



# Unsustainable fishing: Fisheries Committee backs sanctions deal with Council

Committees: Committee on Fisheries

**A deal on new rules empowering the European Commission to ban EU imports of fish from overfished stocks and related species was unanimously endorsed by the Fisheries Committee on Wednesday. It was struck by MEPs and Council negotiators in response to massive overfishing of mackerel by Iceland and the Faroe Islands.**

MEPs insisted in the negotiations that to ensure the long-term sustainability of fish stocks of common interest to the EU and third countries, the EU should take a hard line on third countries that fail to live up to their responsibilities.

"I strongly believe that the agreed text will deliver both workable and effective trade sanctions, which will act as a real deterrent to countries who engage in unsustainable fishing practices now and in the future", said rapporteur and head of the Parliament's negotiating team Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE, IE).

"The mackerel dispute in the North East Atlantic is the moving force behind these new measures. However, I am still hopeful that the measures may never be used against Iceland and the Faroe Islands and I call on all four coastal states to immediately resume talks with a view to resolving this long running dispute", he added.

## Wider ban on fish imports

The agreed text empowers Commission to restrict EU imports from countries that allow unsustainable fishing of fish and fishery products from stocks of common interest (i.e. fish stocks available to the fleets of both EU and third countries whose management requires cooperation between them) and of "associated species."

To make the sanctions tougher whilst complying with WTO rules, MEPs insisted on a much broader definition of "associated species" than originally proposed by the Commission. It will now cover all fish from the same ecosystem as the stock of common interest that prey upon it, are preyed on by it, compete with it for food and living space or occur in the same fishing area.

Should these sanctions prove ineffective, the Commission may adopt additional measures such as restricting the use of EU ports by vessels flying the flag of a non-compliant country or by vessels carrying fish from the overfished stock to the EU, banning exports of vessels, fishing equipment and supplies from the EU to the third country and also banning sales of vessels from the the third country to the EU.

## One month's leeway before imposing sanctions

The country concerned will be given a reasonable opportunity to respond before the sanctions are enforced and will be given no more than one month, as originally requested by the Fisheries Committee, to remedy matters.

The sanctions would be preceded by an evaluation of their possible environmental, trade, economic and social impacts.

# Press release

## Next Steps

The agreement, approved unanimously in the Fisheries Committee by 22 votes, still needs to be endorsed by Parliament as a whole and the Council. The vote in plenary is scheduled for September with the Council to follow soon after.

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*Committee on Fisheries*

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