



**2020/2260(INI)**

28.4.2021

# **OPINION**

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety  
and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

on a Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly  
food system  
(2020/2260(INI))

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the committees responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into their motion for a resolution:

- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 on a Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system (COM(2020)0381),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009, and amending Council Regulations (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1005/2008, and Regulation (EU) No 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards fisheries control (COM(2018)0368),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council directive amending Directive 2006/112/EC as regards rates of value added tax (COM(2018)0020),
- having regard to the Commission draft initiative on a contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security as envisaged in the proposed Farm to Fork and Sea to Fork Strategy under the European Green Deal, in particular its pledge to build on the lessons learned from past crises, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled ‘EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives’ (COM(2020)0380),
- having regard to Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22.

- and aquaculture products<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning<sup>6</sup>,
  - having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 October 2020 on the Farm to Fork Strategy,
  - having regard to Scientific Opinion No 3/2017 of the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors of the Commission Scientific Advice Mechanism of 29 November 2017 entitled ‘Food from the Oceans: How can more food and biomass be obtained from the oceans in a way that does not deprive future generations of their benefits?’,
  - having regard to its resolution of 12 May 2016 on traceability of fishery and aquaculture products in restaurants and retail<sup>7</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 30 May 2018 on the implementation of control measures for establishing the conformity of fisheries products with access criteria to the EU market<sup>8</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 29 May 2018 on the optimisation of the value chain in the EU fishing sector<sup>9</sup>,
  - having regard to its position adopted at first reading on 4 April 2019 with a view to the adoption of a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and repealing Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council<sup>10</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal<sup>11</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2020 on a New Industrial Strategy for Europe<sup>12</sup>,
- A. whereas the aim of the Farm to Fork Strategy is to contribute to the European climate change agenda, protect the environment, ensure the position of products in the value chain, and encourage the consumption of sustainable and healthy foods;
- B. whereas the fishery and aquaculture sectors are an integral part of the EU food system whose resilience and sustainable development depend on the work and contributions of European fishers and fish farmers, as they play a key role in supporting the environmental, economic and social dimension of coastal, island and many inland communities;

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<sup>5</sup> OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> OJ L 257, 28.8.2014, p. 135.

<sup>7</sup> OJ C 76, 28.2.2018, p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> OJ C 76, 9.3.2020, p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> OJ C 76, 9.3.2020, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2019)0343.

<sup>11</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2020)0005.

<sup>12</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2020)0321.

- C. whereas the unprecedented public health crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic will have repercussions for trade and the market, and has come as a serious blow to fishers throughout Europe; whereas despite the health risks and the low price of fish, European fishers have continued to work and distinguish themselves as key workers, with the crisis highlighting the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in ensuring access to food; whereas the EU has provided a short-term response such as more flexible access to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and State aid approval, together with more long-term support as outlined in the Recovery Plan for Europe; whereas the Commission's intention to present a contingency plan to ensure food supply and food security across the EU in times of crisis is to be welcomed;
- D. whereas it is necessary to enforce the competition and social economy rules under the common market organisation (CMO), whose principles date back to 1970, and to update its framework with specific programmes and financial instruments to provide non-discriminatory market access to self-employed workers in small-scale fisheries in order to empower their organisations, which create significant social value by efficiently concentrating the marketing of their products; whereas such self-employed workers were excluded from COVID support under Regulation (EU) 2020/560<sup>13</sup>, despite proving to be very important for society during the pandemic, and had to face health risks as an essential sector in the EU food system and price decreases owing to the closure of the hotel, restaurant and catering (HORECA) channel;
- E. whereas in different Member States there are different traditions and customs with regard to nutrition and the use of available biological resources, including fish, shellfish and molluscs; whereas this should be taken into account when drawing up policies, recommendations and strategies that impact the economically important or traditionally used species of fish and non-fish products in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors;
- F. whereas overfishing and bycatches of sensitive marine species results in the degradation of marine and coastal ecosystems and leads to biodiversity loss;
- G. whereas although the EU fisheries, aquaculture and processing sectors subscribe to the highest marketing, environmental, sustainability and social standards, reviewing and approval is needed to ensure environmental and social sustainability throughout the entire value chain, including on labour rights, animal health and welfare; whereas these sectors provide high-quality seafood products, playing a fundamental role in ensuring food security and the nutritional well-being of the population; whereas it is of the utmost importance, therefore, to assess the position of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the internal market and the imports of their products in order to achieve a fisheries model that reflects the balance between the three key dimensions (environmental, social and economic) proposed in the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals;
- H. whereas while very high, marketing standards in the EU, including environmental, sustainability and social standards, only apply to 75 % of landings in the EU and to less than 10 % of imports (as fillets and frozen fish are excluded), which results in a large

