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REFORM OF THE EU'S COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

Report Categories:

Fishery Products

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Report Highlights:

On April 22, 2009, the European Commission adopted a "Green Paper" on the future of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy. The Green Paper analyzes the weaknesses of the current policy and launches a public consultation as a first step towards a radical reform.

General Information:

REFORM OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY (CFP)

Green Paper

On April 22, 2009, the European Commission adopted a "Green Paper on the future of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy". The paper analyzes the weaknesses of the current policy but offers no ready-made solutions. Instead it raises a number of open questions and invites the EU's fishing and seafood communities, scientists and other interested parties to provide feedback on how to improve the policy. This public consultation is meant to be a first step towards a radical reform and will run

until December 31, 2009.

CURRENT CFP

Shortcomings of the current CFP

In its Green Paper, the Commission admits that the EU's fisheries are trapped in a vicious circle as a result of poor management and bad decision-making. The EU has subsidized fishing capacity and helped modernize the fleet. As a result, there are too many fishing vessels for the number of fish that can safely be removed from the seas. With fewer fish left to catch, most EU fishing fleets are not making money which fuels an incentive to overfish to make up for the loss of earnings. On top of direct aid from the European Fisheries Fund and similar national aid schemes, the EU's fishing industry benefits from a number of indirect subsidies such as the overall exemption from fuel taxes. In several Member States, estimates indicate that the cost of fishing to the national budget exceeds the total value of the catches which means that the public has to pay twice for its fish: once at the shop and once again through taxes.

The last reform of the CFP dates back to 2002 and has failed on a number of fronts. The Green Paper identifies overfishing as a result of fleet overcapacity as one of the major structural problems: 88% of European fish stocks are overfished and 30% are outside safe biological levels. Catches are so low that the EU has to rely on imports for two-thirds of its fish consumption. Efforts to reduce the size of the fleet have been largely neutralized by the development of new more powerful technologies which increase the harvesting capacity of modern fishing boats.

In addition to overcapacity, four other structural shortcomings of the current CFP are being identified:

- Imprecise policy objectives resulting in insufficient guidance for decisions and implementation;
- A decision-making system that encourages a short-term focus;
- Framework legislation that does not give sufficient responsibility to the industry;
- Lack of political will to ensure compliance and poor compliance by the industry.

Decision-Making

The current decision-making procedure of the CFP does not distinguish basic principles from implementation: all decisions are taken at the highest political level, i.e. the Council. The result is a focus on short-term measures at the expense of the sustainability of the fishing industry. The CFP is regulated through very detailed Council regulations with numerous derogations and exceptions granted under continuous political and economic pressure.

FUTURE CFP

Goals

Under framework regulation 2371/2002 establishing the current CFP, the Commission is only required to review the CFP by the end of 2012. Because of the deplorable state of EU fish stocks, the Commission is convinced that the reform process should already be started. To tackle the many failings of the current CFP, the Commission is aiming for a whole-scale, fundamental reform instead of yet another piecemeal, incremental reform.

To achieve a radical reform, the Green Paper sets the following priorities:

- Reduce the size of the EU fishing fleet to adapt the fleet capacity to available resources;
- Refocus the CFP's main objective on maintaining healthy, sustainable and exploitable stocks;
- Establish clear and binding basic principles and objectives at EU level (co-decision procedure), delegation of implementation decisions from the Council to the Commission (Comitology procedure), the Member States and /or regional authorities;
- Shift responsibilities for resource management and implementation of the CFP to the industry, i.e. industry would have to demonstrate that it operates responsibly in return for access to fishing.

The Green Paper also suggests a review of the fishing quota system and a possible need for differentiated fleet management regimes: one for large-scale fleets with a focus on capacity adjustment and economic efficiency and another for small-scale fleets in coastal communities with a focus on social objectives.

Timeline

- April 2009 - Publication of the Green Paper on the reform of the CFP
- December 31, 2009 – Closure of the public consultation
- First half of 2010 – Publication of the results of the consultation
- 2011 – Preparation of an impact assessment report and proposal for a new framework regulation
- 2012 – Adoption of the proposal
- 2013 – New CFP enters into force

LINKS

- [Green Paper on the reform of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy \(DG MARE – April 2009\)](#)
- [Special Report on the control, inspection and sanction systems relating to the rules on conservation of Community fisheries resources together with the Commission's replies \(European Court of Auditors – November 2007\)](#)
- [EU Fisheries Policy \(GAIN report E48029 – April 2008\)](#)
- [EU Fisheries - Marketing \(GAIN report E48031 – April 2008\)](#)
- [U.S. Mission to the EU – Foreign Agricultural Service](#)