



European Parliament secures sustainable fisheries policy

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Measures to stop overfishing and ban discards, Parliament's key common fisheries policy (CFP) reform aims, have been safeguarded in a deal struck by Parliament and Council negotiators on Thursday. The deal should allow a more sustainable common fisheries policy to take effect on time, at the start of 2014.

"Today is an important day for the Common Fisheries Policy, but crucially, it is an important day for all the European Institutions. For the first time, the Fisheries Policy is reformed under codecision. This shows the importance of all institutions, who proved to be capable of working together to reach an agreement. We had to work hard and follow a journey which sometimes was very challenging. We have all shown a strong political drive to overcome many obstacles, and shown generosity in order to move forward and make real progress", said Gabriel Mato Adrover (EPP, ES), chair of the Fisheries Committee.

"We have achieved a complete overhaul of the common fisheries policy, right on time for it to enter into force from 2014. We were successful in defending a meaningful discard ban and the introduction of sustainable fishing quotas. After decades with a policy that has been a terrible failure, we now have a reform that will repair the damage done and in the end lead to more fish in the water and more jobs in the industry", said CFP rapporteur Ulrike Rodust (S&D, DE).

Fishing sustainably

Given that 80% of Mediterranean fish stocks and 47% of Atlantic ones are overfished in the EU, strict rules are needed to restore fish stocks in the coming years.

Member states will have to set sustainable fishing quotas from 2015, and only in clearly defined, exceptional cases by 2020. Fishermen will have to respect the "maximum sustainable yield" (MSY), i.e. catch no more than a given stock can reproduce in a given year. The aim is to restore and maintain fish stocks above levels that can produce the MSY.

Banning discards

Discards - fish thrown back, usually because they are of an unwanted species or size - account for almost a quarter of total EU catches. Most of the discarded species die.

To end this wasteful practice, which is currently not forbidden, fishing vessels will have to land at least 95% of all catches in accordance with a schedule of specific dates for different fisheries, starting gradually from 2015. The European Parliament has fought and managed to keep this figure as high as possible, just short of a total ban.

Landed catches of fish that are undersized, for example, would be restricted to uses other than human consumption. Member states must ensure that fishing vessels comply with the discard ban.

New rules on fishing outside the EU

Press release

EU vessels will henceforth have access only to surplus fish in third countries' territorial waters. New measures will help to prevent "flag hopping" in line with the European Parliament's November 2012 resolution on the external dimension of the common fisheries policy. Parliament also ensured that new control measures will be overseen by a new compliance committee.

Quota criteria

Parliament also ensured that when member states allocate fishing quotas, they must take account of environmental, social and economic criteria, and may give incentives to fishing vessels that fish sustainably with selective fishing gear or use fishing techniques with reduced environmental impact.

Sanctions against oversized fleets

The capacity of fleets throughout Europe has to be adjusted to match the fishing opportunities allocated to them, as a further measure to prevent overfishing. If member states fail to assess and eliminate surplus capacity, EU subsidies may be suspended or even withheld.

Multiannual plans: long-term planning to replace yearly quota-haggling

The reform will rely on multiannual fish stock management plans to ensure that fishing stays sustainable. Taking a longer term approach should improve market predictability, which in turn should help the industry to invest better and plan ahead. Multiannual plans will be based on more reliable and accurate scientific data, which EU member states will be obliged to collect and make available.

Next steps

Member states representatives still have to validate the political agreement reached this week, and several technical details remain to be sorted out. The Council has to formally adopt the new CFP reform text. Then the European Parliament, following a recommendation from the Committee on Fisheries, must approve the deal in 2nd reading before it can be published in the Official Journal of the EU.

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