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<sup>13</sup> Regulation (EU) 2020/560 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2020 amending Regulations (EU) No 508/2014 and (EU) No 1379/2013 as regards specific measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in the fishery and aquaculture sector, OJ L 130, 24.4.2020, p. 1.

number of imported products falling short of the rigorous norms and standards with which the EU-based sector must comply, creating an uneven playing field and putting EU producers at a competitive disadvantage;

- I. whereas the excessive use of pesticides in agriculture also has adverse effects on aquatic flora and fauna;
- J. whereas fishers' associations such as guilds are key players in the food systems of some Member States, where they operate as not-for-profit public law and social economy entities representing the fisheries sector and work together with the public administration, performing functions of general interest for the benefit of maritime fishing and workers in the fisheries sector, as well as discharging business functions, marketing products and providing advisory and management services;
- K. whereas in its 2020 report on the state of world fisheries and aquaculture, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization acknowledges the key role played by fisheries in global food security, while recalling that the biggest threat to its contribution is overfishing and that the sustainable exploitation of fish stocks has the potential to increase the productivity of fisheries;
- L. whereas in order to reduce food waste, the logistics and infrastructure in the value chain need to be improved to optimise the use of all catches and sustainability of the food system;
- M. whereas a holistic approach is needed to the various EU strategies and policies associated with the Farm to Fork Strategy;
- N. whereas the general market concentration and the tendency of large retailers to conclude agreements that are at times unfair to primary producers have a negative impact on small-scale fishing;
- O. whereas the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) include, among others, supplying the EU market with foods of high nutritional value, reducing the EU market's dependence on food imports, and ensuring that food reaches consumers at reasonable prices; whereas the ongoing pandemic has made it even more apparent that the EU needs to be able to fully guarantee food security for its citizens and reduce its reliance on food imports from third countries;
- P. whereas fisheries and aquaculture products are an important source of protein and an important component of a healthy diet; whereas more than half of the adult population of the Union is overweight, which is contributing to the high prevalence of diet-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease and increasing healthcare costs; notes that the consumption of fish and aquaculture produce in the EU varies greatly across the Member States;
- Q. whereas compared with other animal proteins, fish caught in the wild has the lowest environmental impact as it lives in the wild and does not require the use of land, artificial feeding, a water supply, or antibiotics or pesticides for its production, and therefore represents the perfect option for animal proteins in terms of food security and climate protection;

