Basic information

2008/2178(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
The CFP and the eco-system approach to fisheries management **Subject** 3.15 Fisheries policy 3.15.01 Fish stocks, conservation of fishery resources 3.15.04 Management of fisheries, fisheries, fishing grounds	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
PECH Fisheries	GUERREIRO Pedro (GUE/NGL)	28/05/2008

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

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries	BORG Joe

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
11/04/2008	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2008)0187	Summary
04/09/2008	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
02/12/2008	Vote in committee		Summary
08/12/2008	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0485/2008	
12/01/2009	Debate in Parliament		
13/01/2009	Decision by Parliament	T6-0009/2009	Summary
13/01/2009	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/01/2009	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2008/2178(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55-p4 Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	PECH/6/63536

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE414.313	15/10/2008	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE415.338	14/11/2008	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0485/2008	08/12/2008	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0009/2009	13/01/2009	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2008)0187	11/04/2008	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	SEC(2008)0449	11/04/2008	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2009)1067	30/04/2009	

The CFP and the eco-system approach to fisheries management

2008/2178(INI) - 11/04/2008 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to set out the role of fisheries management in implementing an ecosystem approach to marine management.

BACKGROUND: the main impact of fisheries on the marine ecosystem is the killing of marine animals. Fisheries may also impact habitats when fishing gear is in contact with the bottom and thus affecting the bottom substrate and organisms living in or on the bottom. The fishing pressure on four fifths of European fish stocks is currently above sustainable targets. Article 6 of the consolidated version of the Treaty establishing the European Community calls for an obligation to integrate environmental protection requirements into the Community policies such as the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The Council Regulation on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the CFPstates that one of the operational objectives of the CFP is the progressive implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. An ecosystem approach is also included as an overarching objective in various international agreements that Member States have signed, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the declaration of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in 2002.

An ecosystem approach to managing the seas cannot and should not be implemented in a specific sector alone, but must be cross-sectoral. The Integrated Maritime Policyconstitutes the overall framework for integrated action in the maritime field, and its environmental pillar, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, constitutes the general basis for implementing an ecosystem approach to the marine environment. The Habitats Directive, with its requirement to establish networks of protected areas in the marine domain, provides some important tools for an ecosystem approach. Various initiatives that contribute to that objective have already been taken under the CFP, but have not been seen as part of an overall strategy for implementation. The Commission will continue to develop measures to reduce or eliminate the ecological impact of fisheries whenever new knowledge

of such impacts becomes available. The main instruments to act on the overall fishing pressure are long-term management plans building on the WSSD requirement to rebuild fish stocks to 'maximum sustainable yield' (MSY) levels. The reduction of fishing pressure to MSY levels is supplemented by a policy to reduce and eventually eliminate unwanted by-catch (the discards policy). This will be implemented gradually on a fisheries-by-fisheries basis through the new discards policy.

CONTENT: the present communication forms part of the **first wave of actions to be implemented under the new integrated Maritime Policy.**

The key objectives are to minimise the impacts of fishing on the wider marine environment by reducing the overall level of fishing pressure, and to ensure that fisheries measures are used fully to support the **cross-sectoral approach** defined by the EU's Marine Strategy and Habitats Directives. This should ensure protection for vulnerable habitats and sensitive species, prevent disruptions to the food chain, safeguard the integrity of key ecosystem processes, and thus create a healthy marine environment which will positively support a thriving fishing industry, alongside other sustainable human activities.

Specific objectives need to be defined regarding ecosystem services (i.e. the social and economic benefits from fisheries) and meaningful ecological boundaries for fisheries impacts (i.e. keeping populations within viable levels, maintaining biological diversity and keeping impacts on the structure, processes and functions of the ecosystem at acceptable levels).

The **task** of fisheries management within an ecosystem approach in a EU context is thus to:

1. keep direct and indirect impacts of fisheries on marine ecosystems within bounds in relation to healthy marine ecosystems and ecologically viable fish populations by including all existing knowledge about the interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems in decisions under the CFP;
2. ensure that actions taken in fisheries are consistent with and supportive of actions taken under the cross-sectoral Marine Strategy and Habitats Directive.

The integrated approach through the Maritime Policy and its environmental pillar, the Marine Strategy, will fully benefit sustainable fisheries by ensuring integrative management of all human, environmental and economic interactions in the maritime field. The benefits to fisheries of an ecosystem approach to marine management are extensive. Fishing is probably the one maritime sector which is most directly dependent on healthy marine ecosystems, and is thus also the sector which gains most from integrated protection of these ecosystems. An ecosystem approach to marine management will address the concerns, often voiced by the fishing industry, that many human activities impact the marine ecosystems and the fish stocks in them negatively and that all these impacts - not just fisheries - need to be managed in order to protect the marine ecosystems and fish stocks. An integrated ecosystem approach will do what fisheries management cannot do alone: ensure that marine ecosystems recover to and are maintained in a healthy state whereby the basis for the future productivity of fish stocks is secured.

