

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Convention Area: conservation and management measures

2021/0103(COD) - 23/04/2021 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to transpose into European Union (EU) law the conservation and management measures adopted by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: the EU has been a contracting party to the WCPFC since 2004, when it ratified the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. The WCPFC is the regional fisheries management organisation (RFMO) responsible for the management of fisheries resources in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. WCPFC's conservation and management measures apply to the entire WCPFC Convention Area.

The WCPFC is empowered to adopt conservation and management measures (CMMs) for the living resources of the sea under its jurisdiction, which are binding on the Contracting Parties.

CONTENT: the proposed Regulation aims to implement existing measures of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPFC), which are binding on the Contracting Parties. It establishes management and conservation measures for fisheries in the Convention area and in respect of fish species covered by the Convention.

The regulation would apply to EU vessels fishing in the WCPFC Convention area and to the rules on fishing authorisation.

The proposal:

- deals with conservation and management measures, including provisions for: purse seine vessels fishing for tropical tuna and longline vessels fishing for swordfish; closure of fisheries; prohibition of fishing on data buoys; provisions on fishing in the vicinity of fish aggregating devices, their deployment and design; and setting rules for transshipment in port;
- sets out measures designed to protect marine species in the WCPFC Convention Area, such as: oceanic white tip, silky and hammerhead sharks; mobulid rays, including provisions for data collection and reporting on these rays, as well as their release; and sea turtles, seabirds and cetaceans;
- sets rules on: requirements for vessels, their marking and identification; the vessels monitoring scheme, including the WCPFC regional vessels register scheme; bunkering duties; and the charter notification scheme;
- contains provisions on: the WCPFC regional observer scheme, including rules on the coverage of the observer programme; the rights and responsibilities of vessel operators and masters; the safety of observers; and the reporting duties and obligations of observers;

- regulates boarding and inspection procedures, the list of serious infringements, provisions for evidence, and enforcement and use of force;
- covers port State measures, and the procedure in the event of suspected illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities;
- provides for delegated powers to the Commission to provide for changes to WCPFC measures, which are likely to be frequent.