- R. whereas fishers tackle all types of marine waste by fishing for marine litter – be it actively or passively – and assisting with litter from other vessels, which helps to improve the marine environment and the sustainability of the sector;
- S. whereas the work of fishers and ongoing efforts to implement the CFP brought about improvements in EU fish populations and delivered other positive results through efficient, science-based fisheries management focused on sustainability, responsible fisheries, and minimising the impact of commercial fisheries on ecosystems, and founded on ambitious, internationally agreed management targets; whereas there are still environmental parameters that require further efforts in order to be improved;
- T. whereas the fisheries sector has for a long time helped to provide European consumers with high-quality products that meet high nutrition and food safety standards, and is now a global leader in terms of sustainability;
- U. whereas fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from fishing fell by 18 % between 2009 and 2018; whereas although the energy efficiency of the EU’s fishing fleet – tonnes of fish per litre of fuel – has increased over the years thanks to the adaptation of new technologies and improvements in fish stocks, fisheries will still face difficulties on account of climate change, of which it is a victim rather than a cause, as demonstrated by the many natural phenomena such as water temperature increases which have had and will continue to have an extremely negative impact on the profitability of the sector;
- V. whereas in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 on the CMO in fishery and aquaculture products, it is essential that consumers are informed, through marketing and educational campaigns, of the value of eating fish and the wide variety of species available, as well as of the importance of understanding the information contained on labels; whereas country of origin information and the traceability of fishery products are clearly in the interests of EU consumers, but existing EU legislation does not require the origin of the final prepared or preserved product to be indicated, even though this is mandatory for the catching sector; whereas information on traceability and sustainable production is therefore lost in the food value chain;
1. Stresses that the CFP and a functioning system of governance of Europe’s seas are an integral part of the EU food system and supply chain and closely interact with the European health and environment pillars that are at the heart of the Farm to Fork Strategy; expresses great disappointment at the lack of prominence and ambition for the contribution and potential of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the Farm to Fork Strategy; stresses that this lack of ambition makes it more difficult for the Union to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal and warns that it will lead to fewer opportunities and less income for EU fishers, aquaculture producers and workers along the fish and seafood supply chain; calls for the strategy to be expanded to a Farm to Fork and Sea to Fork Strategy, and for its title to be officially renamed ‘A Farm to Fork and Sea to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system’;
  2. Stresses that the current strategy should be integrated with a cross-cutting approach to fisheries that considers the main EU legislation on the subject and in the light of the strategy’s objectives, taking due account of the three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental – to ensure that the future food system is fairer,

healthier and more respectful of the environment; urges the Commission to pay due attention to the specific nature of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in any future legislative proposals, strategies or guidelines it may draw up as a result of the strategy and to fill the gap with appropriate additional initiatives;

3. Stresses the importance of ensuring coordination and mutual support between all Green Deal initiatives and between the objectives of the Union and the Member States in relation to food security, climate change, marine natural resources and sustainable fisheries management, among others;
4. Recognises that fisheries are one of the most efficient and climate-smart systems that ensures healthy and sustainable food while guaranteeing a dignified existence for fishers in the EU;
5. Welcomes the Commission's recognition of key workers during the COVID-19 pandemic; stresses that fishery workers, not just agri-food sector workers, fall within this category; calls on the Commission, therefore, to step up its efforts to improve the position of European fishers in the value chain by enhancing workplace health and safety, guaranteeing them a decent wage and protecting their freedom of movement, especially in times of crisis;
6. Underlines the close relationship between fishing activities and the conservation of biodiversity and highlights the negative impact of unsustainable fishing on biodiversity; stresses, however, that only sustainable fishing can limit the negative impact on species, habitats and ecosystems, as well as the effects of climate change;
7. Stresses that in order to fully and effectively achieve the strategy's objectives, an extensive preliminary socio-economic impact assessment is needed to consider all the possible repercussions of the proposed measures on the EU's coastal communities and on the productivity and competitiveness of its fisheries; stresses, furthermore, that the transition to a sustainable model of production and consumption should happen gradually and in a manner commensurate with the capabilities of the EU fishing industry;
8. Stresses that the transposition of fair and acceptable principles very often risks creating onerous and excessive practices that are difficult for fishers to apply, without ever really achieving the objectives that these principles set out to achieve; stresses, therefore, that the strategy's proposals should not pose excessive financial or bureaucratic burdens for operators in the fisheries sector;
9. Agrees with the Commission on the need to ensure that the key principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights are respected, especially with regard to precarious, seasonal and undeclared workers; stresses, to this end, that practical steps should be taken in order to meet this need, through greater cooperation with EU bodies for social dialogue, such as the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Sea Fisheries, when drawing up legislative initiatives to achieve the strategy's objectives;
10. Stresses that promoting healthy and sustainable diets as part of the strategy and the EU's climate change strategy should privilege the consumption of EU fisheries and aquaculture products, as they are an important source of protein with a small carbon

footprint and a crucial component of a healthy diet, and highlight the value of the work of fishers and women in the sector, and of aquaculture; recalls the potential of sustainable aquaculture and fisheries to create green jobs and considers that the ecological transition of food systems in general, and fisheries in particular, should take place in a way that ensures a fair income for the fisheries sector, strengthening its position in the value chain by encouraging grouping in guilds, cooperatives, associations or other organisations, and by conducting appropriate monitoring within the framework of Directive (EU) 2019/633 on unfair trading practices<sup>14</sup>;

