

European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund: simplification and transposition of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies

2026/0289(COD) - 21/09/2026 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to adopt more suitable and simpler support measures within the framework of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) and to integrate the necessary changes to ensure the full implementation in Union law of the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement on fisheries subsidies.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: the **European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund**, established under Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 (the EMFAF Regulation), allocates resources from the EU budget to support the common fisheries policy (CFP), the Union's maritime policy and its international commitments on ocean governance.

Despite its strategic importance, **the current regulatory framework presents implementation challenges**. The mid-term EMFAF evaluation and regular feedback from Member States, stakeholders and Advisory Councils (ACs), indicate that funding opportunities are perceived as limited and insufficiently flexible. Legal uncertainty and complexity have been identified as major barriers to supporting the energy transition, small-scale fishing and generational renewal.

It is therefore necessary to amend the EMFAF Regulation to make it more accessible and easier for Member States and beneficiaries to implement.

The proposal and its objectives are consistent with other Union policies, especially environmental, climate, cohesion, agriculture, social, market and trade policies. The proposal is also consistent with the initiatives set out in the European Ocean Pact.

CONTENT: this proposal seeks to **amend the EMFAF Regulation to make it more accessible and easier for Member States and beneficiaries** to implement. The proposal also incorporates the necessary changes to ensure the full implementation in EU law of the **World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies**, which was adopted at the WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference on 17 June 2022, was ratified by the EU on 7 June 2023

and entered into force on 15 September 2025.

The proposal is expected to:

- provide **greater legal certainty** and facilitate the testing of new technologies by introducing new definitions for "energy transition", "pilot projects" and "demonstrators", which should not be treated as ordinary fishing vessels;

- **accelerate the energy transition** of the EU fishing fleet by making engine replacement and modernisation rules more flexible, with a simplified approval process and methodology for emissions reduction calculation;
- have a **positive impact on generational renewal** by increasing aid intensity for young fishers and the removal of barriers to support the transfer of ownership of business will have a positive impact on generational renewal;
- introduce a new scheme for **temporary cessation of activities** in order to alleviate the socioeconomic impact on fishers of significant and unexpected reductions in fishing opportunities;
- grant Member States more **budgetary flexibility** by raising the ceiling for fleet measures and permanent cessation from 15 % to 30 % of each Member State's allocation;
- ensure full compliance with the **agreement on fisheries subsidies** by making any operator or vessel engaged in IUU fishing or high seas activities outside the competence of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) ineligible for EMFAF support.