Fisheries products in the Union: responsability, partnership, competitiveness

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Adopting the report by Mr John Joseph McCARTIN (PPE, Irl.) on the future for the market in fisheries products, the European Parliament urges that producer organizations be given funding in recognition of their role in centralizing supply and balancing supply and demand. It calls on the Commission to consider whether the introduction of financial compensation for voluntary reductions of fishing effort could be a good way of compensating ship owners and fishermen for the purpose of better resource management. Parliament takes the view that the possibility of relying on the market forces for the matching of supply and demand, rather than steering prices and intervention, should be investigated. In any event, market policy must be seen in its proper CFP content and any contradictions between its various strands should be eliminated. It also calls for the introduction of storage premium mechanisms to accompany withdrawal aid. It also considers that withdrawal/destruction methods must be reduced and that measures should instead be taken to enhance markets other than the market in fresh fish. It also expresses concern regarding the future of local producers and stresses the importance of small fishing fleets. Noting the advantages of catch plans as an instrument for achieving greater regularity of supply, Parliament calls on the Commission to indicate how it intends to reduce withdrawals. In addition to funding for catch plans, Parliament considers that producer organizations should receive funding to enable them to provide technical assistance to producers (research and measures to promote selective fishing activities, the development of instruments to improve quality on board vessels and of communications equipment). Given the importance of controls, Parliament puts forward the possibility of allowing fisheries products to be landed only at designated ports equipped to carry out the necessary controls. Similarly concerning product quality, Parliament considers that a close link must be established within distribution networks in order to ensure product quality and facilitate certification. It calls on the Commission to ensure that reference prices can be maintained together with safeguard clauses as an emergency response to any serious market disturbances. Measures must also be taken to protect fishermen and the processing industry in the Community from any form of unfair competition particularly from third country suppliers who are able to sell at lower prices since their wages are lower, their working conditions less healthy and the methods used incompatible with Community fisheries resource conservation requirements. In this connection, Parliament opposes a reduction or possible abolition of customs duties on products from third countries and calls for reciprocity should such steps be taken. It urges that, in the context of trade with third countries, reference be made to the problem of catches in international waters by vessels flying flags of convenience. In conclusion Parliament urges that future legislation reforming the common organization of fisheries take account of the five following aspects which are essential for its functioning. - an internal information system allowing closer monitoring of market developments including, if necessary, a list of specifies most sensitive to price fluctuations. - suitable health inspection procedures to ensure the quality and safety of processed products in the Community (one proposal by Parliament is the use of identification tags) and the creation of a Community reference laboratory; - compliance with minimum legal requirements regarding the labelling of fisheries products to ensure that consumers are better informed. - public funding for the promotion of regional fisheries products complying with quality specifications as certified by an independent authority. - support measures for Community production in the light of current market trends where it is necessary to distinguish between the situation with regard to fresh products, frozen products or products intended for processing. Finally, Parliament calls on the Commission to assess regularly the functioning of the market in fisheries products and to identify existing links between marketing measures, resources and monitoring.