11. Underlines the low environmental impact of fisheries in certain aspects and the healthy food production of the sector, since no artificial feeding, antibiotics, fertilisers or chemical pesticides are involved; highlights that thanks to its heart-healthy properties, the consumption of fish has great potential to address the European public health crisis with regard to the high prevalence of diet-related diseases, such as cardiovascular disease;
12. Observes that the CFP is the current legal framework for fisheries, which is aimed at providing healthy sea-based food in accordance with sustainable, social, economic and environmental principles for fisheries management, ensuring the sustainable exploitation of living marine biological resources, and restoring and maintaining the populations of the species caught above levels which can ensure the maximum sustainable yield, as well as ensuring profitability of fishing activities;
13. Stresses the important role that women play in processing, promoting and marketing the fish that is caught;
14. Highlights that the ongoing pandemic has demonstrated the need for the EU to improve and safeguard food security and food sovereignty in order to reduce its reliance on food imports from third countries; agrees with the development of a contingency plan to ensure the EU's food supply and food security in the event of future crises; recalls the CFP objective to contribute to the supply of highly nutritional food to the EU market and reduce the EU market's dependence on food imports; emphasises, in this regard, the need to move towards the intelligent integration of global, regional and local food systems, promoting short channels in the fisheries value chain in order to improve food security, in accordance with the principles of the single market;
15. Emphasises that the Biodiversity and Farm to Fork Strategies are two sides of the same coin; calls, therefore, for the formulation of impact assessments that identify the full costs of the Commission's biodiversity objectives in terms of the impacts of reducing fishing pressure and thus food production;
16. Emphasises that when implementing the objectives and measures proposed in the strategy and the transition to a sustainable food system, due attention must be paid to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of food systems and to the competitiveness of the European fisheries and aquaculture sectors, including a fair income for primary producers; stresses the importance of the constructive, effective and

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<sup>14</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/633 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain, OJ L 111, 25.4.2019, p. 59.

equal consultation of fishers and aquaculture producers and other relevant stakeholders representing the value chain in any decision related to the proposed Farm to Fork and Sea to Fork Strategy;

17. Invites the Commission and the relevant EU agencies, including the European Food Safety Authority, to assess whether algae can constitute a safe, healthy and sustainable source of food in the context of the Farm to Fork Strategy;
18. Welcomes the Commission's planned report on the functioning of the CFP, due to be published by 31 December 2022, which will need to focus on the risks triggered by climate change for the sustainability of species and the objective of achieving maximum sustainable yield; emphasises the need, however, for an overall approach to bring fish stocks to sustainable levels and restore marine and coastal ecosystems, which should also focus on the benefits and the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, including the effects of invasive alien species that threaten certain species of economic significance, making concerted efforts to reduce their impact; calls for this report to be followed up with legislative or non-legislative proposals and actions to better implement the objectives of the CFP in the light of the new challenges facing the fisheries sector and to address any shortcomings that prove to be significant;
19. Stresses the need for the Commission and the Member States to take the necessary action to improve the quality of EU waters and prevent toxic substances from entering the food chain; calls on the Commission and the Member States, therefore, to adopt a holistic approach to the marine environment and tackle the root causes of water pollution, including marine litter and urban and industrial waste water, and to put an end to practices that are harmful to the marine environment and human health;
20. Welcomes the role of the newly announced EU Strategic Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of EU Aquaculture for 2021-2030; emphasises the fundamental role of aquaculture and the need for its development as a cornerstone in ensuring self-sufficiency of healthy food; calls for these guidelines to be swiftly adopted and implemented and underlines, in this regard, the need for specific guidelines for shellfish and inland aquaculture in order to provide direction for better management and increased sustainability, as well as more funding for these sectors under the new European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF);
21. Underlines that the continued work on the proposed Farm to Fork and Sea to Fork Strategy should draw inspiration from and build on existing practices that already meet the current strategy's sustainability objectives, such as certain types of aquaculture management that also provide environmental and social services; calls on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate, encourage and provide adequate support for environmentally friendly aquaculture such as low-impact, closed-system aquaculture, algae, shellfish, pond fish farming or integrated multitrophic aquaculture systems as important parts of the circular economy and net contributors to excess nutrient transformation in high-quality protein;
22. Urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the plans for the sustainable development of aquaculture take account of the main barriers to the

development of the potential of the sector and to recognise the need to allocate space to aquaculture through appropriate spatial planning; highlights the importance of a transparent and participative mechanism, in line with Directive 2014/89/EU on maritime spatial planning, for allocating space to all stakeholders in an equitable manner, including to existing and new fishing grounds and aquaculture farms; stresses that the development of aquaculture requires a solid, reliable and clear legal framework for the use of space and licenses that provides confidence and security for investment in the sector;

