European fish processing industry

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Brigitte LANGENHAGEN (EPP-ED, D) on the fish processing industry. It pointed out that this sector was of vital importance for the EU's supplies of food and was, moreover, a labour-intensive industry generating a large number of jobs and hence a source of income for regions dependent on fisheries, having an annual turnover of more than EUR 10 billion. MEPs called on the Commission to include the processing industry in its proposals to reform the common fisheries policy. They added that the fisheries industry, including the processing side, should only be subject to a certain degree to internal market rules, and called on the Commission to submit a paper to Council and Parliament containing an analysis of the industry and describing the policies pursued in this area. The report focused on certain matters which were important for the economic and social development of the industry, such as the gradual abolition of customs duties on raw materials for processing (with the exception of sensitive products such as imports of tuna loin and Asian preserves), the coordination of measures to liberalise port services, the need to maintain and increase structural aid for modernising the industry and the problems of recycling waste water. MEPs also stressed that consumers must be able to rely on precise product designations, in particular in the case of canned sardines and tuna from third countries, and on the harmonisation of trade names of processed fishery products, so as to prevent confusion. Lastly, they said that the industry could only benefit from tighter controls designed to ensure the quality of products and guarantee food safety, since a healthy natural product represented the real added value of processed fish.