the total target of fishing mortality, without reducing the fishing opportunities of professional fishers.

Members emphasised the need for recreational fishing data to be able to assess impacts on populations. They also proposed to delete the provisions establishing a common system of allowable catches (TACs) and quotas in the Mediterranean.

Permanent cessation

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund shall make provision for support measures for permanent cessation measures, provided that a Member State can prove that the fleet segment’s activities are not in line with the fishing opportunities available to that segment.

Co-management

With the aim of improving the state of stocks, Member States may establish a co-management regime in order to achieve the objectives of the plan, in accordance with the local specificities of a fishery.