23. Welcomes the intention to promote organic aquaculture and emphasises the economic benefits of this for aquaculture producers given its ample untapped potential for development and growth; points out that the transition can be assisted through the EMFAF;
24. Stresses that it has long been common practice in the aquaculture sector to reuse unused (or usable) animal products for human consumption; points out that in the interests of a circular economy, considerable investment is needed to create synergies between aquaculture and food waste and support virtuous processes to reuse aquaculture waste (such as algae) for feeding fish;
25. Welcomes the Commission's intention to support green business models, such as those based on carbon sequestration, in order to make supply chains more sustainable; stresses, in this regard, that certain aquaculture practices, such as mussel or oyster farming, can be a successful model for the future in the context of the Emissions Trading System; calls on the Commission to invest in this type of green business in the light of the strategy's objectives;
26. Welcomes the Commission's intention to publish guidelines for sustainable food procurement in institutional catering and urges the Commission to include fisheries and aquaculture products in these guidelines;
27. Welcomes the Commission's intention to take action to accelerate the market deployment of energy efficiency solutions in the agriculture and food sectors; stresses, in this regard, that such actions should also take the aquaculture sector into account in order to deploy all potential forms of energy production involved in these types of farming and to promote a zero-consumption production system;
28. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement measures to improve water quality and disease control and limit stocking density in aquaculture production in the interests of human health and animal welfare;
29. Stresses that all too often organic products are put in a price bracket beyond the reach of most European consumers; stresses, therefore, the need to establish a fair price system at EU level for organic products so that they are no longer the privilege of a few, but can form the basis of healthy eating for all;
30. Welcomes the Commission's willingness to place a greater focus on investing in technology and green and digital practices, but expresses disappointment at the lack of any mention of fisheries and the aquaculture sector; stresses the urgent need to support fishers and actors in the fish product supply chain in the transition to more digital

practices by investing heavily in training, and financing for digitisation and conversion to ‘green’ practices and tools;

31. Requests that the Commission and the Member States improve and streamline the labelling, including via digitally readable codes, of all fisheries and aquaculture products at EU level, whether fresh, frozen or processed or sold in restaurants and through both retailers and wholesalers, in order to ensure traceability on the place of origin, species and information on other aspects such as production methods, including from third country imports;
32. Stresses the need for a food traceability system in the EU that enhances the sustainability of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and responds to consumer demands by providing information on where, when, how and what fish has been caught or farmed, primarily to improve food safety but also to enable checks throughout the chain of both EU products and third country imports and combat fraud and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; calls for a coordinated approach to ensure consistency between different initiatives on this issue and to assess the costs and benefits of different options for consumers, producers and the internal market as a whole in line with the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making<sup>15</sup> in order to implement these objectives as efficiently as possible; believes that this system should involve all actors in the value chain so that they can collaborate with one other, using simple digital systems that are easy to use and do not entail excessive costs for operators, in particular small businesses;
33. Stresses that good traceability mechanisms on sustainability for all products sold on EU markets are essential to ensure transparency for consumers, the sector and the various administrations; welcomes the Commission’s intention to support the implementation of the rules on misleading information as regards the sustainability of food products and to develop an EU sustainable food labelling framework and to achieve the targets of the Green Deal and the UN Sustainable Development Goals; stresses that this step will enhance the value of sustainable products and protect consumer rights; asks the Commission to develop guidelines on digital tools for consumer information transmitted through all links in the value chain, including existing platforms, with the aim of promoting interoperability and improving the efficiency of existing systems;
34. Requests that the Commission consider issuing environmental statements that meet robust, internationally recognised criteria, such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard No 14024, which should be based on a full life cycle assessment rather than any one aspect of sustainability and should be implemented by keeping the administrative and financial burden to a minimum, especially for small-scale fishers and SMEs; stresses, to this end, that the labelling must be objective, based on scientific data supported by rigorous independent verification, non-discriminatory with regard to the actual nutritional value of the foods, and able to provide exhaustive and specific information on the nutrients in the product based on the reference intakes of the average consumer, without misleading or influencing purchasing choices, in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011<sup>16</sup>; stresses, furthermore, that businesses

