Basic information

2006/2224(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Implementing sustainability in EU fisheries through maximum sustainable yield **Subject** 3.15.04 Management of fisheries, fisheries, fishing grounds 3.15.07 Fisheries inspectorate, surveillance of fishing vessels and areas	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
PECH Fisheries	FRAGA ESTÉVEZ Carmen (PPE-DE)	27/09/2006

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	2763	2006-11-20

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries	BORG Joe

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
04/07/2006	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2006)0360	Summary
28/09/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
20/11/2006	Debate in Council		
17/07/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
23/07/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0298/2007	
05/09/2007	Debate in Parliament		

06/09/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0382/2007	Summary
06/09/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
06/09/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2006/2224(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/6/40577

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE378.735	07/06/2007	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE390.768	21/06/2007	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0298/2007	23/07/2007	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0382/2007	06/09/2007	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2006)0360	04/07/2006	Summary

Implementing sustainability in EU fisheries through maximum sustainable yield

2006/2224(INI) - 06/09/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Carmen **FRAGA ESTEVEZ** (EPP-ED, ES) on the implementation of sustainable fishing in the EU on the basis of maximum sustainable yield (MSY). The report began by stating that the greater part of the Community's fisheries resources having significant commercial value are being overfished or are almost in that situation. Parliament felt that the Community system of conservation and management based on total allowable catch (TAC) and quotas has not led to the rational exploitation of stocks - on the contrary, the rigidity of the system and its dependence on political rather than biological guidelines have proved obstacles to rational management, making controls difficult and encouraging discards. The report welcomed both the Commission’s recognition that the existing fisheries management policy has failed and its objective of creating a new management model making it possible to ensure stock recovery, adapt the fishing effort to fisheries' real circumstances, and improve the reliability and stability of the fishing fleet. Parliament stressed the need for all future measures altering the current Community system of conservation and management to be taken with the full involvement of fishermen and to be based on scientific fisheries research.

It was important to increase the appropriations earmarked for scientific fisheries research in the Seventh Framework Programme for research so that that programme could contribute to the development of theoretical fisheries' management models, their application, improved analysis of the state of stocks, natural effects and other inter-species relationships, and improved fishing gear. Parliament noted the Commission's intention to achieve these objectives by making MSY the yardstick for fisheries management, but warned that, for a large majority of scientists, the **traditional MSY model had been superseded** by new cutting-edge approaches which consider the ecosystem in its entirety and incorporate, inter alia, aspects relating to the environment and species interrelation, and economic and social factors. New methods have been developed, based on computer simulations of fisheries, which emulate the MSY approach while not taking it as an explicit target, and take due account of uncertainties, environmental factors, and possible interactions between species, which could, in principle, be extended to take into account specified social and economic factors.

Parliament cautioned that it would be difficult to apply the MSY model to multispecies fisheries (i.e. the majority of those in the EU), since this could lead to overfishing or underfishing depending on the species chosen. It was, therefore, obliged to deplore the deficient analysis and inadequate solutions offered by the Commission's communication, as well as the absence of an in-depth evaluation of what applying an MSY model would actually mean, in terms of its shortcomings, the particularities of its application, and the potential risks of any errors in the model. It also regretted the lack of any analysis of the evolution of the MSY concept and the potential advantages of the different approaches. Accordingly, the time was not ripe to propose the introduction of an MSY system, and a deeper analysis was needed of the problems, with a view to deciding, with all political courage, the most suitable measures for introducing the changes that are most needed to the present CFP.

Parliament was concerned that, in the context of the ambitious objective of changing the approach of the CFP conservation and management system, advantage was not being taken of the opportunity to provide a clear definition of the system of access to resources, and that the TAC/quota system and the fishing effort system continued to overlap. The Commission must seize this opportunity to devise a system of access to resources that puts the accent on sustainability, discourages discards, simplifies the technical measures, eliminates discrimination and excessive competition for stocks, introduces the necessary flexibility, and boosts the sector's competitiveness. Any change to the management system must necessarily include financially acceptable compensation mechanisms, and this will require an assessment of the social and economic impact of the final proposal. The Commission must develop these measures at the same time as the new management system and, if possible, to integrate the two.

