Fisheries: action plan to integrate environmental protection

2002/2175(COS) - 28/05/2002 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present an Action Plan which aims to integrate environmental protection requirements into the CFP by defining guiding principles, management measures and a work programme, with a view to promoting sustainable development. CONTENT : integration of environmental protection requirements into Community policies is an obligation under Article 6 of the Treaty. This document responds to the invitation to the Commission, made by the Fisheries Council in the context of its conclusions of 25 April 2001 on the integration of environmental concerns and sustainable development into the Common Fisheries Policy, to present concrete proposals on environmental integration within the framework of reform of the CFP. On the basis of an analysis of the existing situation and the international debate on responsible fishing, the Commission has already set out its ideas on environmental integration in a number of policy documents. The purpose of this document is to translate such ideas into an Action Plan comprising objectives and principles, means, targets and timetables to enable the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) to address environmental challenges efficiently. In elaborating this Action Plan, the Commission has taken into account the conclusions of the Council and of the European Parliament and also the opinion of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries Management and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee on Fisheries on the above-mentioned policy documents. Management action within the CFP aimed at the integration of environmental protection requirements should give the highest priority to: - within the framework of multi-annual management plans, a reduction in fishing pressure on fishing grounds to sustainable levels; where possible, and on the basis of scientific advice, this reduction should target fishing activities having adverse effects both on the sustainability of fish stocks and on the favourable conservation status of non-commercial species and habitats; - an improvement of fishing methods with a view to reducing discards, incidental bycatch and impact on habitats. In the coming months, the Commission shall devise an Action Plan on discards and appropriate proposals to protect sharks, cetaceans and sea birds from adverse effects of fishing; - the elimination of public aid for the modernisation or renewal of the fishing fleet except for aid to improve safety or product quality not likely to increase fishing capacity. In addition, the CFP should address the following issues: - the measures set out in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Fisheries and not specifically mentioned in this communication; special attention should be given to the setting up of long-term management plans for the most important and the most vulnerable fish stocks, the identification of key habitats and biotopes, the setting up of temporal and spatial closures including "no take zones" and the development of guidelines for Best Fishing Practice; - measures to stimulate fishing practices adding value to environmental integration. To achieve this, Member States and the Commission should collaborate in the framework of the partnership envisaged in Article 8 of Regulation 1260/99/EC laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds; - the improvement of scientific assessment of the state of fishstocks, both in Community and non-Community waters; - the integration of environmental policy concerns into the aquaculture sector; - the adoption of a Community strategy for distant water fisheries to contribute to sustainable fishing outside Community waters through global and bilateral partnership at national and/or regional level. In order to reinforce the process of integration and accelerate its implementation, the following actions should be undertaken: - within the 6th Framework Programme for Community research, the Commission will aim to stimulate the better understanding of the marine ecosystems with a view to a progressive implementation of an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management; - the Commission will extend management measures to the protection of noncommercial species and habitats from the effects of fishing and aquaculture activities, and study the operational requirements of a full application of the precautionary principle to all aspects of the CFP implying environmental risks; - the Commission will analyse the consequences of the application of the principles of prevention, rectification at source and polluter-pays in the field of fisheries and aquaculture; - within the provisions set out in Article 10 of Regulation 1543/2000 /EC establishing a Community framework for the collection and management of the data needed to

conduct the CFP, and in support to the obligations emanating from the conservation requirements under Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC, Member States should initiate studies and pilot projects regarding the collection of basic information on the relationships of capture fisheries and aquaculture with the environment.