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<sup>15</sup> OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011 on the provision of food information to consumers, OJ L 304, 22.11.2011, p. 18.

also have a role to play in ensuring that the fisheries products they source are traceable to the point of origin, and in providing all the information that consumers need to be able to make well informed, healthy and green dietary choices;

35. Urges the Commission, in this regard, to introduce an obligation to inform consumers with labelling on origin and traceability for all prepared or preserved fish and seafood products such as crustaceans, molluscs and caviar and, in the interests of ensuring a level playing field, to evaluate the need to revise Regulation (EU) 1379/2013 on the CMO in fishery and aquaculture products and draw up a proposal, if appropriate;
36. Points out that different standards between products from the EU and third countries could put EU fisheries at a competitive disadvantage in the absence of a global convergence of sustainability standards; stresses, to this end, that the labelling and traceability rules for EU products should also be applied to imported products; stresses, moreover, the need to adjust the current legislation to require a declaration of origin of the final product from EU and third country products combined in production lines;
37. Emphasises the need for a harmonised EU legal framework to develop a mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling system at EU level, based on independent scientific evidence; urges the Member States to support the implementation of the future EU nutritional profiling system and to refrain from unilateral actions that could hinder the harmonisation of the Commission's efforts; calls on the Commission to consider the need to include changes in the algorithm for creating these nutritional profiles so that the presence of omega-3 is positively taken into account and the ratio of saturated to unsaturated fats is considered when attributing penalty points;
38. Points out that fish, crustacean and mollusc products can be protected through the European quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs; notes that in accordance with Article 32 of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, Member States can also use the optional quality term 'product of island farming', including for fish, crustacean and mollusc products, in order to enhance the visibility of island-based producers; calls on the Member States to consider introducing additional regional designations for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, with a view to promoting the visibility of their producers and products that are not eligible for protection under the European quality schemes set out in Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012;
39. Welcomes the mandatory use of digitalised catch certificates;
40. Stresses the need to continue to promote the responsible exploitation of fisheries resources and to combat IUU fishing by strengthening the policy of sustainable fisheries agreements with non-EU countries for European vessels providing quality products;
41. Notes that the EU's fisheries, aquaculture and processing sectors already apply stringent environmental and social standards which will also be revised to ensure higher quality products; deems it is of the utmost importance, therefore, to apply the principle of reciprocity to fisheries products entering the EU market from third countries and to ban products deriving from IUU fishing;
42. Welcomes the zero tolerance approach to IUU fishing in the light of the global nature of this phenomenon and the need to adopt a consistent and coherent neighbourhood policy

to fisheries management, while fully enforcing Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 on IUU fishing<sup>17</sup> (IUU Regulation); stresses, in this regard, that trade agreements signed with third countries should include chapters on sustainable fishing that are in line with the EU's sustainable development policies, the CFP and the provisions of the IUU Regulation; requests that EU fishers, fleets and SMEs operating in the seafood sector be given support to strengthen and improve their position in the value chain; recalls that autonomous tariff quotas must only be used where there is a lack of an adequate seafood supply for the EU market and cannot be exploited to put pressure on the supply and prices of EU producers;

