Oil pollution: measures to compensate the Spanish fisheries and aquaculture after the Prestige shipwreck

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PURPOSE : to institute specific measures to compensate the Spanish fisheries, shellfish industry and aquaculture, affected by the oil spills from the Prestige. CONTENT : the Commission presented a proposal for specific measures to compensate operators in the Spanish fisheries, shellfish and aquaculture sector hit by the oil spill from the sinking of the oil tanker "Prestige" off the coast of Galicia on 22 November 2002 . The Commission proposes the adaptation of a December 2001 Council Regulation allocating aid to encourage the reconverting of the fleets which used to operate in Morocco's waters in order to allow the financial transfer of budgetary resources to repairing the damages caused by the oil spill. Thus, some EUR 30 Million would become available for this purpose. In addition, a number of provisions of the 2000-2006 FIFG programme would be subject to derogation as they have not been designed to cope with environmental damage of such magnitude. Under current FIFG rules, compensation for temporary cessation of activities can only be paid to fishermen and vessel owners. In order to ensure equal treatment to the fish and shellfish farming sectors, the Commission proposes to extend compensation for temporary cessation of activities to these sectors. In addition aid would be made available for shellfish restocking, cleaning, repairing and rebuilding aquaculture sites and replacing damaged fishing gear. Currently, there is a limit of 4% on the global FIFG allocation of each Member State that can be dedicated to compensating temporary cessation of activities due to unforeseen circumstances. In addition, indemnities cannot be paid for more than 2 months per year. The Commission proposes, therefore, that these restrictions be lifted so as to compensate Spanish fishermen, vessel owners, shellfish and fish farmers who have been forced to halt their activities.