

Conservation of fishery resources: sustainable exploitation in the Mediterranean Sea

2003/0229(CNS) - 21/12/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE: to establish sustainable fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea region by improving the exploitation of aquatic living resources, and protecting sensitive habitats.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Regulation 1967/2006/EC concerning management measures for the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean Sea, amending Regulation 847/93/EC and repealing Regulation 1626/94/EC.

CONTENT: the Council adopted by qualified majority this regulation concerning management measures for the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean Sea. The French delegation abstained.

The Regulation is aimed at establishing sustainable fisheries in the region by improving the exploitation of aquatic living resources, and protecting sensitive habitats whilst taking into account the specific nature of the small-scale Mediterranean coastal fisheries.

The main features of the Regulation are:

- the introduction of 40mm square mesh of bottom trawls and, under certain circumstances, diamond meshed net of 50 mm by 1 July 2008 at the latest;
- the general rule still involves a ban on the use of trawl nets within 1.5 nautical miles. However, trawling activities within the coastal bands (between 0.7 and 1.5 nautical miles) could be authorised under certain conditions (article 12);
- purse seines may be temporarily used until 31 December 2007 at a distance from the coast of less than 300 metres or at a depth less than the 50 metres isobath, but not less than 30 metres isobath.

The Regulation also:

- introduces new technical measures to improve the selectivity of the current 40 mm mesh size for towed nets;
- strengthens the current ban on the use of towed gear in coastal areas;
- limits the overall sizes of certain fishing gear that affects fishing effort;
- introduces a procedure for establishing temporary or permanent closures of areas to specific fishing methods, either in Community or international waters;
- provides for the adoption of management plans combining the use of effort management with technical measures;

- allows EU Member States to regulate, in their territorial waters and under certain conditions, fishing activities that do not have any significant Community dimension or environmental impact, including certain local fisheries currently authorised under Community law.

It is recalled that discussions in the Council on this matter lasted nearly three years until it reached political agreement on the new management measures.

ENTRY INTO FORCE : 29/01/2007.