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Committee on Fisheries

2009/2152(INI)

05.03.2010

OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

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

on the Commission White paper 'Adapting to climate change: towards a European framework for action'
(2009/2152(INI))

Rapporteur: Kriton Arsenis

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SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Welcomes the White Paper's emphasis on increasing the resilience of all ecosystems as an essential defence against the most extreme impacts of climate change;

2. Reiterates that man-made greenhouse gases have wide-ranging impacts on the complex dynamics of the marine environment and that marine ecosystems already under pressure from pollution, insufficiently regulated, and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing are also being affected by warmer temperatures, rising sea levels, changes in salinity and acidification, possible changes in the circulation of ocean currents as well as the spatial distribution of live aquatic organisms (fish, molluscs, crustaceans etc) and their spread along the water column; moreover recalls that scientific models predict further increases in atmospheric temperature and average sea level and that the most effective way to tackle climate change is a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions;

3. Recalls that the last century saw a 0.6°C increase in atmospheric temperature and a 0.17 m increase in the average sea level, and that the scientific models used to study these topics predict that these values will continue to rise over the course of this century;

4. Recalls that the potential impact of climate change may have devastating consequences for some of the more closed European seas, such as the Baltic; notes that some scientific studies forecast an 8-50% fall in the salinity of the water and a 2-4°C rise in its surface temperature, which could destroy a large part of the marine fauna and flora if these forecasts prove accurate;

5. Points out that rapid depletion of some European fish stocks as a result of human induced pressures upon the environment is eroding the ecological and economic basis of fisheries and is making marine ecosystems more vulnerable to climate change and thus less capable of adapting[1]; further points out that the fishing sector must adapt to climate change, whilst respecting the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development;

6. Notes that climate change, through the rapid reduction in the size of coral reefs and the numbers of calciferous animals, the changes in species' reproductive cycles and sex ratios, and the acidification of the ocean which it brings about, will further endanger fish stocks[2] and reduce the oceans' CO_2 absorption capacity[3], in turn further increasing the rate of CO_2 concentration in the atmosphere and speeding up climate change[4];

7. Points out, likewise, that changes in sea level will cause extreme damage to marine and intertidal ecosystems, affecting sites that are of great importance for primary production,

[1] Green Paper on Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (COM(2009)0163).
[2] FAO, Technical paper 530 (2009) 'Climate change implications for fisheries and aquaculture'.
[3] Sea carbon intake capacity fell by 10% between 2000 and 2007.
[4] 'Blue Carbon: the role of healthy oceans in binding carbon, UNEP, FAO and IOC, 2009.

breeding, recruitment and shelter for many species, and thus also damaging fishing, shellfishing and aquaculture activity as well as marine biodiversity; points out, further, that these ecosystems are also vulnerable to changes in water salinity and temperature aggravated by climate change;

8. Reaffirms that migrations of various marine organisms (fish, molluscs, crustaceans, etc) from one biogeographical region to another may lead to the disappearance of some indigenous species and the invasion of alien species in a given region; notes that these variations may have important consequences for the fishing industry, which may find it difficult to adapt to new biological and economic conditions;

9. Notes that climate change will have potentially severe economic implications for European industrial and small-scale fisheries; calls therefore for consideration to be given to alternative fisheries management systems and the reduction in the capacity of various segments of the European fleet, with the aim of establishing sustainable fishing and aquaculture practices, adapted to new climate conditions;

10. Highlights the particular vulnerability of fishing ports and aquaculture installations to rising sea levels, since these infrastructures are located along the edge of the coastline; also highlights their economic and social significance; urges the Commission, therefore, to take specific account of them in adaptation and risk analysis measures and to pay careful attention to the economic costs to these infrastructures of failure to adapt to climate change;

11. Notes that small-scale coastal fleets, particularly artisanal fleets, may contribute significantly to the resilience of coastal communities, adaptation to climate change and food security, provided that sustainable fishing practices are applied; points out that investing in more environmentally friendly equipment should be encouraged for all types of fleet; also reiterates the importance of fishing for the social and cultural coherence of coastal communities;

