More environmentally-friendly fishing methods

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Seán Ó NEACHTAIN(UEN, IE) in response to the Commission communication on more environmentally-friendly fishing methods. It reminded the Commission that it needed to take a broader view when it came to measures to protect the marine environment and rebuild depleted stocks, in particular by taking account of factors such as the impact of coastal and off-shore pollution, industrial and agricultural effluents, deep-sea dredging and maritime transport. It also stressed that technical measures should be based on scientific fishing research.

MEPs called for a balance to be achieved between socio-economic requirements and environmental sustainability. There should be a mechanism for subsidising or compensating fishermen affected by the negative effects of environmentally-friendly fishing, particularly those in less-developed areas. The report also called for technical methods to improve selectivity and highlighted the need to reduce discards through appropriate technical measures. The Commission was urged to put forward pilot projects on the latter issue.

The committee said that the negative impact of fisheries on marine biodiversity should be limited through the establishment of marine reserves, real-time closures and other measures, at least until habitats have returned to safe biological levels. Among other measures, it also wanted satellite technology to be used to detect unauthorised fishing vessels in closed and protected areas. Lastly, MEPs called for more technical and financial support for Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) to enable them to play a part in developing, implementing and monitoring specific requirements and "locally appropriate" measures.