Fisheries policy: integration of environmental protection, Cardiff process

2001/2143(COS) - 18/12/2001

The committee adopted the report by Vincenzo LAVARRA (PES, I) on the Commission communication. It was critical of the Commission's emphasis on the present situation of over-fishing and fleet overcapacity and the Commission's own contradictory claim that there was a lack of scientific knowledge about the functioning of marine ecosystems and the side-effects of fishing. It therefore called for the forthcoming review of the common fisheries policy (CFP) to focus on the ecosystem, switching from a traditional resource management approach. More funding should be provided for coordinating research into fisheries and into marine ecology. The Commission was urged to put forward alternative proposals to solve the overfishing problem in place of the simplistic solution of permanently decommissioning vessels and forcing fishermen out of the sector, without any support measures. The report pointed out that current levels of industrial fisheries were detrimental both to the survival of fish stocks and the marine environment as a whole. Given the current shortage of resources, it was unacceptable that one-third of Community fish catches should be processed into fish oil and fishmeal used for aquaculture. The committee also expressed concern at the high levels of marine pollution caused by dioxins in areas where such fish were caught, which meant that they were entering the food chain. An ecosystem-based approach meant that measures were needed to combat the problem of external pollutants harmful to fisheries, and the "polluter pays" principle should be extended to the fisheries sector. Closer attention should also be paid to restocking measures and responsible forms of aquaculture, backed up by start-up assistance and accompanying socio-economic measures for those whose activities were curtailed as a consequence of the new policies.