43. Stresses that the EU should continuously monitor the efforts undertaken to combat IUU fishing by third countries that have been granted preferential tariffs for fisheries and aquaculture products; stresses that it is essential for the EU to make full use of the instruments at its disposal in accordance with the IUU Regulation, including the 'red card', if a country that has been granted preferential tariffs fails to comply with EU requirements on labour rights, sustainable fisheries and the traceability of fisheries products;
44. Stresses the need to ensure a level playing field for all fisheries and aquaculture products marketed in the EU regardless of their origin; calls on the Commission and the Member States, therefore, to ensure the implementation of current EU safety, hygiene and quality requirements, including marketing standards on all fisheries and aquaculture products in the internal market;
45. Recalls that progress still needs to be made for sustainable fisheries partnership agreements to become truly sustainable; highlights that these agreements must be in line with the best scientific advice available and must neither threaten the small-scale fisheries sector in third countries nor undermine local food security;
46. Stresses the importance of increasing consumer awareness and calls for all imported fisheries products that enter the EU market to have to comply with internationally agreed minimum standards, as laid down in the International Labour Organization Convention C188 on Work in Fishing and implemented in the EU through Council Directive (EU) 2017/159<sup>18</sup>, in order to prevent EU citizens from consuming fish unaware that it was caught by vessels that do not respect minimum social conditions;
47. Urges the Commission to draw up a list of goods produced by child or forced labour and corresponding reports for use by EU policymakers and companies to conduct risk assessments, perform due diligence on supply chains and develop strategies to address child labour and forced labour; encourages the Commission to use the list as a tool to take action against non-compliant fishing vessels and non-cooperating third countries, similar to that laid down in Chapter VII of the IUU Regulation, in particular to restrict or block imports from fishing vessels or fishing nations (black) listed for serious labour

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<sup>17</sup> OJ L 286, 29.10.2008, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Council Directive (EU) 2017/159 of 19 December 2016 implementing the Agreement concerning the implementation of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 of the International Labour Organization, concluded on 21 May 2012 between the General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives in the European Union (Cogeca), the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) and the Association of National Organisations of Fishing Enterprises in the European Union (Europêche), OJ L 25, 31.1.2017, p. 12.

abuses and failing to comply with basic human rights on board fishing vessels;

48. Underlines the importance of the new EMFAF for enabling sustainably managed seas and oceans, promoting the development of a sustainable blue economy, modernising the fisheries sector in line with the objectives of the CFP, creating new employment and income opportunities, supporting sustainable practices, favouring generational renewal, including for small-scale fisheries, which can curb depopulation in rural areas and on islands, and promoting the active participation of women, associations, including guilds such as *cofradías*, producer organisations and the retail sector; suggests that making use of EMFAF financing should provide economic incentives for fishers, aquaculture producers and workers across the supply chain who have already taken measures to limit their climate and environmental footprint; welcomes the Commission's intention to invest in research, innovation and technology and stresses that the EMFAF should also be used to support research and innovation programmes and projects aimed at reducing food waste and to promote a sustainable food system, including the creation of incentives for the digital transformation of the sector in all links of the value chain for fisheries and aquaculture products; stresses the need, moreover, to integrate existing European research and innovation programmes with the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity 2030 Strategies and the new EMFAF, and to fully involve the fisheries and aquaculture sector and other relevant stakeholders along the value chain in order to maximise potential synergies between different sectors;
49. Underlines the CFP aim of selective fishing and notes that the fisheries sector is investing in selective gear to this end; stresses that the Union should support and encourage these investments;
50. Stresses the need to improve the monitoring, control and enforcement of the CFP, including the full implementation of the landing obligation and the introduction of electronic monitoring of vessels to improve food traceability;
51. Points out that the energy efficiency of the EU's fishing fleets has increased tremendously over the years thanks to the adaptation of new technologies; notes an improvement in fish stocks, especially in the North Sea, owing to the high standards with which the EU fishing sector has to comply;
52. Underlines the importance of small-scale coastal fishing and believes that this sector can significantly facilitate the transition to the sustainable management of fish stocks; calls on all the Member States to increase the percentage for the national quotas allocated to this sector accordingly;
53. Recommends that the EU institutions and all the Member States launch effective, appropriately funded and far-reaching educational awareness campaigns for consumers in order to bolster healthy and sustainable fish consumption, highlight the properties and benefits of fish products, and help consumers to choose wisely when buying fresh fish products; including by promoting the consumption of lesser known fish species; calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement initiatives to reduce food waste and other waste from EU fish and seafood markets;
54. Considers that one of the cornerstones of all campaigns to promote the consumption of seafood should be the sustainability of the practices used to procure it and the leading

role of European fisheries in this area; stresses, moreover, that these campaigns should be promoted by working closely with trade associations and specific professional bodies, such as nutritionists, doctors and paediatricians, in order to take targeted and effective action to help European consumers;

