



POSITION PAPER

S&D Priorities for the Fisheries Sector

Fisheries in Europe

A SUSTAINABLE EUROPE

Safeguarding our fisheries and our fishing

Date: 24/02/2016



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1. INTRODUCTION

Fisheries in Europe should rely upon stable resources within a healthy environment, respecting the economic and social aspects of sustainable development. Our responsibility does not stop at Europe's borders; it extends to the oceans of the world. The 2013 Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reform implies new standards to accommodate the expectations of European citizens on fisheries matters, also with regard to imports. To achieve the objectives of the CFP reform, fisheries has to be governed proactively and in partnership with stakeholders, using tools like co-legislation, regionalisation, existing legal frameworks and control measures, involving all stakeholders in the processes.

It is important to recall that the CFP has its roots in the CAP, and that their objective, via public intervention, consisted in feeding Europeans and guaranteeing food autonomy. In an open market situation facing global competition difficulties can occur with regard to food autonomy. Since both policies are more than ever facing strategic challenges in terms of political autonomy, careful public regulation is necessary. Our strong opposition averted the liberalist attempt to introduce the privatisation of fishing rights, which we will continue to fight against also in the future. A coherent regulatory approach with regards to security of fisheries products' supply must be sought also in relation with international trade.

Sustainable development is a process for meeting human development goals, while sustaining the ability of natural systems to continue to provide natural resources and ecosystem services, upon which the economy and society depends. Sustainable development has been described in terms of three vectors; economic, environmental and social. In this context, none of the vectors has priority over the others. This means that all actions have to be viable (environment vs economy), tolerable (environment vs society) and equitable (economy vs society).

Decisions have to rely on the best knowledge available.

2. PROTECTING THE RESOURCES AND THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

The recent CFP reform gave the EU new tools, paradigms and management methods to tackle marine environment and resources protection, in the conception of which the S&D Group was very much involved.

Maximum sustainable yield (MSY): The Basic Regulation clearly states that the new CFP shall apply the precautionary approach¹ to fisheries management, aiming to ensure that populations of harvested species are restored and maintained above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield. Sustainable exploitation rates should be achieved as soon as possible and no later than 2020. While not a panacea, the concept of MSY is used to quantify sustainable pressure limiting extraction of resources in the marine environment translated into total allowable catch (TAC) limits. Mixed fisheries have to be considered individually. Scientific advice has to be taken into account.

Fisheries policy must be scientifically based: Any populist or intuitive decision can have detrimental repercussions. From 2010 to 2013, the number of stocks at MSY rose from 10 to 25 in the Atlantic, mainly under quotas. During the same period, the number of stocks at MSY decreased from 21 to 12 in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, mainly managed by fishing effort. Overall, 95% of stocks are overfished in the Mediterranean. Data is insufficient and far from accurate. It is imperative that data be collected to fully calibrate the activity according to MSY and avoid systematic recourse to the precautionary approach which must be an exception rather than a common mode of management. Where data is unreliable, the precautionary approach is all the more necessary.

¹ The 'precautionary approach to fisheries management' means an approach according to which the absence of adequate scientific information should not justify postponing or failing to take management measures to conserve target species, associated or dependent species and non-target species and their environment (Basic Regulation, Article 4).

The ecosystem-based approach to fisheries has also emerged in the new CFP and the S&D Group supports the notion that the regulation of a species should not unbalance the ecosystem.

Multi-annual plans have potential to be an excellent management tool complementing the maximum catch authorisations. The support of multiannual plans for the recovery and management of several species of the respective ecosystem and the extension of them to other fishing grounds at risk is crucial. The 2013 CFP reform makes multiannual plans a cornerstone of European fisheries management. The Basic Regulation explicitly laid down the key components of multiannual plans. The EU must commit to implement multiannual plans in line with the new CFP.

Discarding, the detrimental practice of throwing unwanted fish overboard will be phased out between 2015 and 2019, with the gradual implementation of the landing obligation. The discard ban will lead to more reliable data on fish stocks, support better management and improve resource efficiency. It is also an incentive for fishermen to apply technical innovation to their vessels and to use more selective gear in order to avoid unwanted catches. Member States need to distribute quotas in a mix that reflects, as far as possible, the expected composition of species in their fisheries. They should consider adjustments through quota swaps with other Member States in cases of a mismatch between available quotas and fishing patterns.

