

WRITTEN QUESTION P-6581/08
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to the Commission

Subject: Overfishing and excessive quota

The Commission's working document 'Reflections on further reform of the Common Fisheries Policy' (17 September 2008) sets out a clear analysis of the vicious circle affecting fisheries:

- excessive subsidising of the fishing industry and ineffective controls have led to overcapacity in the European fleet relative to the available quantity of fish;
- overcapacity has led to political pressures from the fishing industry to increase quotas (TACs) which leads to even more overfishing and starkly declining fish stocks;
- as a result of further overfishing, catches and economic results decline; this cranks up the political pressure even more for raising the fishing quota to levels considerably higher than the scientists of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) consider responsible.

The conclusion is that ecologically sustainable fisheries must be the top priority for policy reform in 2012. On 17-19 December the Fisheries Council will be setting the fishing quota for the next year, on a proposal from the Commission. The ICES scientific opinions on which the Commission proposal is based have in past years been ignored: the Fisheries Council has invariably set quotas at a level 30 to 40 % higher than the scientific opinion.

1. By what means will the Commission be persuading the Council of Fisheries Ministers that the vicious circle must be broken as soon as possible and that the scientific opinions must accordingly be followed?
2. Is the Commission also prepared to propose quotas for by-catch that will contribute to a substantial reduction in by-catches?
3. Is the Commission prepared to withdraw its proposal for TACs if the Council of Fisheries Ministers again sets out to exceed the ICES scientific opinions by a substantial amount?
4. Is the Commission prepared to put forward proposals without delay to make it possible to force back the overcapacity in the fishing industry in a socially responsible way?