Research for PECH Committee - The Management of Fishing Fleets in Outermost Regions

The Committee on Fisheries (PECH) has requested scientific input contributing to its work on an Own Initiative Report on The Management of Fishing Fleets in Outermost Regions (2016/2016 INI). This Briefing summarizes the main elements of a study prepared for PECH Committee with the same title. Outermost Regions (ORs) of the European Union are affected by handicaps deserving implementation of specific measures. The commissioned study aims at establishing the extent to which fleet management rules adopted under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) take sufficiently account of the specificities of the fishing sector in Outermost Regions, and at identifying relevant measures that could support the development of the sector in these regions. ORs fishing fleets are mostly composed of small-scale vessels targeting inshore and offshore resources. Over the past decade, modernisation of ORs fishing fleets has been unevenly achieved across regions. Under the current CFP, ORs fleets are subject to the same management measures than those applied to all Union fleets. Nevertheless, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) takes into account ORs specific handicaps through increased intensity of public aid and a specific compensation scheme of additional costs. Several options are discussed to support the ORs fleet modernisation, including a derogatory regime for fleet management and a revision of capacity ceilings.

1. INTRODUCTION

As established by Article 349 of the TFEU, Outermost Regions deserve specific attention. The following nine territories of Portugal (PT), Spain (ES) and France (FR) are regarded as Outermost Regions of the Union: Azores and Madeira (PT), Canary Islands (ES) and French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion and Saint-Martin (FR). The current Basic Regulation of the CFP establishes fleet management measures at EU level but may not address the specificities of Outermost Regions in sufficient details. Feedback from stakeholders in Outermost Regions indicates that fleet management rules and associated financing conditions should be more flexible to meet specific needs arising from the specific handicaps recognised by the TFEU including “structural social and economic situation [...] which is compounded by their remoteness, insularity, small size, difficult topography and climate, economic dependence on a few products, the permanence and combination of which severely restrain their development” (Article 349 of the TFEU).

2. THE SITUATION OF FISHING FLEETS IN OUTERMOST REGIONS

In Outermost Regions (ORs), small-scale fishing vessels represent the overwhelming majority of the 4 507 fishing vessels registered in ORs regions (see Figure 1). The percentage varies between 84% in Azores and 100% in both Martinique and Guadeloupe. Small-scale fishing fleets in the ORs include mostly open-decked vessels built locally on traditional designs (e.g. yoles or tapouilles in French ORs) and powered by outboard engines. ORs small-scale fleets use a number of different passive gears including hooks and line, pots or nets.
3. Past and Current Fleet Management Measures Applicable to ORs

In terms of fishing capacity expressed in kW, Figure 2 indicates that fishing vessels of less than 12 m represent less than 60% of the total fleet power in each ORs due to the presence of large scale vessels, except for Martinique and Guadeloupe where no such vessels are registered. Data for Mayotte are provisional as the small-scale fleet is still under the process of being registered.

Over the 2005-2016 period, the number of fishing vessels decreased in all ORs (see Figure 3). By Member State, the highest decrease in the number of vessels are found for Portugal (-40%) and for Spain (-31%), but are somewhat more limited for France (-15%). However, the aggregate engine power of the fishing fleets increased in the ORs of France (+26%) and Portugal (+15%) as a consequence of increases of the average engine power of the vessels registered. In Canary Islands, aggregate fishing power decreased by 31% (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Comparisons of development of fishing vessels registered in the Outermost Regions in numbers and in aggregate engine power, 2005 and 2015

The average age of small-scale fishing vessels varies dramatically according to the region concerned, thus suggesting different needs in relation to fleet modernisation (Figure 4). By comparison with the Mainland situation, small-scale vessels in the ORs of France (18 years old vs 29 years old) and the ORs of the Azores (25 years old vs 34 years old) are newer than their Mainland counterparts. In Canary Islands and Madeira small-scale vessels are older than in Mainland, exceeding 40 years old on average.

Figure 4: Average age of fishing vessels of less than 12 m based in Outermost Regions (ORs) (plain bars) and comparison with average age of vessels of less than 12 m based in the respective Mainlands (ML - shaded bars) situation as of 01/01/2016

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1 For 2016, fleet data for Mayotte (France) have not been included to have similar comparison basis.
Figure 5 displays a comparison of the fishing capacities of the different fleet segments based in ORs with regard to the capacity ceilings set in the CFP Basic Regulation (EU) 1380/2013. The administrative situation of ORs fleets early 2016 indicates that all fleet segments in Portuguese ORs as well as the Guadeloupe small-scale segment are nearing the respective capacity ceilings. Conversely, Martinique small-scale vessels and French Guiana small-scale vessels and shrimp trawlers, as well as Canary Islands large scale trawlers, are at less than 70 % of their respective limits. Other segments in the Canary Islands are in-between these two situations.

ORs fishing fleets target different resources, including inshore resources by the small scale fleets and offshore resources like tunas, small pelagics or deep sea species by both the small-scale and large scale fleets. The development of some fleet segments in the ORs over the past few years has been hampered by various externalities in relation with the status of the resources targeted (Portuguese fleet segments, French Guiana shrimp trawlers) or in relation with loss of access to historical fishing grounds in the case of Canary Islands large scale trawlers.

