

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

2007/2112(INI)

11.10.2007

OPINION

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

for the Committee on Fisheries

on a policy to reduce unwanted by-catches and eliminate discards in European fisheries
(2007/2112(INI))

Draftsman: Chris Davies

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Fisheries, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the Commission's proposal as the first attempt to get to the heart of the by-catch problem but stresses the urgency of developing regulations to eliminate this environmentally unsustainable and immoral practice which in extreme cases can account for up to 90% of all fish caught;
2. Stresses that an EU policy needs to effectively tackle all the different types of by-catch (including, but not exclusively, invertebrates, corals, marine mammals, birds and turtles) and should promote environmentally friendly catching methods which neither compromise marine biodiversity nor cause unnecessary injury to other living organisms;
3. Considers that, because fisheries vary greatly in nature, it is of the greatest importance to tailor fisheries legislation so as to significantly reduce the quantity of fish discarded in each specific fishery; considers, however, that the by-catch quotas should never exceed 25% and proposes that a fishing ban should automatically come into effect if one species of fish exceeds that by-catch quota;
4. Although by-catch as a general practice is unjustifiable, recognises that some species are known to have a high survival rate on release and that derogations to a fishing ban for these as well as endangered and protected species should be authorised providing that adequate scientific justification of their survival potential is given;
5. Stresses the importance of an effective monitoring system once a ban on discarding fish is introduced. Gaps in knowledge concerning the quantity of fish discarded impair the quality of estimates of stock size and fish mortality, and make it harder to evaluate measures seeking to prevent the catching of fish which do not meet size criteria. Calls on the Commission to continue to develop new monitoring techniques, and draws attention in this connection to the possibilities opened up by electronic log books;
6. Calls on the Commission to take into account the available scientific opinion on the Baltic cod stocks, where a huge percentage of catches are registered as by-catches;
7. Calls on the Commission to adopt its long overdue proposed strategy on sharks;
8. Calls on the Commission to take into account the available scientific opinion on albatrosses which, notably in long line fisheries, are currently being killed at a rate that is putting them in danger of extinction;
9. Insists that priority should be given to tackling the worst offenders, those fisheries with the highest and most widespread discards, for example beam trawlers, Nephrops trawls and whitefish trawls;
10. Suggests that discard practices that result from the incompatibility of technical rules on minimum landing size (MLS) and mesh sizes be looked at with priority as these are

relatively easy to rectify;

11. Recommends that by-catch quotas be incorporated into Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and that all landed by-catch be counted against quota allocations; should a fishery exceed its by-catch quota it would risk closure, just as an excess of juveniles is suggested to trigger real-time closures; this quota should then be gradually reduced to provide further incentives to improve gear selectivity;
12. Highlights that, aside from a gradual ban, positive incentives need to be created to encourage uptake of available Best Available Technology in terms of selectivity, gear shifts, (real-) time closure and changing fishing grounds;
13. Stresses that, if the provisions introduced are to be effective, due and proper use must be made of scientific fishing research relating to EU fisheries and account must be taken of the specific features of individual fisheries in connection with location, marine species diversity and long-established fishing practices;
14. Advises that non-selective gears should be actively discouraged through taxes and fees, while destructive gears, such as those used in a number of bottom trawl fisheries, should be banned;
15. Draws particular attention in this connection to the use of the beam trawl, which can in some cases account for over 60% of the by-catch, and consequently calls for an immediate ban on beam-trawl fishing;
16. Insists that one of the main reasons for discarding, high-grading, should be made illegal and the devices that enable it, such as onboard sorting grids in pelagic fisheries, should be banned;
17. Calls on the Commission to pay particular attention to how measures can be "translated" to apply to EU fleets fishing in the waters of third countries and asks that the use of the most selective fishing gears be made a pre-requisite for fishing under fishing partnership agreements (FPAs);
18. Calls on the Commission, in accordance with Parliament's resolution of 10 July 2007 on industrial fisheries and the production of fishmeal and fish oil (2004/2262(INI))¹, to carry out studies and/or pilot projects to investigate the possibilities for the industrial fishing sector to use discards without this under any circumstances leading to an over-exploitation of resources.

¹ *Texts Adopted*, TA(2007)0327.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

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| Date adopted | 3.10.2007 |
| Result of final vote | + : 36 - : 0 0 : 1 |
| Members present for the final vote | Adamos Adamou, Johannes Blokland, John Bowis, Frieda Brepoels, Hiltrud Breyer, Dorette Corbey, Chris Davies, Avril Doyle, Anne Ferreira, Matthias Groote, Satu Hassi, Jens Holm, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Urszula Krupa, Marios Matsakis, Linda McAvan, Roberto Musacchio, Riitta Myller, Péter Olajos, Miroslav Ouzký, Vladko Todorov Panayotov, Vittorio Prodi, Frédérique Ries, Guido Sacconi, Karin Scheele, Richard Seeber, Bogusław Sonik, María Sornosa Martínez, Antonios Trakatellis, Anja Weisgerber, Glenis Willmott |
| Substitute(s) present for the final vote | Giovanni Berlinguer, Philip Bushill-Matthews, Bairbre de Brún, Duarte Freitas, Genowefa Grabowska, Karsten Friedrich Hoppenstedt |
| Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote | |