

Launching a debate on a Community approach towards eco-labelling schemes for fisheries products

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The Council held an exchange of views on the Commission's Communication on a Community approach towards eco-labelling schemes for fisheries, on the basis of a Presidency questionnaire.

1) As regards the type of schemes, most delegations indicated that they were in favour of establishing minimum requirements for voluntary eco-labelling schemes (option 3).

2) Apart from the provisions that eco-labelling schemes should be transparent, market-driven, nondiscriminatory, voluntary, accessible to operators irrespective of their size and economic contexts, based on sound scientific evidence and fully consistent with WTO rules, several delegations mentioned clear and objective criteria concerning fishing practices, together with quality of fish. Such principles should ensure and maintain credible schemes and avoid confusion on the part of consumers.

3) As regards the added value expected from eco-labelling schemes in the overall framework of the

Common Fisheries Policy, the following issues were raised:

- compatibility with international trade;
- clear links with sustainable fisheries;
- better consumer information and confidence;
- improved fisheries practices.

After a final report on the issue, the Commission may present a legislative proposal on the ecolabelling scheme accompanied by a full impact assessment.