EU/Cook Islands Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement: implementation of the Agreement 2021-2024. Protocol

2021/0312(NLE) - 05/07/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 477 votes to 37, with 117 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Protocol on the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Government of the Cook Islands.

Parliament **gave its consent** to the conclusion of the Protocol.

The purpose of the Protocol is to enable the EU and the Cook Islands Government to continue to work together to promote sustainable fisheries and the responsible exploitation of fisheries resources in Cook Islands fishing waters and to allow Union vessels to fish in those waters.

The first Protocol implementing the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA) between the EU and the Cook Islands remained in force for four years, from 14 October 2016 to 13 October 2020. On 7 July 2020, the Council approved a mandate for the European Commission to negotiate a new protocol for the implementation of the SFPA with the Cook Islands Government. Due to the complexity of the negotiations, the current protocol had to be extended by one year, from 14 November 2020 to 13 November 2021.

On 28 July 2021, a new threeyear protocol was signed, **giving 4 EU seiners access to the Cook Islands' waters to fish tuna for 100 days a year**, with the option, upon request, of a further 110 days.

The EU's financial contribution comes to **EUR 700 000 per year** – EUR 2 100 000 in total for the 3 years – broken down as follows:

(1) EUR 350 000 per year for access to fishery resources for the duration of the protocol;

(2) EUR 350 000 per year in support for the development of the sectoral fisheries policy in the Cook Islands. Support measures will be agreed by both parties within the framework of the joint committee set up to monitor the implementation of the SFPA.

The Protocol attaches major importance to the sustainable development of the local fisheries sector, in line with the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, based on the best scientific advice and respecting the recommendations of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), but also respecting democratic principles and fundamental rights.

The Protocol ensures continued access for the European fleet to Cook Islands waters, while guaranteeing the development of the local sector and providing added value to the population dependent on the fisheries sector, which accounts for around 3% of the Cook Islands' GDP, in full respect of the marine environment and fisheries resources. It also encourages practices to combat illegal fishing.