55. Notes that the Commission's proposal for a directive on VAT rates envisages the use of indirect taxation to encourage the consumption of sustainable and healthy food products; calls on the Member States to make use of existing tools in this regard, such as reduced VAT rates and green public procurement;
56. Criticises the fact that the strategy fails to mention any of the problems derived from the pollution of seas in the EU with microplastics and nanoplastics, which poses a worrying threat to the health of European consumers; stresses the need to step up research and data collection concerning the impact of marine litter, nanoplastics and microplastics on fishery resources and human health, while promoting action to raise awareness among European consumers of the problem of plastic pollution;
57. Calls on the Commission to provide financial support and visibility to projects and initiatives aimed at shortening supply chains, promoting local food systems and sustainable seafood consumption and supporting small-scale fisheries;
58. Stresses that in order to fully adhere to the European circular economy and meet food waste reduction objectives, virtuous practices should be promoted and encouraged in fisheries, such as reusing products that have been caught that fall below the minimum conservation reference size for which a ban on discards applies;
59. Notes that by their very nature, a number of the animal welfare considerations in the Commission's strategy do not apply to the fisheries sector;
60. Underlines the necessity to establish better consultative methods for commercial organisations of small-scale fishers to allow them to take part in the relevant decision-making processes that have repercussions on their livelihoods, such as the social dialogue committees; highlights the importance, in this regard, of fair and balanced participation for small-scale fisheries, as representation on advisory councils and in other forums is insufficient; emphasises, in particular, the importance of equal and fair representation when implementing such international obligations as social and ecosystem management to ensure that it is feasible to implement them in all fleet segments;
61. Regrets the fact that while the strategy rightly highlights the role of farmers as custodians of the land, it does not accord the same recognition to European fishers, who should be regarded and recognised as the custodians of the sea and have a key role to play in achieving the strategy's objectives; expresses its disappointment, in this regard, that the strategy fails to ensure the involvement of representatives from the sector in institutional forums or encourage a bottom-up approach that fully involves European fishers in drawing up the rules that they have to apply; stresses the need for the fisheries sector to be fully involved in order to fully achieve the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy;
62. Stresses the need to encourage small-scale fishers to come together in associations,

cooperatives and producer organisations to ensure that they have a better negotiating position with market suppliers and a better and stronger position in the food supply chain to guarantee them a fair income; stresses that associations such as the guilds in Spain (*cofradías*) should be recognised under EU law and be eligible to receive financial support on an equal footing with producer organisations; calls on the Commission to take action in this regard.

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	19.4.2021
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 27 -: 1 0: 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Clara Aguilera, Pietro Bartolo, François-Xavier Bellamy, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Rosanna Conte, Rosa D'Amato, Giuseppe Ferrandino, Søren Gade, Niclas Herbst, France Jamet, Pierre Karleskind, Predrag Fred Matic, Francisco José Millán Mon, Grace O'Sullivan, Manuel Pizarro, Caroline Roose, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Ruža Tomašić, Peter van Dalen, Emma Wiesner
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Benoît Biteau, Manuel Bompard, Nicolás González Casares, Valentino Grant, Petros Kokkalis, Gabriel Mato, Nuno Melo

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

27	+
ECR	Bert-Jan Ruissen, Ruža Tomašić
ID	Rosanna Conte, Valentino Grant, France Jamet
PPE	François-Xavier Bellamy, Peter van Dalen, Niclas Herbst, Gabriel Mato, Nuno Melo, Francisco José Millán Mon, Annie Schreijer-Pierik
Renew	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Søren Gade, Pierre Karleskind, Emma Wiesner
S&D	Clara Aguilera, Pietro Bartolo, Giuseppe Ferrandino, Nicolás González Casares, Predrag Fred Matić, Manuel Pizarro
The Left	Petros Kokkalis
Verts/ALE	Benoît Biteau, Rosa D'Amato, Grace O'Sullivan, Caroline Roose

1	-
The Left	Manuel Bompard

0	0

**Key to symbols:**

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention