Small-scale fisheries situation in the EU and future perspectives

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted the own-initiative report by João PIMENTA LOPES (GUE/NGL, PT) on the small-scale fisheries situation in the EU and future perspectives.

Strengthening small-scale fisheries along the value chain

Members take the view that the future of small-scale, coastal and artisanal fishing depends not only on long-term and sustainable measures, but also on immediate, meaningful and effective measures to increase fishers' profit margins also through higher quota allocations in line with scientific advice. They consider that it necessary to enhance the organisational and commercial capacities of the sector and the profession' s attractiveness, to provide training and targeted support for young people and to improve operating conditions, in particular for the inclusion of women on board vessels and in the sector more generally, and to strengthen its position in the supply chain.

The report calls on the Commission, therefore, working in close cooperation with the Member States, to establish and implement support mechanisms, within the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) framework, for small scale, artisanal and coastal fisheries that make it possible to tackle the specific problems in this part of the sector.

The future of small-scale fishing requires that its specific nature should be **recognised in the CFP** and the present instruments be adapted in order to meet the needs of this sector.

Stressing that small-scale fisheries are the weakest segment along the value chain and marketing arrangements often tend to favour the interests of the buyer rather than the fishers, Members affirm the need to strengthen and **shorten the sector's value chain** between the producer and the consumer, thereby increasing the opportunities for **direct sales** from fisher to consumer and reducing the number of intermediaries in order, ideally, to reach the point where the producer is able to supply the final customer directly.

The report also points out the need for an **ambitious revision of the CMO Regulation** with the aim of increasing its contribution to the sector's income and to market stability, as well as to improve the marketing of fishery products and increase their added value. In this context, Members stress the importance of creating **certified seafood labels** and fisheries product brand mechanisms, as well as of increasing **traceability** in the supply chain, which would in turn improve information to consumers, encouraging them to buy locally and sustainably sourced seafood and raise their awareness of SSF products.

Improving operating conditions and guaranteeing the future of small-scale, artisanal and coastal fisheries

Members welcome the fact that the EMFAF provides the possibility to support the modernisation, replacement or acquisition of newer engines that emit less CO2, including engines using new energy-efficient technologies, and the conversion of petrol engines. They call on the Commission and Member States to ensure **equal tax conditions** at international level and continue to exempt the fishing industry from fuel taxation.

Given the current extraordinary inflation of fuel prices, Members propose that **extraordinary measures** could be envisaged by the Member States to provide aid to the small-scale, coastal and artisanal fisheries segment for the expected rising production costs. Moreover, the report urges Member States to allocate funds from the Recovery and Resilience Facility to investment in the small-scale coastal fleet with the aim of helping fishers and operators who do associated work, mainly women, such as net menders, shore-based assistants and packagers, and workers.

With a view to improving the execution rate of EMFAF financing and ensuring that small-scale fisheries have access to support, it is necessary to look into and implement measures to streamline procedures, thereby reducing the red tape, complexity and approval time surrounding applications.

Member States are urged to ensure the full implementation of EU standards and regulations in relation to safety, labour and living conditions on board fishing vessels.

In addition, the future of small-scale fishing requires that EU regulations ensure a regulatory environment that strengthens the position of fishers in the supply chain and provides investments for the long-term sustainability, stability and economic competitiveness of the sector. The report points out the need for **economic and social protection during non-fishing periods** and in the event of disasters that hamper activities. There is a need for mechanisms providing for wage compensation for lost earnings during such periods.

For generational renewal, the sector should put in place attractive conditions for young people and women.