

Conservation of fishery resources: sustainable exploitation in the Mediterranean Sea

2003/0229(CNS) - 09/10/2003 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : on the conservation, management and exploitation of living aquatic resources in the Mediterranean Sea and on marketing of fishery products caught in the Mediterranean Sea, and amending Regulations 2847/93/EC and 973/2001/EC. **PROPOSED ACT** : Council Regulation. **CONTENT** : In its Action Plan (see COM/2002/0535), the Commission outlined the main elements of the future Mediterranean fisheries policy, with a special emphasis on conservation policy. The Action Plan underlined the Mediterranean specificity. Such specificity means that, although the objectives of Community fisheries management as laid down in Council Regulation 2371/2002/EC must be the same for the Mediterranean as for other Community areas, the instruments to achieve these objectives must be adapted to the specificity of Mediterranean fisheries, both to take into account the different biological, geographical and legal situations in this region, and to build on the experience and practices of fishermen's organisations. This proposal deals with a particular element of the Action Plan: the updating of the technical measures regulation applicable to the Mediterranean (Regulation 1626/94/EC). The proposal revises and replaces the measures laid down in Regulation 1626/94 while maintaining some of its elements that are widely accepted by the Mediterranean fisheries stakeholders and public opinion. The proposal, in particular: - introduces new technical measures to improve the selectivity of the current 40 mm mesh size for towed nets, without immediate increasing of the mesh size, and puts forward a two-stage approach towards increasing the minimum mesh size to 60 mm over the next six years; - strengthens the current ban on the use of towed gears in coastal areas; - limits the overall sizes of certain fishing gears that affect fishing effort; - introduces a procedure for establishing temporary or permanent closures of areas to specific fishing methods, either in Community or international waters; - provides for the adoption in the Mediterranean area of management plans combining the use of effort management with technical measures; - introduces provisions to ensure that leisure fishing is conducted in a way that reduces interference with professional fishing and does not jeopardize the sustainability of certain resources; - delegates powers to Member States to regulate, in their territorial waters and under certain conditions, fishing activities that do not have any significant Community dimension or environmental impact, including certain local fisheries currently authorised under Community law. The proposal also introduces conservation measures in the 25-mile management zone around Malta in accordance with the guidelines fixed in the Treaty of Accession to the European Union 2003.