Concerning environmental conservation, it is essential that all possible intervention scenarios be considered. Sustainability of stocks is vital for the survival and development of the fishing industry, but it should not be necessary to ban an activity if alternative environmentally effective solutions can help to preserve jobs. The least impacting scenario for the three pillars of sustainable development must always be the one used. Systematic bans should be a last resort.

Several new fishing instruments are being used without proper environmental impact assessment. It is positive if they allow for faster catches (lower footprint and higher profits) and increase in security. Nevertheless, before applying new technologies they

should be tested and the social and environmental impact assessed. Among them, as an example, fishing aggregating devices are now massively used, without proper assessment. The S&D Group will ensure that new technologies are properly studied before implementing them in the industry.

Objectives/actions:

- ✓ Restore and maintain populations above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield in order to maintain the long term social and economic sustainability of fishing fleets
- ✓ Management decisions must be based on reliable and appropriate scientific advice, and also provide for flexibility to integrate new scientific advice as quickly as possible
- ✓ Strive for a holistic approach in multiannual management plans
- ✓ Phase out the wasteful practice of discarding and reducing unwanted catches through facilitating innovation and selectivity in the fisheries sector that optimises fishing in a sustainable and environmentally adequate way
- ✓ Member States need to be flexible when allocating quotas
- ✓ Ensure the environmental adequacy of exploitation gear

3. THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DIMENSION

Despite several reforms since fisheries became a Community policy area in 1983, the EU fisheries sector has been declining steadily over the years. Depletion of natural resources, overfishing and declining job opportunities have persisted despite attempts to bring about change. The new reformed CFP aims at creating a new and effective legal framework for a more sustainable EU fisheries sector. This should also include a simplification of administrative procedures in all aspects of the fisheries sector, including aquaculture.

The number of EU vessels in February 2014 was 87,445². In terms of direct employment, according to the latest figures from the Commission, there are 116,094 jobs in Europe, the majority of which are located in Spain with 32,194 jobs, followed by Italy with 20,599 jobs. While one job at sea generates four jobs on land, the processing sector alone accounted for 115,651 jobs in 2011. The aquaculture sector represents about 33,019 jobs. Fishing accounts for a very high number of jobs in many coastal areas and islands. Therefore, without giving in to our environmental goals, it is essential to adopt a multi-criteria approach to avoid damaging the sector under the influence of successive reforms.

The profession is changing: Fishermen have integrated environmental issues related to their business. In many countries, training has evolved. It is also essential that the training of professional fishermen be generalised, to enable them to incorporate EU Regulation, to appropriate it and to be its guardians. Still today, not all European countries have training for fishermen or maritime schools.

Although the definition of **artisanal fishing** is still under debate, it is important to emphasise that family businesses, or those where the boss is also the fisherman, need to be supported. In this sense, there is a clear need to empower the role of women in fisheries and, above all, to make the sector attractive enough for young people. These are bare minimum requirements to keep people in coastal areas and secure territorial cohesion.

The Common Market Organisation (CMO) reform of 2013 contained many steps in the right direction. But it is necessary to ensure that fishermen can continue to achieve reasonable prices on the market. The S&D Group will defend this approach.

Aquaculture: As a continuation of our call for the promotion of an aquaculture sector that is competitive, stable, sustainable and environmentally adapted and in line with the scope of the CFP, the S&D Group stresses the need for environmentally friendly

² Source: European Commission, [Facts and Figures on the Common Fisheries Policy](#)

aquaculture and continued support for it. In its Special Report No. 10/2014³, the European Court of Auditors states that the EU aquaculture sector has been stagnating for several years while worldwide aquaculture production has increased. The report also points out that the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) has not been effective in supporting the sustainable development of aquaculture.

The S&D Group considers it essential to foster growth of accomplished craftsmanship, such as traditional shellfish aquaculture, in addition to supporting the creation of new production methods. Aquaculture must move away from the use of antibiotics and pesticides, as is the case today and it must not destroy natural habitats nor put excessive pressure on natural fish stocks.

