Common fisheries policy after 2002: meetings at regional level in 1998-1999. Report

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PURPOSE : Commission Communication on the results of 30 regional meetings held from September 1998 until June 1999 on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) after 2002. CONTENT : The regional meetings formed the second phase of the consultation process on the CFP after 2002. The meetings showed that there is a large consensus to pursue the CFP beyond 2002, but the parties consulted believe that many of its components need to be reviewed, modified or even completely changed. The main conclusions are as follows: - on the issue of access to the 6/12 mile zone, there are virtually no demands for the establishment of a free access regime "up to the beaches". -with regard to access to the North Sea, fisherman from Spain, Portugal, Finland and Sweden support the abolition of all discriminatory restrictions. Organisations from North Sea coastal states expressed concern about the increase in fishing effort in the North Sea. -the retention of the Shetland Box did not receive unanimous support. Many organisations in Spain, the Netherlands and a large federation in the United Kingdom believe that the establishment of the Box has no scientific basis and is purely political in nature. -On TACs and Quotas, it was widely held that these had failed to restrict stock exploitation rates due to lack of proper enforcement and sound scientific advice. Suggestions were made on the improvement of the regime. -Most of the participants were against Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs), fearing the creation of oligopolies and the loss of jobs. There was more support for the ITQs in the Netherlands, Spain and Denmark. -the principle of relative stability was widely supported. Ireland and Northern Ireland made strong demands for changes in the relative stability keys. -The current discard rules were heavily criticised and the landing of all catches was widely supported by fisherman in some Member States. -The current definition of fishing effort, as far as the engine power element is concerned, was strongly criticised in Italy, Greece, Netherlands and Portugal. On MAGPs, Belgium, Germany and Portugal favoured stronger penalties on States not meeting their targets. The United Kingdom and Finland criticised MAGPs and asked for greater flexibility. -Fisherman asked for greater protection of the marine environment against land-based pollution and other industrial activitities. - In the case of bilateral fisheries agreements, there is a clear split between the North and the South. Fisherman from countries benefiting from Community funded agreements asked for the strengthening of the external fisheries policy. -On the markets and trade in fishery products, processors asked for easier access to raw materials and fisherman asked for more protection from low-priced imports. -The proposal for a new FIFG regulation was clarified. -With regard to enforcement and monitoring, there was a widespread demand for a level-playing field throughout the Union. -On fisheries research, many fisherman argued that scientificdata are often flawed and there is more fish to be fished. - The aquaculture sector complained of lack of support from the Community. -Many participants emphasised the "specificity" of Mediterranean fisheries. -There was a unanimous request for greater transparency on the part of the Commission and for greater participation in the elaboration of Community decisions.