ORs have implemented strategies to lower the fishing pressure on inshore stocks for which potential is perceived as limited, by developing exploitation of offshore resources available. This is particular the case in French ORs with the development of exploitation of highly migratory species around networks of anchored FADs as far as 40 miles offshore. For Portuguese ORs, developments included exploitation of deep-sea stocks around the seamounts present in the fishing zones.

4. PAST AND CURRENT FLEET MANAGEMENT MEASURES APPLICABLE TO ORs

Under the current CFP, ORs fishing fleets have no derogation to the general fleet management rules prescribing in essence that entry of new capacity must be compensated by prior withdrawal of equivalent capacity, and that fishing capacities withdrawn with public aids shall not be replaced.

Whereas under the previous CFP, ORs fleets were granted derogations exempting Member States from the compulsory withdrawal of capacities in case of entry until end of 2011, within the capacity limits authorised. ORs were also granted authorisation to use Union aids for vessels construction until end 2006 while prohibition of construction aid applied as from end 2004 for Mainland fleets.

Note 1: AZO: Azores, CAN: Canary Islands, GUA: Guadeloupe, GUY: French Guiana, MAD: Madeira, MAR: Martinique, MAY: Mayotte, RUN: Réunion / SSF: Small-Scale Fleet, PEL: pelagic species, SHR: shrimps, DEM: demersal, TC: third countries waters and EU: EU waters. Note 2: Data for Mayotte segment of vessels < 10 m have not been included as France is exempted from registering these vessels until 2021. Data for Mayotte for segment including mechanised longliners < 23 m have not been included as well as no corresponding entries have been found in the fleet register as of 01/01/2016. Note 3: Capacity ceiling considered in this figure are those of Annex II of Regulation (EU) 1380/2013. They may have decreased since, if vessels have been withdrawn with public aid.
According to the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (2015), assessment of the current balance between ORs fleet capacity and the fishing opportunities available by Member States was not conclusive, mainly in the absence of biological data on stocks exploited. Neither France nor Portugal identified ORs fleet segments as structurally imbalanced in their National fleet reports. Spain would have identified a segment in Canary Islands as structurally imbalanced.

The current CFP includes several measures of interest to ORs fishing fleets including exclusive access rights in the 100 miles zone around the territories, fishing opportunities under Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) negotiated with third countries in North and West Africa and in the Indian Ocean, or the creation of a dedicated Outermost Regions Advisory Council which did not exist under the previous CFP and are still to be established under the new CFP.

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) takes into account the specificities of ORs by authorising higher intensity of public aid compared to the Mainland (+35 %), increasing maximum aid intensity level to 85 % in the general case. This is higher than aid intensity considered for ORs under the previous EFF. In opposition to this under the current EMFF no exceptions are made with regards aid intensity for engine replacement which is uniformly capped at 30 %, irrespective of the Union region concerned.

But the EMFF includes the continuation of the compensation scheme aiming at offsetting additional costs borne by ORs operators in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors as a result of the specific handicaps of the regions. By comparison with respective measures in the past, the EMFF offers a broader scope of possible technical and geographical interventions. As a consequence the annual maximum financial envelope almost doubled from EUR 15.6 million to EUR 27.5 (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member State</th>
<th>EMFF Regulation 2014–20 in EUR (a)</th>
<th>Regulation (EC) 791/2007 2007–13 in EUR (b)</th>
<th>(a) / (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>8 700 000</td>
<td>5 844 076</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>12 350 000</td>
<td>4 868 700</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>6 450 000</td>
<td>4 868 700</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>27 500 000</td>
<td>15 581 476</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In addition the Commission authorises Member States to take into account the specificities of ORs when designing State Aids schemes for the fisheries sector. This opportunity has been taken up for vessel running costs in Spain and Portugal ORs, and for investments in vessels and implementation of fishermen compensation schemes for long-lasting natural disasters in French ORs.

5. THE WAY FORWARD

Due to the global economic crisis and to other externalities, ORs could not take full advantage of past derogations to Union fleet management rules. Some ORs claim that fleet modernisation remains a stringent need to be addressed.

A new derogation to fleet management rules established under the CFP could support further development of those ORs fleet segments that are currently not nearing established capacity limits. However, for those fleet segments close to their respective capacity ceilings (in Azores, Madeira and Guadeloupe in particular), a derogation on similar grounds that the 2004–2011 derogation will have no effects.

In the longer term, it could be envisaged to increase certain fleet segment capacities if it can be scientifically demonstrated that exploitation rate of certain fisheries resources can be increased without compromising the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) objective. In complement, reorganisation or even suppression of ORs fleet segmentation could provide development possibilities for some ORs segments without the need to increase capacity limits.

Another proposal is to increase aid intensity for operations concerning engine replacement in the ORs by granting the 35 percentage increase on top of the 30% aid intensity set by EMFF. Under current
EMFF rules, aid intensity for such operations applies uniformly, irrespective of the Union region considered.

While re-introduction of **Union aids for construction** would be a leverage to modernise ORs fleets given the specific handicaps of the regions, the decision is sensible and has to be coherent with recent Union initiatives in the **WTO** context aiming at prohibiting harmful subsidies in the fisheries sector which according to the Commission, encompass aids for construction or increase of fishing vessels capacities.

**REFERENCES**

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

- CFP  Common Fisheries Policy
- EFF  European Fisheries Fund
- EMFF  European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
- MSY  Maximum Sustainable Yield
- OR  Outermost Region
- PECH  Committee on Fisheries of the European Parliament
- STECF  Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries
- TFEU  Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
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