12. Deplores the fact that mature and well-functioning Integrated Coastal Zone Management involving all relevant levels of government is still rarely put into practice[1]; strongly urges the Commission to ensure that the Integrated Coastal Zone Management recommendations[2] are updated, reinforced and implemented in the wider context of the Integrated Maritime Policy, bringing together all the sectoral policies linked to the sea and oceans; further stresses the need for close involvement of fisheries, shell fishing and aquaculture sectors in this process, bearing in mind how important these activities are for coastal areas;

13. Strongly urges the Commission to ensure that marine strategies, applying an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities, are developed and implemented in order to achieve a good environmental status in the marine environment, as provided for in Directive 2008/56/EC;

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[1] Communication from the Commission - Report to the European Parliament and the Council on evaluation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in Europe (COM(2007)0308).

[2] Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2002 concerning the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Europe, OJ L 148, 06.06.2002, p. 24.

14. Calls on the Commission, with this aim in mind, to carry out studies designed to assess the phenomenon of green algae and their impact on the fishing industry; calls, further, for a study to be carried out on the influence that changes in currents as a result of climate warming have on the movement of certain marine species;

15. Calls on the Commission to lead scientific research into fishery resources in the northern seas, and to promote the sustainable management of fisheries in the area in accordance with the precautionary principle, advocating a moratorium on all new fisheries in the Arctic pending appropriate regulation within the framework of regional fisheries organisations (RFOs);

16. Emphasises that the solution to the serious climate change which we are currently witnessing must primarily be based on the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions and the protection and expansion of natural ecosystems, which are Earth's most significant carbon sinks, and that the resilience of marine and terrestrial ecosystems depends as much on the preservation of biological diversity as on maintaining adequate populations and their habitats;

17. Urges the Commission to ensure that adequate financing is provided for ecosystem protection and for compensation for the climate-related income losses suffered by fishermen;

18. Considers it necessary to guarantee adequate funding for research which will inform policy decisions in the field of climate change and fisheries and aquaculture; stresses that research as well as subsequent measures should be multidisciplinary in nature, addressing the sum of pressures upon fisheries and aquaculture, including coastal and offshore pollution, industrial and agricultural effluents, alterations to river courses, deep-sea dredging, port activity, maritime transport and tourism, in the context of an integrated and ecosystem-based approach;

19. Urges the Commission to ensure that adaptation through ecosystem resilience should be mainstreamed in the Community's position in international negotiations on fishing and the marine environment, and most notably in Fisheries Partnership Agreements and RFOs;

20. Calls on the Commission to actively participate in the establishment of a 'blue carbon fund' in the context of the UNFCC; stresses that such a fund should explore financial and coordination mechanisms for the protection and management of coastal and marine ecosystems and ocean carbon, as part of a global strategy for marine planning;

21. Stresses that the fishing industry's capacity to adapt to variations in productivity and recruitment in the various fisheries depends on the following factors:

- fishing capacity being commensurate with the productive capacity of the resource during its lower productivity phases,
- the availability of alternative fishery resources,
- investment in flexible technologies such as 'multipurpose' boats and flexible processing chains,

- the availability of alternative livelihoods during lean periods[1].

[1] FAO (2007): Adaptation to climate change in agriculture, forestry and fisheries: Perspective, framework and priorities.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	23.2.2010
Result of final vote	+: 15 –: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Josefa Andrés Barea, Kriton Arsenis, Alain Cadec, João Ferreira, Carmen Fraga Estévez, Carl Haglund, Isabella Lövin, Guido Milana, Maria do Céu Patrão Neves, Crescenzio Rivellini, Ulrike Rodust, Struan Stevenson, Jarosław Leszek Wałęsa
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Ole Christensen, Ioannis A. Tsoukalas