



2017/2052(INI)

23.11.2017

OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on Budgets

on the next MFF: preparing Parliament's position on the MFF post-2020
(2017/2052(INI))

Rapporteur: Clara Eugenia Aguilera García

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on Budgets, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Highlights the fact that, in view of the socioeconomic importance of fisheries activity in the coastal regions of the EU, keeping a specific, substantial, independent and accessible fisheries fund is necessary in order to implement the common fisheries policy (CFP), to ensure the sustainability of European aquaculture and fisheries, to introduce a selectivity plan so as to prevent discards, to reduce the financial burden of the landing obligation and facilitate its fulfilment, and to achieve the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) objective; stresses, moreover, that such a fund must also help the fisheries sector carry out a restructuring process that has been rendered necessary for a variety of reasons, and that this process may include measures such as the application of the landing obligation and the replacement of non-polluting engines;
2. Stresses that the CFP is an exclusive EU competence and that the financial funds made available to the EU for this policy should therefore be sufficient in order to achieve the demanding goals laid down in the Basic Regulation; recalls, however, that the current European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) accounts for only 0.6 % of the total 2014-2020 MFF; emphasises that EMFF financial funds should be maintained at at least the same level in view of the socioeconomic importance of fisheries in the coastal regions of the European Union;
3. Urges the Commission to propose a larger financial allocation for the next EMFF programming period, higher funding percentages, and different rules on co-financing and the allowances paid to fishermen during the closed season, in order to provide means of meeting the needs of small-scale non-industrial fisheries, which are often hampered by administrative delays caused by Member States;
4. Notes that support measures for the temporary cessation of fishing activities should be maintained in certain cases; notes, furthermore, that they should be targeted at those fleets that are forced to cease their activities owing to an external cause, such as the closure of a fishery; calls, moreover, for support measures for the permanent cessation of fishing activities to be maintained under the same conditions that currently apply, together with, where necessary, an economic audit of the repercussions of the dismantling of vessels on the fleet's equilibrium and on real fishing capacity;
5. Notes that Brexit must not be used as an excuse to reduce future funding; takes the view that the EU should find a way to ensure that a possible decline in the post-2020 MFF does not automatically translate into lower allocations to the EMFF, as it has been cut under the 2018 budget; underlines the fact that support must be specially prioritised for small-scale coastal fisheries; warns, furthermore, that the risk of the impact of Brexit on fisheries necessitates a solid budget heading, in view of the already diminished budget allocated to the sector in the EU;
6. Proposes that financing be enhanced by means of other financial instruments in addition to non-repayable aid; proposes, moreover, access to a loan scheme allowing greater financing possibilities for the sector so as to enhance the economic development of enterprises and to continue working to mitigate the environmental impact of extractive

activities;

7. Emphasises the need to endow the EMFF with a sufficient level of funding to enable investment in the sustainability, selectivity and competitiveness of fishing fleets;
8. Stresses that the level of implementation of the 2014-2020 EMFF three years after its adoption on 15 May 2014 remains unsatisfactory, as by September 2017 only 1.4 % of the EUR 6.4 billion fund had been used; hopes that the level of implementation of the EMFF and other EU structural and investment programmes will eventually improve; highlights that the low level of implementation is largely due to the delay in adopting the rules for this European fund following the reform of the CFP and, in many cases, the lack of clarity in the administrative procedures regarding the aid measures under the fund; advocates, therefore, greater precision and simplification in this regard; calls for greater flexibility in allocating appropriations and, in particular, for data-related funding not used by Member States to be transferable to research institutes and, for control purposes, to the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA);
9. Stresses, in addition, that costs in connection with the landing obligation should be covered by the EMFF, which presupposes that the fund has been simplified and is sufficiently well endowed;
10. Is of the opinion that steps need to be taken in order to ensure that the post-2020 EU fisheries fund is implemented in a swifter, more flexible and less bureaucratic manner, without the delays that continue to plague the 2014-2020 EMFF, in order to try to avoid a repetition of the current situation;
11. Calls on the Commission to revise the investment clause so as to enable regional and national investment co-financed under the EMFF to be excluded from the national deficit calculation used for the purposes of the European Semester;
12. Supports the view widely held by the industry and Member State administrations that the current financing rules are too complicated and could be made less cumbersome overall, and for projects that involve low levels of funding in particular; points out that, as the report on the omnibus regulation to simplify the Financial Regulation did not cover the EMFF, the EMFF Regulation must be simplified;
13. Highlights the importance of fisheries control and scientific data collection control, those activities being pillars of the CFP; takes the view that they must continue to receive EU funding and that Member States must step up their efforts to make use of the resources concerned;
14. Is of the opinion that, for a new EU fisheries fund, proportionality rules must be introduced so that small projects bear a lesser bureaucratic burden than large projects; suggests, in this connection, that there should be a sort of ‘de minimis’ rule for low-level financial support under a new EU fisheries fund;
15. Stresses that, even though the EU remains a net seafood importer, European fisheries continue to be both a very important source of healthy food for the European market and a guarantee of food autonomy; underlines the fact that the EU should continue to prevent market entry for third-country products that do not comply with food-related,

