Policy to reduce unwanted by-catches and eliminate discards in European fisheries

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The Council adopted conclusions on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on a policy to reduce unwanted by-catches and eliminate discards in European fisheries. It notes that such an approach could have many implications such as a 'discard ban', regulating what is caught rather than what is landed, and a move to results-based management.

It recalls the importance of effective data collection for providing a sound basis for such a new approach.

The Council reiterates that one of the main avenues for action in this respect is to motivate the industry to improve the selectivity of the fishing gear and to develop more targeted fishing practices.

The Commission, Member States and stakeholders are called upon to:

- to enhance research efforts in gear design, fishing methods and fishing practices in this respect;

- to take an active part in the search for the best solutions and to select fisheries for the first implementation of this approach with the aim of reducing unwanted by-catches and eliminating discards.

When developing measures to reduce unwanted by-catches and to eliminate discards and in this context, the Council stresses the importance of simple and controllable regulations which are economically viable in order to reach long-term compliance by the industry.

Lastly, the Council invites all interested parties, in particular the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, ACFA and RACs, to contribute their views to this important discussion.