Parliament called in sum, for the phasing-in of a system which would, ultimately, result in a fisheries policy that was ever more in line with the biological capacity of stocks in recovery so as to ensure that the sustainability of the Community's fisheries became more of a given than a cause for concern and was perceived as such wherever Community fisheries' products are to be found in the world, which would provide the fleet with the necessary stability and allow for sound and ever more long-term planning. This would, ultimately, result in a stable system of access to resources in which TACs and quotas need only be modified in specific circumstances and using semi-automatic mechanisms, instead of being altered every year on grounds that are not purely scientific.

Implementing sustainability in EU fisheries through maximum sustainable yield

2006/2224(INI) - 04/07/2006 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: the presentation of a Communication on implementing sustainability in EU fisheries through maximum sustainable yield (MSY).

CONTENT: Maximum Sustainable Yield, or MSY, is the highest yield that may be taken from a fish stock without lowering its productive potential for future years. The Community and its Member States agreed in Johannesburg 2002 to maintain or restore stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield, with the aim of achieving these goals for depleted stocks as soon as possible and certainly no later than 2015.

The purpose of this Communication is to set a new political orientation concerning EU fisheries management and to present a new policy approach to implementing a MSY yield. The longer-term management outlook will be based on a system that obtains the best from the productive potential of living marine resources, without compromising its use for future generations. This approach is fully consistent with the Common Fisheries Policy. This trend is also being developed in the context of the gradual implementation of the ecosystem based approach to management, which constitutes a further objective of the CFP.

The best way to achieve MSY is to exploit stocks at a moderate fishing rate. If too much fishing takes place, the stock concerned will decrease resulting in lower catches. Most fish stocks in the EU are now over fished. It has been estimated that around 81% of fish stock in EU waters are over-fished. Scientists suggest that current rates of over fishing varies on average from two to five times the level that would provide the highest catch. This over fishing has led to lower catches, lower incomes for fishermen, low profitability in many fisheries and high catches of young fish – many of which are discarded by being simply thrown back into the sea.

As well as preventing vulnerable stocks from collapsing, this approach will allow the development of larger fish stocks of all species, thus reducing costs and increasing profits for the fishing industry, as the amount of effort required per tonne of fish caught decreases. The greater availability of mature fish in larger fish stocks will also reduce the level of discarding immature fish.

The Commission warns that attempting to manage a fish stock towards a target size would need large changes in the industry’s activity in order to counterbalance environmental changes in the short term. During the rebuilding phase employment may decrease. Member States will have to decide how to manage this transition. They will also have to choose between developing smaller but more efficient and profitable industries on the one hand or keeping higher levels of fisheries employment on the other. The Union’s role is to provide the management framework for phasing out over fishing. Under either approach, change can be managed more easily if it occurs gradually.

The long-term plans proposed by the Commission are as follows:

- Further consultation with fishermen, consumers and other stakeholders.
- Seeking impartial scientific advice.
- Taking account of the economic, social and environmental impact of any proposed plans.
- Defining target rates for fishing and setting the means to reach such a target on a gradual basis. In other words not seek to manage biomass levels.
- Diminishing any harmful impacts of fishing on the ecosystem.
- Including technical measures to ensure that fishing of all stocks is compatible with their respective targets.
- Allowing some stock to be exploited more lightly than at MSY level in order to achieve some gain in productivity in other species.
- Establishing targets irrespective of the biological condition of the stock when the plans enter into force. In the event that a resource is more depleted than others more stringent conservation measures may be required.
- Specifying appropriate guidelines in cases where scientific advice is unable to quantify the action needed to reach MSY.
- The periodic review of the plans and their targets.

To conclude, the Commission is committed to carrying out impact assessments for all of the MSY long-term plans. Economic, social and environmental impacts of the various options available will be analysed, thus enabling the Commission and Member States to clearly identify the necessary trade-offs between short-term losses and long-term gains. The Commission invites the Regional Advisory Council and the Member States to join it in developing a more sustainable approach to the management of European fisheries, which can put an end to over fishing and help restore the European fishing industry and which helps put EU fishing back on a path of long term viability.