Small-scale fisheries situation in the EU and future perspectives

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The European Parliament adopted by 408 votes to 66, with 44 abstentions, a resolution on the small-scale fisheries situation in the EU and future perspectives.

In 2019, the small-scale fisheries (SSF) sector in the EU-28 consisted of a fleet of 42 838 vessels – which represented only 7.5 % of the gross tonnage and 5.4 % of the landed weight across the Member States overall – and employed 62 650 fishers, accounting for 75 % of the active fishing ships and 48 % of crew.

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) does not provide small-scale fisheries with clear and differentiated legislative support to help them achieve socio-economic viability. Nor have Member States put in place effective measures for this type of fishing.

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.

Parliament 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** be recognised in the CFP and that the present instruments be adapted in order to meet the needs of this sector. There is a need to develop a common, more comprehensive and adequate definition of small-scale, artisanal and coastal fishing.

In particular, Parliament recommended the following:

- **strengthening and shortening the sector's value chain** between producer and consumer, thereby increasing the possibilities for direct sales from fisher to the consumer, ideally so that the producer can serve the final customer directly;

- **ensure a fairer and more appropriate distribution of added value** along the sector's value chain and consider the use of forms of intervention similar to guaranteed prices and target prices, in order to improve fishers' incomes;

- take action at EU or Member State level to defend or create **markets of origin**, thereby advocating preferential short circuits for traditional products;

- **promote and defend the qualities of small-scale fish**, such as freshness, seasonality, cultural heritage and sustainability, and increase support for these products in trade fairs, small shops and catering, so as to maximise the value of fisheries products and foster local development;

- set up a **training programme** for the hotel, restaurant and catering sector to improve knowledge of seafood products and good practice in protecting resources.

Parliament 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.

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.

In addition, the resolution calls for:

- allocating funds for investments in the small-scale coastal fleet under the Recovery and Resilience Facility with the aim of helping fishers and operators carrying out ancillary work, who are mainly women, such as net menders, shore-based assistants and packagers, and workers;

- providing specific support under the EMFAF for the small-scale fisheries sector for the installation of storage, freezing and refrigeration facilities and for maintaining the cold chain from the vessel to the final consumer.

Parliament believes that the support granted by Member States in the context of the implementation of the EAGF should be mobilised to address structural deficiencies with a view to helping to **increase fisheries incomes**, promote employment with rights in the sector and ensure fair prices for producers.

Members stressed the need to:

- implement measures to streamline procedures for accessing EMFAF thereby reducing the administrative burden associated with applications;

- renew and modernise the small-scale fleet with a view to improving safety and living conditions on board vessels, improving their energy efficiency and making this segment more environmentally friendly;

- ensuring a regulatory environment that strengthens the position of fishers in the supply chain and provides investment in the long-term viability, stability and economic competitiveness of the sector.

The resolution pointed 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.