Common fisheries policy: monitoring of fisheries, action plan

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OBJECTIVE: to propose an overall plan for revision of the monitoring of the common fisheries policy (CFP) extending over three years (1999-2000). SUBSTANCE: Following on from the Commission's report on fisheries monitoring under the common fisheries policy (COM(98)92 - COS0685), the Commission proposes, as agreed, a general action plan seeking to strengthen Community monitoring. To this end it sets out a plan for what should be done in each of the main areas considered in the communication and puts forward a timetable of priority measures for 1998, 1999 and 2000 to be implemented at both Community and national level. The idea is to define an overall strategy which should lead to a strengthening of fisheries monitoring. To this end the Commission is stepping up activities in five key areas: transparency, cooperation, non-member countries, those involved in the common fisheries policy and optimising the cost-effectiveness of fishery controls. For each of these fields priority activities are set at budgetary, regulatory or other levels on a year by year basis. The main actions can be summarised as follows: 1)transparency: the main priority is to create the conditions for ensuring genuine transparency, which presupposes that correct information is forwarded by the Member States on all the physical monitoring resources available, the human resources and the effective and vigorous application of penalties. From 1998 to 2000 the Commission proposes organising consultations with the Member States to detail the types of information required as regards resources and effort and to define the different kinds of inspections, to redefine in the framework of Regulation 2847/93/EEC the most serious infringements and to strengthen the cooperation between national administrations, encouraging exchanges of inspectors. The Commission also suggests more in- depth annual reports; 2)cooperation: all forms of cooperation should be strengthened (cooperation among services within a Member State, cooperation at Community level). A national administration should be able if necessary to take over from another national administration for inspections and following up infringements. Contacts between administration should be improved in order to deal with horizontal methodological problems (satellite monitoring, engine power, adapting the layout of administrative documents, validation procedures, etc.) or pilot fisheries (checks on catches and landings in specific zones, mesh size, etc.); 3)non-member countries: the aim is that the vessels of non-member countries landing their catches in Union ports should be checked as effectively as Community vessels. To this end international cooperation must be strengthened and measures adopted within strengthened international organisations. The principle of responsible fishing worldwide must be encouraged and 'ports of convenience' must be avoided. The Commission would also like to see the measures which currently apply to Community vessels as regards monitoring by satellite and landings to apply also to vessels from non-member countries, the aim being to prevent a catch which is landed being attributed without proof to an unregulated area; 4)involvement of those working in the industry in the implementation of effective checks: the idea is to convince fishermen of the need for more effective controls. It is also necessary to avoid any increase in work for fishermen (information to be transmitted) which is why the Commission suggests increased computerisation. Lastly, work must be done to increase awareness among those concerned; 5)optimising the cost-effectiveness of fishery controls: in this context the Commission suggests three fold action: - use of new technologies in order to meet the challenges of increasingly effective fishing gear and equipment (strengthening the use of satellite transponders), - covering the whole marketing chain: the idea is to strengthen checks after landing and not to be restricted to the standard inspections at sea and on landing. The Commission therefore suggests using 'traceability' in relation to the marketing of fishery products (i.e. to identify the source of the product even after catch). A harmonisation must also be achieved of the methods used to monitor engine power, - establishment of rational strategies for the deployment of monitoring resources: so that the overall strategy can be effective there must be a clear overview of the resources available, these resources must cover all possible monitoring measures, the cooperation mechanisms should serve to link the actions of different departments, synergy must be created with the provisions in Regulation 2847/93/EEC and other measures,

the major problems must be identified so that resources can be concentrated on them and the cost-effectiveness of the various monitoring strategies must be analysed. Various activities have already been started in this area. The Commission now proposes strengthening the identification of major problems and strengthening the rules on allocating monitoring resources between fisheries and types of intervention. These various proposals are listed in the Commission document with a timetable for implementation in 1999 and 2000.