

Common Fisheries Policy: conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources

2006/0190(CNS) - 13/10/2006 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to amend Regulation 2371/2002/EC on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the Common Fisheries Policy.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Regulation.

CONTENT: in the framework of the political agreement reached on the adoption of the European Fisheries Fund for the period 2007-2013 (see **CNS/2004/0169**), the Council decided to modify the provisions applying to the management of fishing fleet capacity.

The Commission therefore proposes to amend the provisions applying to fleet capacity management which are included in Chapter III of Regulation 2371/2002, and in particular Article 11 on the adjustment of fishing capacity and Article 13 on the entry-exit scheme and overall capacity reduction.

The proposed modifications will assist those vessel-owners who actively seek to improve the working conditions of their crew and the quality of the products they offer to consumers. The second of the two modifications also illustrates the importance which the Commission attaches to reducing fuel consumption in the industry, which is vital for both environmental and economic sustainability. In both cases, the aid permitted is to be granted in line with very strict conditions, which guarantee that it cannot lead to any increase in fishing capacity.

The modifications proposed make two specific changes to the text of the Basic Regulation:

- § **Adjustment of fishing capacity:** previously, all tonnage withdrawn with public aid as of 1 January 2007 was to be permanently withdrawn, with no possibility of its being reintroduced. This would create a new reference level under the 'Entry/Exit' scheme which governs fleet capacity. Aid to improve safety on board, working conditions, hygiene and product quality was to be limited to work on the superstructure of vessels over five years old. It was also conditional on the new capacity not increasing the ability of the vessel concerned to catch fish. The proposed modification allows Member States to create a 'GT bank', whereby up to 4% of the tonnage withdrawn with public aid may be reallocated to vessels of any age (new or existing) to cover these specific types of modernisation work, whether above or below deck.
- § **The 'entry-exit' scheme and overall capacity adjustment:** previously, it was not possible to grant public aid for the replacement or renewal of engines. The proposed modification will allow Member States to provide aid for engine renewal on condition that the new engine has at least 20% less power than the one which it replaces, and that this reduction in power is permanently deducted from the reference level of the fleet (i.e. constitutes a permanent reduction in the capacity of the fleet of the Member State concerned). In order to keep with the existing policy on capacity reduction, the provision that the reduction in power linked to the replacement of the engine with public aid cannot be re-built.

The Commission believes that these two measures, taken together, will lead to further real reductions in the fishing capacity of the European fleet, while encouraging the industry to improve the conditions in which fishers work, and reduce the environmental impact of their activities.