Fishery and aquaculture products: common organisation of the market COM

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The committee adopted a draft report by Carmen FRAGA ESTÉVEZ (EPP/ED, E) approving the Commission proposal subject to a number of amendments. One of the most important innovations of the proposal is that, in order to improve consumer information and make inspections easier, it would become compulsory to label each product visibly with information on commercial designation, method of production and catch area. The committee wished to add other points, such as the fishing method used (in the case of fish caught at sea), the minimum legal size in the catch area, the calibre and the origin of the product (e.g. farmed or caught in the Community or imported from a third country). Regarding the operational programmes for each fishing year, the committee thought aquaculture should be included in the programmes proposed by the Commission. On the question of withdrawal prices, the Commission wishes to reduce aid so as to discourage the fishing of products for which there is no buyer on the food market, while at the same time increasing the aid for carry-over and private storage. Although the committee acknowledged that the present withdrawal regime must be altered, it argued for a less drastic solution. Thus, while the Commission would not allow financial compensation for withdrawals above 8% of the annual quantities placed on the market by a producer organisation, MEPs wanted to change this figure to 10%. The committee also felt that, as regards carry-over aid, there seemed to be no good reason for making a distinction between fresh and frozen products. On the issue of trade arrangements with third countries, the Commission proposes to replace the existing tariff quota system with the total or partial suspension of tariff duties for an indefinite period for certain fisheries products intended for the processing industry. To ensure that shortages in products for the processing industry do not arise on the Community market, the committee suggested that the Council, acting by a qualified majority and on a proposal from the Commission, should be able to decide on a total or partial suspension of customs duties in line with criteria proposed by Parliament.