Industrial fisheries and the production of fishmeal

2004/2262(INI) - 24/05/2005

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Struan STEVENSON (EPP-ED, UK) on industrial fisheries and the production of fishmeal and fish oil. The report referred to the ban on feeding fishmeal to ruminants imposed by the Commission in 2001 as a precautionary measure introduced by Council Decision 2000/766/EC in the wake of the BSE scare in the EU.

The report welcomed the Commission Communication on improving the monitoring of industrial fishing within the EU and stressed the importance of continuing research into the impact of industrial fisheries on other fisheries and on the wider marine environment with a view to keeping all fishing activities at a sustainable level and rewarding those fisherman using the most environmentally friendly techniques**.**

The committee expressed concern about the problem of discards from marine fisheries, which is estimated in Europe to account for up to 1 million tonnes annually. It called on the Commission to carry out studies and/or pilot projects to investigate the current situation of discards and the possibilities for their use by the industrial fishing sector in such a way as to ensure that this would not lead to over-exploitation of resources. It also suggested that use of discards by the fishmeal and fish oil industry should be examined by the Commission, in close collaboration with Parliament's Fisheries Committee, given the swiftly expanding EU aquaculture sector (fishmeal and fish oil are used as a basic feed stock for farmed fish).

The report stressed the controls in place in the EU to limit the presence of undesirable substances and contaminants in animal feeds, ensuring that fishmeal and fish oil remain well within the limits, and called on the Commission and Member States to monitor closely the application of the existing controls. It stressed the need for the industry to apply the ALARA (As low as reasonably achievable) principle at all times when dealing with dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs and called for scientific analysis to determine acceptable limit values for dioxin in fishmeal for feeding pigs and poultry.

Lastly the committee stressed that there is no scientific evidence to support banning fishmeal on the grounds that it may may transmit BSE or other TSEs and that there are no ethical reasons for prohibiting the use of fishmeal in EU ruminants' diets. It therefore called on the Commission and Council to lift the ban on feeding fishmeal and fish oil to ruminants.