Common fisheries policy: fisheries control situation

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OBJECTIVE: To take stock of developments in monitoring of the Common Fisheries Policy since 1992 and to analyse the prospects for progress in this area. SUBSTANCE: Since a new regulation on fisheries monitoring (Regulation 2847/93/EEC) was adopted in 1993 and a plan for monitoring by satellite (Regulation 686/97/EC) was put in place in 1996, there have been significant improvements in monitoring the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Nonetheless, major shortcomings have become apparent in the Community monitoring instrument, particularly in the following sectors: - monitoring of fleets; - monitoring at sea; - monitoring of landings (in particular, with regard to basic documents, computerisation and data checking and with regard to monitoring vessels flying the flag of a country other than where they land; there are also problems with regard to control points, given the number of potential landing points and landings in third countries); - monitoring the market for fishery products (the main short comings concern respect for common marketing standards and minimum fish sizes). The Commission document also discusses the problem of infringements and penalties. It deplores the fact that these are not always harmonised and therefore fair. Increased cooperation between Member States is needed in this area and with competent international organisations such as NAFO. The Commission's resources should also be increased in order to guarantee the effectiveness of Member States' monitoring systems and the fairness of the penalties imposed. In the third part of its communication, the Commission proposes a number of measures to remedy the various short comings. To this end, it suggests priorities for action in the years to come with a possible calender for 1998 and 1999. In 1998, its main proposals are to: - remedy the serious shortcomings with regard to basic documents and their computerisation, incorrect catch declarations and repeated overfishing of quotas; - examine how combining regulatory arrangements with cooperation will make it possible for controls to be more effective, - put in place pilots schemes for coordinating control operations, - amend the existing regulations (in particular, Regulation (EEC) 2847/93), - integrate the Mediterranean in the general rules of the CFP and launch the first phase of satellite monitoring, - study the issue of human resources assigned to monitoring activities. In 1999 the basic goals are follow-up action to the initiative launched in 1998, extending control operations across the whole of the sector and exploiting the opportunities afforded by satellite monitoring, proposing a procedure for resolving coordination problems between the Member States by establishing a plan for exchanges of information and staff, defining possible statistical objectives for the resources assigned to monitoring by each Member State, dividing tasks fairly between the Commission and the Member States with regard to monitoring non-Community resources and preparing the ground for the action to be taken on the budget decision due to expire in 2000.