Common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted a report drawn up by Pedro **GUERREIRO** (GUE/NGL, PT) following the Commission's report to the Council and the European Parliament of 29 September 2006 on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 104/2000 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products.

Members welcomed the Commission's decision to undertake an in-depth evaluation of the existing COM in fisheries and aquaculture products, but regretted the delay of almost a year in submitting the evaluation report. It was necessary, as a matter of urgency, to carry out a far-reaching revision of the COM in fisheries products in order to boost its contribution to guaranteeing incomes in the sector, ensuring market stability, improving the marketing of fisheries products and increasing the value added generated. The Commission was asked submit a communication on the guidelines and a proposal for the revision of the COM in fisheries products, taking account of the proposals set out in the report.

The contribution of the COM in fisheries products to the sector has fallen, especially since the 2000 revision. Members felt that the reversal of this trend, notably by a significant reinforcement of financial resources, must be one of the main objectives of a future revision of the COM in fisheries products, thus enabling it to guarantee Community funding at an adequate level for the fisheries sector's needs. They noted that the existing intervention mechanisms were characterised by a high level of concentration, and called on the Commission to determine whether these mechanisms were the most suitable ones and whether they were sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of the existing structures of production /marketing in the Member States, in order to improve the marketing of fish and ensure a fair income for producers. They also believed it essential to provide increased funding for the COM in fishery products in the forthcoming revision.

The Committee stated that the compensatory payment for tuna should be extended, and also called on the Commission to introduce a compensatory payment for sardines, as Parliament had previously asked.

The report stressed the importance of labelling and of accurate consumer information, with a view to boosting the quality and value added of fisheries products. Commercial designations, notably for imported products, needed to be examined and checked to ensure that consumers were not misled. The Commission was asked to accelerate the process of ecological certification of fishery products, since this was vital if competition between economic agents within and outside the EU were to take place on an equitable footing.

Members emphasised the need for the Structural Funds to contribute to the modernisation and creation of support infrastructures for producers in the context of production/marketing, covering units for refrigeration, processing, transport and marketing/distribution. They also emphasised that the intervention mechanisms must take account of the increased durability of fisheries products, and called for greater support for the improvement of the on-board handling of fish, especially investment in refrigeration and packaging systems and the improvement of on-board health and safety.

The Committee went on to stress the need for reinforcing the mechanisms of support, especially financial, for promoting the concentration of supply, notably via the funding of producers' organisations, and above all for small-scale coastal and traditional fisheries. The operational programmes should ensure - with suitable financial support -the possibility of the producers' organisations marketing their products directly

to boost the value added of fisheries products. And the Regulation should be suitably amended. The Committee also called for an amendment in order to maintain the direct link of aid to the producers' organisations in the Community budget, while also opening up the possibility of complementary aids in support of the operational programmes on the part of the Member States.

The report recommended that the Commission should evaluate the consequences of relations with third countries, and notably the impact of imports on prices at the initial point of sale. It called on the Commission to take a firmer line in its evaluation of external trade relations, especially when activating the WTO safeguard mechanisms so as not to compromise the objectives of Article 33 of the Treaty. It was vital to ensure the application to imported fisheries products sold on the internal market of the same rules and requirements as those applied to Community fisheries products, e.g. in terms of labelling, phytosanitary rules or the prohibition on the Community market of fisheries products under the minimum sizes authorised for Community products.