Basic information

2004/2199(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
More environmentally-friendly fishing methods **Subject** 3.15 Fisheries policy 3.15.07 Fisheries inspectorate, surveillance of fishing vessels and areas	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
PECH Fisheries	Ó NEACHTAIN Seán (UEN)	22/09/2004

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Agriculture and Fisheries	2592	2004-06-21

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
21/06/2004	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
21/06/2004	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2004)0438	Summary
18/11/2004	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
31/01/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
01/02/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0019/2006	
14/03/2006	Debate in Parliament		
15/03/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0091/2006	Summary

15/03/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
15/03/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2004/2199(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	PECH/6/23837

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Amendments tabled in committee		PE367.672	14/12/2005	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0019/2006	01/02/2006	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0091/2006	15/03/2006	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2004)0438	21/06/2004	Summary

More environmentally-friendly fishing methods

2004/2199(INI) - 21/06/2004 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to propose ways in which the Community can further promote the use of environmentally-friendly fishing methods, particularly through technical conservation measures.

CONTENT : Environmentally-friendly fishing activities contribute to promoting sustainable economic and social conditions in the fishing sector. Fishermen need healthy fish stocks in a balanced environment. Any upset in this balance leads to the cycle of "boom and bust", which is unsustainable in economic terms. Within an integrated management approach there are three main objectives related to

conservation and the development of environmentally-friendly fishing:

- to reduce fishing effort to sustainable levels and keep it there : this is the single most important challenge for the CFP. It has been estimated that, on average, 20 million tonnes are discarded each year from marine capture fisheries worldwide. This corresponds to about 23% of the annual catches. There are no estimates available on the total amount of discards in Community waters. However, the total amount of fishery discards in the North Sea in 1990 was around 260, 000 tonnes of roundfish, 300, 000 tonnes of flatfish, 15, 000 tonnes of rays, skates and dogfish, and 150, 000 tonnes of bottom invertebrates. These discards correspond to about 22% of the total landings from the North Sea and are in line with the worldwide figures. Obviously the problem is not restricted to the North Sea. In other fishing areas of the Community the problem of discarding is probably of a similar order of magnitude. In spite of recent decisions of the Council fishing mortalities for most species are substantially higher than needed in order to take optimal yields from the stocks. For some demersal stocks fishing mortalities have recently been so high that the stocks are under threat of collapse; for many more, fishing mortality rates are judged to be unsustainable in the longer term.

- to optimise catches of target species and minimise unwanted catches. The aim is to make fishing operations as selective as possible, by retaining target specimens of the right species and size with minimum impact on other species or juvenile fish of the target species.

-to minimise the impact of fishing on habitats. The use of some types of fishing gears can damage or even destroy sensitive marine habitats. Gear specifications and area restrictions on the use of certain gears may be necessary to reduce this risk.

Methods of achieving each of these objectives are briefly examined in the communication.

The paper states that a fresh impetus needs to be given to the promotion of more environmentally-friendly

fishing within the CFP. This calls for action under the following headings:

-a more decentralised approach to the development of more environmentally friendly fishing methods;

-greater involvement of the fishing sector in the regulatory process;

-sharing and developing knowledge at Community level;

-simplification of Community rules;

-changing fishermen's behaviour through the development of incentives;

-Further development of impact assessments on the ecological, economic and social effects of environmentally friendly fishing methods, particularly as regards their long-term effects.

The Commission intends to follow up on the ideas outlined above according to the following timetable.

-Review of current technical measures, 2004-2005:

-Reduction of discards, 2004-2006:

-Research, 2005-2006:

-Proposals for new financial incentives, 2004-2005: under the revised fisheries structural fund that will operate from 2007 a high priority should be given to schemes promoting environmentally-friendly fishing, including the development and use of more selective gears and compensation for short term losses for vessels participating in trials of more environmentally-friendly fishing methods. The Commission will include the relevant proposals in the context of the proposal on the future FIFG.

More environmentally-friendly fishing methods

2004/2199(INI) - 15/03/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Seán Ó **NEACHTAIN** (UEN, IE) on more environmentally-friendly fishing methods. It reminded the Commission that it should take a more wide-ranging view of measures to protect the marine environment and rebuild depleted stocks, in particular by considering coastal and offshore pollution, industrial and agricultural effluents, deep-sea dredging and maritime transport, so as to complement current management methods. Technical measures should be based on scientific fishing research.

