Common fisheries policy : improving scientific and technical advice for its management

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Carlos LAGE (PES, P) on the scientific and technical advice for EU fisheries management. MEPs said that it was important to strengthen the relationship between science and industry by improving consultation between scientists and the fishing industry, integrating them in a joint body at European, national and regional level. They pointed out that the Regional Advisory Councils had an important role to play in this regard and therefore called for scientists to be members of the RACs. The committee also noted that there were inaccuracies in catch data and scientific advice, and that there were differing interpretations about scientific advice received as well as the causes of problems concerning stocks. It further pointed out that these problems were compounded by the Commission's apparent unwillingness to have regard for all the scientific advice available. One solution might be to arrange for scientists to travel on fishing vessels to conduct research in locations where fishing is actually carried out. The committee argued that this would reduce differences of opinion between scientists and fishermen, which would lead to greater support for measures taken on the basis of scientific advice. The report stressed that, as EU measures based on scientific advice can have severe socio-economic impacts on fishing communities, the quality of such advice and of socio-economic impact assessments should be improved. It also urged that more resources be devoted to researching aquaculture, including environmental impact. Other recommendations included strengthening fisheries science in partnership with third countries in order to ensure that resources are developed sustainably and allocating more funds to meet the need for scientists and managers in fisheries.