The Commission calls for the **protection of sensitive marine habitats and sensitive species**.

Lastly, the CFP will support policies aimed at an ecosystem approach to marine management:

- in the short and medium term steps to reduce overall fishing pressure on marine ecosystems will continue, including implementation of the MSY approach through longterm management plans and in annual or multiannual proposals on catch limitations;
- legislation will be developed to reduce unwanted by-catches through the discard policy and technical measures will be revised to include considerations of habitats damage and by-catch;
- for specific groups of sensitive species plans of action are being developed where a toolbox of instruments is used to provide specific protection. A plan of action to protect sharks and elasmobranchs will be published in 2008 and a plan of action to protect seabirds will be published in 2009;
- simplified technical measures through the new regulation proposed in 2008 will trigger improvements in the selectivity of fishing gear;
- the condition of fish populations will be an element in determining good environmental status under the Marine Strategy, and CFP instruments will be implemented to achieve the goals relating to fish populations and impacts of fisheries on habitats and sensitive species;
- a first set of selected indicators will serve as a practical basis for fisheries managers in the implementation of an ecosystem approach. This will be further developed and completed and the supporting data will be collected under the revised Data Collection Regulation to come into force from 2009;
- CFP instruments will be used to ensure appropriate management of fishing activities within areas protected by Community legislation (e.g. Natura 2000 sites, or other protected areas including under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive);
- the Community will support initiatives to promote an ecosystem approach in RFMOs, in the UN framework and other international fora and, where appropriate, in bilateral agreements;
- an ecosystem approach will furthermore be seen as the guiding principle for decisions under the CFP where an incremental approach will be taken to address issues of excessive fishing pressure on populations and ecosystems, minimising impacts on sensitive habitats and species and preventing distortions of ecosystem structure and functioning;
- research on the ecosystem approach will remain a priority in the FP 7 programme and research activities on all its aspects will continue to be promoted in order to improve knowledge and fill gaps in the description of marine ecosystems, thus feeding into the adaptive process of its implementation. Furthermore, scientists and managers need to intensify their dialogue so that the management tools can be improved continuously;
- Member States are invited to use the funding possibilities of the EFF in order to achieve progress in the implementation of an ecosystem approach by promoting measures such as the improvement of knowledge and fisheries management, training of fishers in low impact fishing practices, and development of practices and technologies with low impact on the environment.

The Commission will continue to develop such measures to reduce or eliminate the ecological impact of fisheries whenever new knowledge of such impacts becomes available. The Commission has to this end requested the ICES and the STECF to provide advice on any new knowledge on the interaction between fisheries and the ecosystem. Collection of data to derive indicators on the ecosystem effects of fisheries will be included in Member 'States' data collection programmes as from 2009.

The CFP and the eco-system approach to fisheries management

2008/2178(INI) - 11/04/2008 - Document attached to the procedure

This paper consists of the Commission's staff working document concerning the role of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in implementing an ecosystem approach to marine management.

Two recent research projects on the development of indicators to support the CFP (Anon, 2006, 2007) and two STECF SGRN meetings (SGRN 05-03 and SGRN 06-01) have focused on the development of indicators that might underpin the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries.

This document synthesises and builds on the outputs of these projects and meetings to propose a preliminary set of indicators and to describe the data requirements needed to operationalise them. The document also identifies other indicators that will need to be introduced and the research and data requirements associated with their introduction.

In these projects it was decided that two types of indicators were needed to support the environmental integration process:

1. indicators of the state of the marine environment;

2. indicators of the pressure that affects state.

The state indicators should cover a broad range of ecosystem features and the pressure indicators should cover the most important aspects of how fishing impacts the ecosystem.

For the current preliminary set of indicators those indicators for which there was sufficient scientific justification were preferred, but in case there was no agreed "best" indicator for a particular ecosystem state or fishing impact a pragmatic choice was made for the indicators they deemed most informative. A prerequisite for selection was that the indicators could be quantified based on existing or proposed monitoring programmes, if needed after a slight modification or expansion.

A summary table distinguishes operational indicators (tabulated as 'operational immediately') from those that required additional data or research before they could be made operational.

The section relating to operational indicators provides precise specifications for indicators that are considered to be operational or can be made operational if small changes are made to existing data collection procedures. A table summarises these specifications and they are more comprehensively described in supporting appendices relating to each indicator. The table and appendices provide a recommended name for the indicator, define the indicator, list the data required for calculation of indicator values, describe how the indicator should be calculated, describe the expected precision of supporting data, describe the existing availability of data collected under the DCR and list **any issues that need to be considered by the EC before the indicator is introduced**.

