



## A new framework for the Common Fisheries Policy

The EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has still failed to make fisheries sustainable. In September 2012, the EP gave its views on the main policy issues proposed in a CFP reform package. The EP has now to vote its position on a new 'CFP Regulation' before negotiating with the Council.

### Background

Despite [progressive improvements](#) after the 2002 review of the general [fisheries conservation policy](#), the [Commission](#) considers that the CFP urgently needs further reform. The [CFP has failed](#) to ensure sustainable exploitation of marine life, as fishing activities are still far beyond what marine ecosystems can sustain. 80% of Mediterranean stocks and 47% of Atlantic stocks remain overfished, because of fleet over-capacity, excessive catch possibilities or low compliance. The Commission also considers that discards (part of the catch which is thrown back, often dead, at sea) remain unacceptably high. Several EU fleets have low profitability, and some fishing-dependent coastal communities are in decline. EU fisheries management is also seen as lacking flexibility and as insufficiently adapted to regional conditions.

### The basics of a new 'CFP Regulation'

The proposal for a new 'CFP Regulation' ([2011/0195\(COD\)](#)) sets principles for the design and governance of EU fisheries policy. This covers management of fishing activities at sea (e.g. access to waters, measures for conservation of fisheries resources, including through multiannual plans, rules on fishing allocations and management of fishing capacity). It also foresees the basic requirements for scientific support and control systems. The new CFP framework also sets the fundamentals for fishing activities outside EU waters. Moreover, it provides for promotion of EU aquaculture, links to the Common Market Organisation and establishing conditionality for EU financial assistance. In terms of fisheries conservation policy (presently under Regulation [No 2371/2002](#)), some major reform proposals aim at:

- reaching [maximum sustainable yield](#) (MSY, the largest catch of a fish stock that can be taken over an indefinite period without harming it) for all fisheries by 2015;
- addressing fleet overcapacity by introducing mandatory [transferable fishing concessions](#) (TFCs) of fishing opportunities (e.g. quotas) for all vessels over 12m or using trawls, and leaving the possibility to Member States to extend such systems to [small-scale](#) fisheries;
- shifting away from the present regulatory-led discard practice (i.e. the prohibition of landing fish caught under minimum size or in excess of quotas) and introducing a [discard ban](#) for several dozen commercial stocks; and
- introducing possibilities for some decentralisation, notably by allowing [regionalised](#) approaches for conservation measures (based on essentials set at EU level) and by consolidating the Advisory Councils (i.e. stakeholders' platforms established mainly at sea-basin level, such as the [Baltic Sea](#)).

### European Parliament

On 12 September 2012, the EP agreed its outline positions on [CFP reforms](#), in particular on the Commission's overall approach ([T7-0336/2012](#)). For fisheries conservation, the EP supported the MSY principle taking into account some difficulties in implementation. But it opposed a system of mandatory fishing-rights based management (TFCs). Believing that a gradual elimination of discards should be fishery-based, the EP stressed the need for stakeholder involvement and careful practical design. It also supported some forms of regionalisation to bring detailed decisions on management measures closer to the fishing grounds, but emphasised the role of the EU's co-legislators in adopting multiannual management plans.

The EP has now to vote legislative amendments to the proposed 'CFP Regulation' ([rapporteur](#) Ulrike Rodust, S&D, Germany). For its part, the [Council](#) reached political agreement on a [general approach](#) on the proposed Regulation in June 2012.