

Collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy

2007/0070(CNS) - 18/04/2007 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to substantially revise the current legal framework for the collection of basic fisheries data and use for scientific advice.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Regulation.

BACKGROUND: the systematic collection of reliable basic data on fisheries is a cornerstone of fish stock assessment and scientific advice, and consequently of critical importance for the implementation of the common fisheries policy (CFP). The Commission has carried out a review of the current system of the data collection framework following several years of its implementation. A number of shortcomings were identified which need to be addressed urgently in order to provide the scientific community and fisheries managers with the data they need to take more effective management decisions.

CONTENT: the goal of the Commission's proposal for a new Council Regulation on data collection in the fisheries sector is to develop long-term, well-integrated regional sampling programmes covering biological, economic, environmental and social data. The revised data collection regulation is intended to meet new demands generated by the need to move towards fisheries management (i.e. fleet- and area-based management, rather than fish stock-based) and towards the ecosystem approach to fisheries management. A significant innovation in the proposal is the inclusion of collection of environmental data with the primary purpose of monitoring the impact of fishing activity on the marine ecosystem.

The new data collection system will cover all the process, from the collection of the data in ports or at sea to its use by the end-users (mainly the scientific community and advisory bodies).

Quality control and validation of the data collected is of particular importance. The Commission considers that the Community financial contribution should be made conditional on quality control and compliance with agreed quality standards. Consequently, the Commission has introduced a financial penalty related to non-compliance and poor quality of national programmes.

The improvement of access to data and its use has been also considered of high importance including access to additional sets of data such as Vessel Monitoring Satellite (VMS) data. New rules have been defined to this end, as well as rules on the use of data to protect the interests of the data providers.

The simplification of the procedures are an important goal as National programmes will henceforward be established for a 3-year period; however the possibility should be given to the Member States to include amendments when necessary (to take account of increased international coordination, for example). Multi-annual planning periods will reduce the administrative burden for all parties concerned.