The CFP and the eco-system approach to fisheries management

2008/2178(INI) - 13/01/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 557 votes to 48 with 12 abstentions, a resolution on the CFP and the ecosystem approach to fisheries management in response to the Commission's communication entitled 'The role of the CFP in implementing an ecosystem approach to marine management'.

The own-initiative report had been tabled for consideration by Pedro **GUERREIRO** (GUE/NGL, PT) on behalf of the Committee on Fisheries.

Sustainable management of fisheries: Parliament welcomes the Commission's communication and underlines that this initiative represents a contribution to guaranteeing exploitation of fishery resources so as to create sustainable conditions from the social, environmental and economic points of view. In this context, it calls on the Commission to include in its proposal methods and tools to allow for the mutual exchange of information and data and a continuous learning process among all stakeholders, in order to enable all of them to further develop the ecosystem approach with the objective of showing and proving the benefit for all.

Integrated approach: any and every fisheries policy should take account of a multitude of dimensions - social, environmental and economic - that require an integrated and balanced approach that is incompatible with a vision that creates a hierarchy among them according to an a priori definition of priorities. The report underlines that the application of an ecosystem approach to marine management necessarily imposes a multidisciplinary and intersectoral action encompassing the various measures and policies that have an impact on marine ecosystems - going far beyond and upstream of policies adopted in the area of fisheries - without which it will not be possible to achieve the objectives of this approach. MEPs reaffirm that a policy for fisheries must start from the **principle of interdependence** between the welfare of fishing communities and the sustainability of ecosystems of which they are an integral part. They emphasise, in this context, that it is necessary to recognise the specific character and importance of small-scale inshore fishing and artisanal fishing.

Studies and scientific research: Parliament reiterates the need to study and adopt measures in relation to a multitude of factors that have a profound impact on the sustainability of marine ecosystems and the state of fishery resources. It stresses that scientific fisheries research is an essential tool for fisheries management that is indispensable for identifying the factors that influence the development of fishery resources, with a view to carrying out a quantitative assessment and developing models that make it possible to forecast their development, but also for improving fishing gear, vessels and working and safety conditions for fishermen, in conjunction with their knowledge and experience.

Parliament proposes that scientific studies be carried out capable of identifying the redistribution of marine species exploited by fisheries because of the impact of the recent change in the physical and chemical parameters of waters due to climate change. It considers that considers that these studies should serve as a basis for reformulating a number of existing stock recovery plans, for example the recovery plan for hake and langoustine off the Iberian Peninsula. The resolution draws attention to the need to develop aquaculture research projects in order to replenish stocks of the most endangered species.

Access to the territorial zone: MEPs consider it vital to maintain the access derogation to the zone falling within territorial waters at at least 12 miles, as a way of fostering the sustainability of coastal marine ecosystems, traditional fishing activities and the survival of fishing communities and they call for this derogation to be permanent in nature.

Measure fishing effort: MEPs consider it insufficient to measure fishing effort in a uniform way, without taking account of the diversity of fleets and gear. They consider that controlling fishing effort should take account of the various species, the various fishing gear and the assessed impact of catches on stocks of each species. They also stress that there are significant differences between the various marine areas and their respective fishery resources, and also between the various fleets and fishing gear used and their impact on ecosystems, which requires fisheries management measures, such as technical modifications to nets, the closure of certain fishing areas and the reduction of fishing effort, that are diversified, specific and adapted to each case. The resolution stresses the need to apply mechanisms to subsidise or compensate fishermen affected by the economic and social repercussions of multiannual recovery and management plans and measures to protect ecosystems.

The **European Commission** is invited to:

- include the fisheries sector in a genuine intersectoral plan for the preservation of the marine environment;
- reconsider the present system of total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas as the principal instrument for managing marine resources and its usefulness given the present fishing restrictions;
- study and propose more open control and supervision systems in respect of fisheries landings, illegal catches and the discarding at sea of by-catches;
- study the various instruments for managing fishery resources, whilst ensuring that the current instruments are not altered until an alternative becomes available that will guarantee the more appropriate exploitation of fishery resources;
- propose measures making imported fishery products placed on the internal market subject to the same requirements as those applying to fishery products in the various Member States;
- develop specific policy instruments to encourage fishermen to take all available measures to reduce their by-catches as far as possible;
- promote more environmentally sound fishing practices through the use of more selective fishing techniques which are able to reduce by-catches and fuel consumption during fishing periods;
- speed up the process of the eco-certification of fish as much as possible, in order to promote cleaner and more environmentally-friendly fisheries.

Parliament underlines that the **participation of the fisheries sector** in the definition, implementation and evaluation of different measures in the framework of the CFP is fundamental for an accurate assessment of the state of fisheries resources by the competent scientific bodies.

Lastly, the report urges **greater decentralisation of the CFP** to allow greater involvement of fishermen, their representative organisations and fishing communities in the CFP and fisheries management, while ensuring that minimum standards are to be met that are consistent and coherent across the Community.