

The state of play in the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and future perspectives

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted an own-initiative report by Gabriel MATO (EPP, ES) on the state of play in the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and future perspectives.

The report aims to provide political guidelines for any future review of the CFP. It poses some questions on the implementation of the current CFP, on whether the current CFP objectives and tools are still relevant to tackle current and future challenges and on whether certain aspects should be reformed, reviewed, adapted or improved. It focuses mainly on the conservation of fish stocks and fisheries management, also building on specific reports already adopted in recent years on issues such as maximum sustainable yield, landing obligations and quota allocation.

The report regretted that, since 2014, the implementation of the CFP has not given sufficient consideration to **socio-economic aspects or the availability of food supply or the ecosystem-based approach**, all of which are needed to ensure sustainable management of stocks.

Members consider that the resulting negative impacts on the fishing sector have been exacerbated by unprecedented challenges that have arisen could not have been foreseen in 2012 when the CFP was designed, such as Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy crisis. While welcoming the rapid adoption of EU measures to support and relieve the sector in times of crisis, Members pointed out that the cumulative effects of this situation have brought many fleets to the brink of bankruptcy, with potentially devastating repercussions for employment and social cohesion in coastal areas.

The report stressed that the implementation of the CFP will have to **adapt to the challenges of the fight against climate change**, in the context of which the Union has committed itself to being climate neutral by 2050. The CFP must therefore continue to be implemented and, where necessary, reformed and adapted accordingly.

Members stressed the strategic value of seafood in the context of the European Green Deal and the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They stressed the need to maintain a balance between the three pillars of sustainability of the CFP.

They are therefore in favour of **strengthening the socio-economic and food safety dimensions of the CFP**, and advocate remedying shortcomings and raising ambitions in this respect. They advocate the full application of an ecosystem approach and the establishment of a level playing field at international level.

According to the report, the objectives of a fisheries policy should include guaranteeing the supply of fish to the public, as part of ensuring food security and sovereignty, developing coastal communities, and championing and encouraging the social recognition of fisheries-related professions, as well as promoting jobs and improving the living conditions of fishers.

The report noted that the CFP Basic Regulation highlights the environmental, socio-economic and food security objectives of the policy, Regulation (EU) 2016/2336 relating to deep-sea stocks deals solely with environmental aspects. Members consider that in future all regulations subordinate to the Basic Regulation should fully incorporate socio-economic and food security aspects.

The Commission and Council are invited, in the context of policy development, to place more value in policymaking on the importance of fisheries in contributing to food security by providing high-quality seafood products, as well as in its contribution to the economic and social structure, and the cultural, touristic and gastronomic heritage of Europe's coastal and island communities.

Members pointed out that some aspects of the CFP may not be responding adequately to the **small-scale fishing sector** and that its essential socio-economic role in many coastal communities and its strategic role in securing the food supply must be guaranteed.

The report highlights the **strategic role of fishers and aquaculture producers** in the food value chain and in food security, as well as the role of **women**, as fishers, vessel masters, net menders, shore-based assistants and packagers, etc., and their need for recognition. Members also stressed the need to attract young people not only to sea fishing activities, but also to the management of fishing and aquaculture businesses, so as to ensure generational renewal throughout the aquatic products sector.

Recalling that all seas and the ocean are a **global common good**, Members consider that marine resources should be managed on the basis of sound scientific advice so as to maximise the long-term benefits for society as a whole.

The Commission is invited to invest further efforts in **promoting the CFP as a strategic model for ocean governance** by using the EU's position in RFMOs, free trade agreements and sustainable fisheries partnership agreements, and more generally in international fora. These efforts will be essential to **ensure a level playing field** for EU operators and to defend the interests of the EU fisheries and aquaculture sectors at global level.

Member considered that imported aquatic food products must be subject to rigorous monitoring and certification procedures, to ensure they come from sustainable fisheries, and to high health, environmental and social standards, that are as strict as those applied to EU products. They also underlined the importance of the EU's zero-tolerance policy regarding IUU fishing, in the light of it still being an occurrence on the international level.

Lastly, **outermost regions** have specific constraints and specific needs as provided for in article 349 TFEU. The CFP ought to take account of their specific characteristics and needs and adapt to these.