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

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The European Parliament adopted by 371 votes to 92, with 92 abstentions, a resolution on the state of play in the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and future perspectives.

General objectives of the CFP

The resolution 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 resolution 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. Therefore, Parliament believes that **the CFP must continue to be implemented, and where needed, reformed and adapted accordingly**.

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

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)

The introduction of MSY as a fisheries management reference point has been a driver for improving the overall state of fish stocks. It is crucial to continue and accelerate the work of rebuilding and keeping fish stocks above MSY levels. Parliament stated that the MSY objective should be implemented in light of the practical reality and in consideration of the socio-economic, proportionality and food security dimensions.

Conservation measures

The Commission and the Council are called on to consider setting total allowable catches for longer than annual or biannual periods, in particular for the main target stocks, always based on the best scientific advice available, in order to provide more predictability and long-term certainty for fishers and in line with the MSY principle.

Landing obligation and reduction of unwanted catches

The resolution noted that the landing obligation cannot be properly implemented if some shortcomings, such as the lack of storage capacity on board or collection facilities at port as well as adequate usage of exemptions, are not improved.

Moreover, the objective of minimising unwanted catches cannot sufficiently be achieved through the landing obligation and should be primarily met by using technical measures and should be supported by better documenting catches, on the basis of the best available scientific advice.

Quota allocation

While deploring the lack of transparency regarding the distribution of fishing opportunities in certain Member States, the Commission will initiate discussions among Member States and stakeholders with a view to preparing a vade mecum on the allocation of fishing opportunities in order to improve transparency, promote sustainable fishing practices across the EU, and support small scale and coastal fisheries.

External dimension of the CFP and oceans' governance

The Commission is called on invest more effort in promoting the CFP as a **policy 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 forums.

Imports and trade and Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported fishing

Parliament called for a more harmonised approach in the EU in relation to the implementation of IUU-related EU-legislation. It 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 including examples ranging from a lack of transparency on illegal fishing operations to modern slavery, as in the case of some Chinese vessels.

The resolution called for all free trade agreements with third countries to include a section on tackling IUU fishing.

Climate change and other challenges for the future

The resolution stressed that climate change mitigation and adaptation are key challenges that are insufficiently tackled by the current CFP. In this regard, the Commission is called on to consider, when revising the Common Fisheries Policy, that the ocean's characteristics (temperature, density, salinity, oxygen saturation, etc.) have changed over the last 10 years.

Moreover, Member States should continue to encourage the promotion of **algae farming** and facilitate the use and development of algae as food and feed.

Aquaculture

The resolution recalled the importance of aquaculture to guarantee long-term food security and contribute to meeting the growing world demand for aquatic food, as well its contribution to create growth and employment for EU citizens, to better preserving ecosystems and biodiversity and be part of a more circular management of resources. However, Parliament regretted that the EU's current trade policy does not safeguard a level playing field between EU and non-EU producers that will allow the aquaculture sector to achieve sustainable economic results and in return to contribute to the social and economic development of the EU's regions.

Lastly, Parliament highlighted 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.