Parliament stated that, while ecological considerations are of major concern, future fisheries management policies must not be used to further penalise economically and socially vital fishing operations. It was essential to achieve a balance between socio-economic exigencies and environmental sustainability, while underlining the need to activate a mechanism for subsidising or compensating fishermen who are affected by the negative effects of environmentally-friendly fishing. Parliament called for the adoption of technical methods to improve selectivity and, therefore, the possibility of catching fish at the right size, in order to maintain high productivity. Only by ensuring that fish spawn and develop for a minimum specific period can the satisfactory reproduction of fish be made possible.

Any significantly negative impact of fishing on marine biodiversity must be limited through the establishment of marine reserves, real-time area closures and other appropriate and balanced management measures. Parliament expressed particular concern over the issue of ghost fishing and urged the Commission to take action to combat the issue, including close monitoring of the effectiveness of any provisions that are adopted at EU level.

It went on to highlight the need to reduce discards, which produce detrimental biological effects as well as having negative economic impacts, through the adoption of closed seasons, prohibited zones and mesh size regulations. Parliament asked the Commission to bring forward proposals for pilot projects aimed at reducing discards, and suggested that the option of discard bans accompanied by appropriate incentives for fishermen be considered.

Parliament urged the Commission to promote actively the adoption of an FAO International Plan of Action on by-catch reduction. The Commission must avoid conflicting objectives and superfluous regulations and avail itself of this opportunity to simplify the overall regulatory system. It should consider the application of environmentally-friendly fishing technical measures as a complement to existing effort limitations in relation to stock recovery plans. In this context, it was absolutely essential to develop and implement the satellite technology needed to detect the presence of unauthorised fishing vessels in closed areas and in Marine Protected Areas, in order to guarantee effective protection of fish, their critical habitat and other biodiversity.

More environmentally-friendly fishing methods

2004/2199(INI) - 21/06/2004

The Council adopted the following conclusions in which it welcomes the Commission's Communication on promoting more environmentally-friendly fishing methods: the role of technical conservation measures. It recognises that making fishing activities more environmentally friendly will contribute to a sustainable fishing industry.

Moreover, the Council believes that improving research and developing technology in partnership with the fishing industry can contribute to developing ways of fishing that will better meet the challenge of rebuilding stocks and maintaining sustainability. It confirms its commitment to dialogue with stakeholders and highlights the key role of Regional Advisory Councils, and recognises that the active involvement of stakeholders, especially the fishing industry, in the development of environmentally friendly fishing measures, can enhance compliance and effectiveness.

In addition, it underlines the importance of encouraging fishermen to move towards more environmentally friendly fishing methods, and in that context calls for an evaluation by the Commission, by end 2005, of the potential for the provision of financial and non-financial incentives.

It is considered that environmentally friendly fishing methods should be promoted equally throughout the Community. In this context, the existing technical measures for the Atlantic and North Sea should, in 2004-2005, be evaluated with a view to their simplification in accordance with the fundamental requirement of ensuring the effectiveness and enforceability of such measures and considering the need for a localised approach.

Priority in research should be given to extending research to the application of environmentally friendly fishing gear technology; improving the understanding of the structure and dynamics of marine ecosystems to aid the development of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management; developing low-impact, species-selective fishing gears and fishing techniques that prevent undesired effects on habitats and on non-target species; the use of closed areas or Marine Protected Areas as a means of protecting sensitive habitats and non-target species; developing appropriate environmental impact assessment techniques for new fishing and aquaculture practices.

Taking into account the above, the Commission is invited to evaluate, by end 2005, the potential for the provision of financial and non-financial incentives in order to encourage fishermen to move towards more environmentally friendly fishing methods; to submit, as soon as practicable, after consultation with stakeholders including the relevant Regional Advisory Councils, a simplified Proposal for technical conservation measures for the Atlantic and North Sea; to give a high priority to schemes promoting and evaluating environmentally-friendly fishing, including, where appropriate, the development and use of more selective gears, compensation for short-term losses for vessels participating in trials of more environmentally-friendly fishing methods, and the training and education of fishermen; when introducing significant new proposals on environmentally friendly fishing

methods, to carry out, as appropriate and on the basis of available information, an assessment of possible economic and social impacts covering an evaluation of both short and long-term effects and consider temporary remedial measures that may be required; to develop a pilot project to address the problem of ghost fishing in Community waters which will include a retrieval system to remove lost gears, gear adjustments that lessen the impact of lost gears and methods to reduce the losses of gears; to report to the Council and to the European Parliament during 2007 on the implementation and impact of the actions set out in these conclusions.