Implementation of the Common Market Organisation (CMO) Regulation in fisheries and aquaculture - Regulation (EU) 1379/2013

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The European Parliament adopted by 415 votes to 10, with 129 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of the Common Market Organisation (CMO) Regulation in fisheries and aquaculture – Regulation (EU) 1379/2013.

The resolution recalled that the common organisation of the markets (CMO) is an integral part of the common fisheries policy (CFP) alongside conservation and financial measures and is vital for achieving their objectives. The implementation of the CMO demonstrates a low uptake related to the creation of fish producer organisations (POs) due to the complex set-up and recognition framework in the Member States and the financial and legal uncertainties regarding the financial support and eligibility of actions.

Professional organisations

The resolution stated that professional organisations and interbranch organisations are the backbone of the fishery and aquaculture sector and they play a key role in helping to achieve the objectives of the CFP, which is why they need to be further supported and strengthened with further financial support.

Common marketing standards

Parliament considered that marketing standards for aquatic food products placed on the EU market, regardless of their origin, should adhere to harmonised environmental and social sustainability standards. These standards should also be included in trade agreements and measures adopted in regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) as it is important to ensure that operators have a level playing field and that EU producers are not unduly disadvantaged in the market.

Consumer information

According to the resolution, for the CMO to fully achieve its objectives, the competent authorities must ensure that consumers are informed, through promotional, marketing and educational campaigns, of the nutritional, health and sustainability benefits of eating fishery and aquaculture products, the wide variety of species available and the importance of understanding the information on labels, while avoiding misinforming consumers and ensuring alignment with EU food systems.

The Commission is called on to consider reinforcing marketing standards in order to include more information on the labels such as the ingredients, geographical fishing area and fishing gear, among other things, without adding unnecessary administrative burdens on producers and professional organisations.

Both the Commission and the Member States are called on to promote and establish new protected quality designations in the light of their known and proven benefits for EU fishery and aquaculture products and calls for better marketing of those products.

As regards **traceability and transparency** measures, Parliament considered that if these measures are supported by a proper labelling system, which should be required for processed, fresh and preserved aquatic food products, they can guarantee that the information provided to consumers is accurate, clear,

complete, trustworthy and reliable. Such a labelling system is vital for **combating both food fraud**, including mislabelling, and **IUU fishing**.

The traceability of products must be strengthened and guaranteed throughout all stages of the value chain to provide not only economic and commercial benefits, but also contribute to efforts to protect health. Parliament welcomed, in this regard, the introduction of the CATCH certificate for imported products by the new Fisheries Control Regulation.

Competition rules

The resolution underlined that around 70 % of the seafood that is consumed in the EU is imported from non-EU countries, which consequently leads to the EU being dependant on these imports for its consumption. In this regard, the Commission and the Council are called on to ensure that EU trade policy allows for a level playing field between EU and imported products, and to promote the consumption of sustainable (environmental, economic and social) EU aquatic food products.

Market intelligence and crisis management

The European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products (EUMOFA) provides market intelligence to operators in the fishery sector to help them to better understand market trends. However, Parliament considered that the EUMOFA should be updated to include new product categories of fish products that are traded in increased volumes in the EU, and to offer more intuitive and comprehensive digital tools.

Parliament called on the Commission, during the next revision of the CMO, to consider the possibility of establishing a crisis reserve or system, including storage aid, as a means of protecting the sector from any exceptional situations that might arise in the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector. It recalled that exceptional aid recently had to be provided to tackle the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusions

Parliament welcomed the progress made in implementing the CMO rules. Nevertheless, the Commission and the Member States need to make more effort to achieve more uniform implementation of the CMO Regulation across sectors, by taking sufficient account of the specific conditions under which markets operate in the outermost regions. Parliament stressed the importance of involving all stakeholders throughout the entire supply chain.

Parliament welcomed the outcome of the negotiations on the revision of the Fisheries Control Regulation, in particular the rules aiming to strengthen traceability provisions for all fishery, shellfish and aquaculture products, including products imported from non-EU countries.

The resolution welcomed the Commission’s intention to present a **proposal** for a legislative framework for sustainable food systems with the aim of enhancing transparency and providing consumers with more information.