environmental and social standards deriving from International Labour Organisation Convention No 188, or with provisions to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and that these requirements must be incorporated into free trade agreements; stresses that overall, imports of sub-standard fishery products that do not meet the legal requirements should be restricted and a level playing field for fishery products created; underlines the need to strengthen and harmonise controls and inspections of third-country imports in order to prevent products that do not meet the legal requirements from entering the EU market;

16. Stresses that European added value in fisheries management has to date been largely associated with a reduction in the capacity of fishing fleets, sound resource management, product quality and product processing; is of the opinion that in the post-2020 MFF a balance between the fisheries resources available and fleet capacity will have to be taken into account; highlights that other elements with an unquantifiable added value should also be considered, such as the role played by fisheries in communities highly dependent on the sector in terms of direct and indirect employment and local growth; underlines, therefore, the importance of maintaining an independent fisheries fund in order to support these communities and guarantee greater territorial cohesion;
17. Stresses that coastal communities that depend on artisanal fisheries should be a priority in the future EMFF given the importance of artisanal fisheries in such localities in terms of the environment and employment, this sector accounting for 80 % of the European fleet, and for 40 % of employment in the primary sector as a whole, in addition to the jobs created indirectly in local distribution, the manufacture of nets or ship repair; stresses, moreover, that coastal communities that depend on artisanal fisheries should be a priority in the future EMFF so as to ensure growth and provide income and employment; notes that this was the message of the CFP reform and that it was heeded when the new policy was formulated;
18. Stresses the importance of the social and economic dimension of fishing for local communities and some maritime and coastal regions; recognises the need to maintain enough financial provisions to enable coastal, artisanal and small-scale fleet sectors to obtain funding;
19. Highlights the fact that traditional coastal fishing is a major source of attractiveness for tourists and, as such, also has a considerable indirect impact on other sectors of the economy;
20. Highlights the fact that European coastal and island communities are highly dependent on the fisheries sector, and will remain so, both in connection with seafood product processing, tourism and catering and – upstream – as regards shipyard, maintenance and repair work, safety and new technologies; stresses, therefore, that community-led local development (CLLD) and fisheries local action groups (FLAGs) should remain a focus and their funding must be increased, as they serve to enable local fisheries communities to address these challenges at grass-roots level, using the knowledge of local stakeholders to tackle local issues; underlines, in this regard, the importance of keeping the financing structure of fishermen's producer organisations intact and of making contributions to representative professional bodies;
21. Believes that control measures are a fundamental and essential component of the CFP for

ensuring a level playing field, and that sufficient economic and other resources need to be dedicated to control activities, both by the Commission and the Member States; considers, therefore, that the future fund must ensure sufficient support in this regard;

