

Common fisheries policy: protection of resources, the environment and consumers. Green Paper

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The committee adopted the report by Rosa MIGUELEZ RAMOS (PES, E) on the Commission's Green Paper on the future of the common fisheries policy (CFP). It criticised the Green Paper for only proposing half-measures, which simply sought to preserve the CFP more or less in its current form, albeit with some modest changes. MEPs believed the CFP needed to be overhauled to take account of new realities (the single market, the various enlargements on the horizon, the depletion of fish stocks), while maintaining the basic objectives of a Community policy which aims to have a coherent and beneficial socio-economic impact. With regard to the conservation and management of fishery resources, the Commission was urged to adopt fisheries legislation based on the precautionary principle, not only to ensure the survival of species but also to optimise levels of exploitation. In addition, the current system of total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas needed to be improved and made more flexible. However, MEPs rejected any system of individual or transferable quotas. Technical measures should be adopted to reduce discarded catches and protect young fish. As regards the fishing fleets, MEPs pointed out that management measures organised around fleet planning programmes (MGPs) had fallen far short of the objectives they were theoretically designed to achieve, partly as a result of failings by certain Member States. Effective sanctions should therefore be introduced to deal with infringements, omissions or delays with regard to MGPs. Moreover, to make inspections more effective, the committee called for a uniform system of penalties or even an expansion in the powers of Community inspectors. Turning to the international dimension of the CFP, the report said that the Community should integrate the external aspects of the CFP (international agreements and regional fisheries organisations) into the EU's foreign policy. Such agreements should be concluded only after a careful assessment of fish stocks and of their impact on the environment. Above all, however, the CFP must be closely tied to development policy and the fight against poverty. MEPs also stressed the need for the Community to play a bigger role in the regional fisheries organisations. They were critical of the Green Paper for neglecting the social dimension of fisheries and therefore called for harmonisation of employment conditions and the drafting of a statute for sea fishermen, together with increased monitoring of safety and hygiene conditions by the relevant EU agencies. In general, future decisions should be taken at the lowest possible level in order to involve those working in the industry, as well as politicians and scientists, as closely as possible in the new CFP. Lastly, the Commission was asked to conduct an assessment of the implementation of the CFP reform by 2007.