

P6_TA(2008)0308

Crisis in the fisheries sector

European Parliament resolution of 19 June 2008 on the crisis in the fisheries sector caused by rising fuel prices

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 of 27 July 2006 on the European Fisheries Fund¹,
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on improving the economic situation in the fishing industry (COM(2006)0103),
 - having regard to the conference organised by the Commission and held in Brussels on 10-11 May 2006 on new technologies in the field of fisheries,
 - having regard to its resolutions of 28 September 2006 on improving the economic situation in the fishing industry² and of 12 December 2007 on the common organisation of the market in the fisheries and aquaculture products sector³,
 - having regard to Rule 108(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the current crisis facing the Community fishing industry is due to the constant rise in the price of fuel, which has risen by more than 300% in the last five years and by more than 40% since January 2008,
- B. whereas prices of fisheries products are similar to those of twenty years ago, and whereas in the case of some species a considerable reduction of up to 25% has occurred since the beginning of the year owing to mass imports from illegal fishing,
- C. whereas in the fisheries sector, unlike other sectors of the economy, the price of fuel cannot affect the price of first sale of products, since in the current situation fishermen cannot set prices,
- D. whereas the rise in fuel prices is having direct and indirect repercussions on the incomes of crews, owing to the link between wages and income from the first sale of catches,
- E. whereas EU fishermen's incomes have fallen this year, despite the fact that the fishermen have incurred rising costs,
- F. whereas, in spite of the restructuring plans in force and successive business readjustments, the continual worsening of this crisis has made many companies financially unviable and other fishing enterprises have been left in high-risk situations, leading to protest demonstrations in many Member States,

¹ OJ L 223, 15.8.2006, p. 1.

² OJ C 306 E, 15.12.2006, p. 417.

³ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2007)0606.

- G. whereas there needs to be major investment, at both European and national level, in new technologies to increase energy efficiency in fishing vessels and in ways to reduce their dependency on fossil fuels,
- H. whereas certain Member States have initiated schemes aimed at reducing fuel consumption by their fleets and whereas such innovations are to be supported,
- I. whereas the EU has committed itself to a considerable reduction in greenhouse gas emissions under the Climate and Energy Package, and whereas the fisheries sector can contribute to this effort,
- J. whereas a solution to the current problems facing the fisheries sector can only be found if strong measures are taken at both national and European level in the short, medium and long term,
1. Expresses its solidarity with the EU fishermen and calls on the Commission and the Council to envisage measures in order to resolve the present crisis in the fisheries sector;
 2. Calls on the Member States to speed up procedures to enable the payment of aid under Commission Regulation (EC) No 875/2007 of 24 July 2007 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to *de minimis* aid in the fisheries sector¹;
 3. Reiterates in this context its call to the Commission to revise the above-mentioned Regulation so as to increase the aid to EUR 100 000 per vessel instead of per undertaking, so that the level of aid is brought closer to that in other economic sectors;
 4. Draws the attention of the Member States to the new Community Guidelines for the examination of State aid to fisheries and aquaculture², which allow tax relief and reductions in social costs for Community vessels that operate outside Community waters, and asks for these measures to be applied to those vessels that request it;
 5. Recalls that, together with the rising price of oil, one of the most recurrent claims of the EU fishing fleet with regard to the fall in the price of its products relates to massive imports of fishing products at low prices from illegal fishing, and therefore insists that:
 - (a) the Council act responsibly by adopting the future directive against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, so that controls on imports from IUU fishing are strengthened and improved;
 - (b) controls on fisheries products from third countries be intensified and improved so as to guarantee that the same standards are applied to imported products as to Community products;
 - (c) information on the origin of fisheries products be improved and expanded and, above all, that the compulsory use of an informative label be guaranteed and controlled in all cases, and that fraud in the labelling of products be appropriately tackled;
 6. Reiterates its call to the Commission to submit, as soon as possible, its proposal for the revision of the common organisation of the market in fishery and aquaculture products,

¹ OJ L 193, 25.7.2007, p. 6.

² OJ C 84, 3.4.2008, p.10.

taking account of the proposals of the European Parliament, with a view to allowing fishermen to have more responsibility in the setting of prices, thus guaranteeing incomes in the sector, ensuring market stability, improving the marketing of fisheries products and increasing the value added generated;

7. Asks for the fishing fleet adjustment plans to be brought into force in all the Member States and for the financial means necessary for a voluntary restructuring of the fleets to be provided; to this end:
 - (a) calls on the Commission to establish priority criteria for the segments of the fleet that have been most affected by this crisis;
 - (b) considers it essential that national Operational Programmes under the European Fisheries Fund be reviewed to allow for more targeted spending;
 - (c) calls for assistance with a one-off change in fishing gear to produce less fuel-intensive fishing methods;
 - (d) encourages the purchase of equipment to improve fuel efficiency;
8. Asks the Commission to submit proposals for a seven-year compensation scheme for CO₂ reduction in the fisheries sector, based on the current price of EUR 25 per tonne of CO₂;
9. Asks the Commission to support the creation of a specific fisheries-oriented research and development fund, within the existing Seventh Research and Development Framework Programme, to help finance projects aimed at investigating alternative energy sources and improving energy efficiency in the fisheries sector;
10. Considers that conversion and diversification of fishing gear can contribute to a reduction in the fisheries sector's energy dependence;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to consult widely with the fishing sector and other interested parties to solicit their ideas on the best ways to achieve such an objective, recognising that the situation and therefore the solutions will not necessarily be the same in all fisheries or regions;
12. Urges the Commission to formulate specific proposals to alleviate the situation in the areas most dependent on fisheries;
13. Calls for the establishment of a tripartite dialogue at European level between all the players (public administrations, trade unions and fishermen) to deal with the structural problems of the sector, which are not merely a reflection of the oil price crisis, giving priority to fishermen's working conditions;
14. Requests that at the next Fisheries Ministers Council, due to take place in June 2008, this matter be discussed as a priority and that the necessary measures to resolve the crisis be adopted;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the representatives of the European fisheries sector organisations.