22. Stresses the need to maintain the financing structure for the two collective support instruments for the fisheries sector, local action groups and producer organisations in the fisheries sector, in view of the fact that they constitute core elements for the development of fisheries in regions that depend on this activity;
23. Considers that the EMFF should continue to prioritise financial support to coastal and artisanal fisheries given the socioeconomic role they play in regions that are highly dependent on fisheries, but without jeopardising the financial support to other fleets necessary for the supply of healthy foodstuffs to EU markets;
24. Considers it necessary, with a view to the upcoming reform of the MFF, to launch a debate on the possible funding of measures to modernise certain fleets that are obsolete and that pose safety risks at sea, as is the case with some fleets in the outermost regions, provided this does not lead to an increase in fishing capacity;
25. Stresses the increasingly important role of the so-called ‘blue economy’; is of the opinion that the priorities of the Blue Growth Strategy should be aligned with those of the EMFF, with a specific budget heading being assigned accordingly, i.e. environmental sustainability, resource efficiency, competitiveness, the creation of high-quality employment opportunities, academic and vocational training, and territorial cohesion; calls on the Commission to reassess the financial allocations for Blue Growth in the MFF and stresses that a fisheries fund should play an important role in this regard;
26. Welcomes the desire to boost the aquaculture sector under the European strategy for the ‘blue economy’ – to which 20 % of the EMFF is allocated – but regrets the administrative obstacles to the development of aquaculture; calls, therefore, for thought to be given to ways of reducing red tape in the Member States;
27. Highlights the need for support measures in order to facilitate social dialogue and to use the EMFF to help train skilled professionals for the maritime and fisheries sector; stresses the importance of modernising the maritime and fisheries sector and notes the role that innovation plays in this; calls, therefore, for investment in technological development and innovation to be enhanced, in particular in view of the necessity of improving selectivity in fishing gears in the context of the landing obligation and the fulfilment of the MSY criteria, and in view of the need to ensure vessel efficiency, and crew comfort and safety; calls, moreover, for enterprises in other sectors that develop proposals for the fisheries sector to be given access to the funds and for greater financing possibilities so as to encourage improvements in the economic and environmental performance of the sector;
28. Stresses the importance of promoting and investing in the diversification of fisheries by developing complementary activities;
29. Recalls the need to improve the gathering of scientific data and ensure better access to it, and to foster cooperation and the exchange of scientific data between the maritime and fisheries sector on the one hand and the scientific community, NGOs and other entities on the other, as well as to work on new scientific research and to develop new fisheries

sectors, such as aquaponics;

30. Reiterates the importance of drawing on rigorous and independent scientific opinions when assessing the state of fishery resources, so that management decisions can be taken to enable maximum sustainable yields (MSY) to be achieved; is of the opinion that sufficient funding should be provided for in the post-2020 EMFF for the purposes of scientific data collection;
31. Stresses the importance of maintaining at least the same level of financing for the EFCA in respect of its control, inspection and surveillance tasks in the fisheries sector; demands that the role of the EFCA be reinforced in the future in order to enable the objectives of the CFP to be achieved, and in order for the EFCA to consolidate its activities concerning the governance of fishing fleets and the supervision of monitoring procedures; calls on the Commission to increase the funding of the EFCA.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	21.11.2017
Result of final vote	+ : 21 - : 2 0 : 2
Members present for the final vote	Marco Affronte, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Alain Cadec, David Coburn, Richard Corbett, Diane Dodds, Linnéa Engström, Mike Hookem, Ian Hudghton, Carlos Iturgaiz, Werner Kuhn, António Marinho e Pinto, Gabriel Mato, Norica Nicolai, Liadh Ní Riada, Ulrike Rodust, Remo Sernagiotto, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Isabelle Thomas, Ruža Tomašić, Jarosław Wałęsa
Substitutes present for the final vote	France Jamet, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Francisco José Millán Mon, Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

21	+
ALDE	António Marinho e Pinto, Norica Nicolai
ECR	Ruža Tomašić, Remo Sernagiotto
ENF	France Jamet
PPE	Alain Cadec, Carlos Iturgaiz, Francisco José Millán Mon, Gabriel Mato, Jarosław Wałęsa, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Werner Kuhn
S&D	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Isabelle Thomas, Renata Briano, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Richard Corbett, Ulrike Rodust
VERTS/ALE	Ian Hudghton, Linnéa Engström, Marco Affronte

2	-
EFDD	David Coburn, Mike Hookem

2	0
GUE/NGL	Liadh Ní Riada, Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention