

PODCAST on deep-sea fisheries in the North-East Atlantic

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VOICE 1

You're listening to the European Parliamentary Research Service podcast on deep-sea fisheries in the North-East Atlantic.

VOICE 2

A long lasting debate between the Parliament and Member States on new rules to ensure the sustainability of deep-sea fishing activities could be over next week if the Parliament's plenary finally endorses them. What will this mean for fishermen, and for the fish species populating the depths of our oceans? Stay with us!

JINGLE

VOICE 1

Living in the darkness, hundreds and even thousands of metres below the surface waters, numerous deep-sea fish species and ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to human activities, especially to overfishing and the impact of different types of fishing gear.

VOICE 2

Despite deep-sea fisheries in the North-East Atlantic already being subject to a permit system, limits on capacity, specific controls and technical conservation measures, the European Commission proposed in 2012 to put a definitive end to the use of bottom trawls and bottom-set nets when fishing for deep-sea species.

VOICE 1

What followed, could be expected... a cheering crowd of NGOs and an outraged fishing sector welcomed and demolished the proposal in equal measures. And that was the starting point for long discussions between MEPs and Member States, both feeling somewhere in the middle...

VOICE 2

Having both rejected the idea of a radical ban, Parliament and Council finally reached a compromise in June 2016. So what did they agree on?

VOICE 1

Well, one of the main points is to ban bottom trawling at depths below 800 metres, in order to protect the most vulnerable species and ecosystems. And certain areas will benefit from additional protection measures. There will also be an increase in on-board controls on vessels using bottom trawls and nets,.

VOICE 2

In addition to specific authorisation and control measures, deep-sea fishing vessels would only be able to fish in those areas where they have done so between 2009 to 2011. And the same reference period would be used to set capacity limits for these vessels, with the aim of ensuring the footprint of deep-sea fishing activity does not expand.

VOICE 1

The Commission, the Council and the Parliament's Committee on Fisheries have already endorsed the new rules, believing they achieve a good balance between the commercial exploitation of certain deep water fish populations and the conservation of deep marine ecosystems. But what will the Parliament's plenary say?

VOICE 2

We'll be following the vote next week in Strasbourg.

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