The S&D Group is convinced that consumer protection and clear labelling must be fostered and seafood fraud must be stopped. Seafood products must meet health and sustainability standards, labelling must be reliable. Citizens need to be able to make the right choices. Information must be more transparent and easily accessible, labelling standards need to be harmonised and clear. Seafood fraud and species substitution are widely spread; illegally caught fish enters the seafood market. Traceability must be improved by means of innovative tools. DNA barcoding could be an option.

Objectives/actions:

- ✓ Prevent further damage to the EU fisheries sector
- ✓ Simplify licensing and administrative procedures
- ✓ Provide harmonised multi-disciplinary training for fishermen
- ✓ Support and protect family businesses and empower women and young people in the fisheries sector
- ✓ Provide incentives and support to fishermen

³ [European Court of Auditors' Special Report No. 10/2014](#): The effectiveness of European Fisheries Fund support for aquaculture

- ✓ Support the introduction of relevant environmental aspects in aquaculture and use the EMFF to foster the growth of traditional aquaculture as well as new production methods
- ✓ Foster consumer awareness through transparent and accessible labelling and guarantee health and sustainability standards for seafood products
- ✓ Stop seafood fraud and improve traceability

4. GOVERNANCE

The legal framework for fisheries gives the European institutions broad powers over fisheries management to an extent that exceeds any other European policy. Member States are bound by strict top-down rules negotiated by the co-legislators (European Parliament, Council and Commission). There has been some conflict on the legal interpretation of the legislative procedure which is under ECJ scrutiny. An inter-institutional task force was set up to find a provisional solution to the legal deadlock. The European approach to decision-making should take into account all relevant stakeholders, such as fishermen, merchants, trade unions, consumer unions and NGOs, scientists, politicians, the administration.

Regionalisation: The CFP reform aims to put an end to the micro-management and one-size-fits-all approach of European fisheries from Brussels. Regionalisation and more extensive stakeholder consultation are key to this new approach. Member States with a direct management interest can submit joint recommendations to the European Commission, which are then transformed into EU law. The involvement of advisory councils is crucial in order for management measures to be established in line with the wide variety of situations across Europe and the requirements of those directly affected. Advisory councils bring together representatives of the industry, trade unions as well as other interest groups such as NGOs and consumer organisations of a particular geographical area. They must be consulted and should give advice to the Commission and to Member States on fisheries management in their area.

In order to be successful, this new type of governance must reflect a regional and cross-border, rather than national, approach.

Fisheries control systems, including surveillance, inspections, data collection and enforcement are conducted by the EU Member States through national authorities and inspectors. To oversee the implementation of the CFP, a control system was established in 2010 and is laid down in the Control Regulation. The control system aims at making sure that no more than the allowed amounts of fish are caught, that rules and sanctions are applied to all fisheries consistently and that traceability of fisheries products in the supply chain is ensured, etc. As a consequence of the new CFP and in order to avoid constant and complex changes, it is of utmost importance to review the Control Regulation as soon as possible.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) depletes fish stocks and destroys marine habitats; it distorts competition, penalises honest fishermen and weakens in particular the fisheries sector of developing countries. The EU Regulation to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing has been in force since 2010. Fisheries products must be validated as legal by the competent flag state or exporting state in order to be imported to or exported from the EU. An IUU vessel list is issued regularly, based on IUU vessels identified by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations. The IUU Regulation also offers the possibility to blacklist states that do not act against illegal fishing activities.

The new sustainable partnership agreements with third countries include strict control measures and the provision of support to fight IUU fishing. EU operators who fish illegally anywhere in the world, under any flag, face substantial penalties proportionate to the economic value of their catch.

With respect to **environmental legislation**, the S&D Group is fully committed to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) with the aim to achieve good environmental status by 2020 including the protection of marine biodiversity. The objectives of marine protected areas and closed areas are important in this context.

Objectives/actions:

- ✓ Ensure that the knowledge and experience of all stakeholders in a relevant geographical area is duly taken into account and guarantee the consultation of advisory councils
- ✓ Speed up the process for a new Control Regulation
- ✓ Continue to fight IUU fishing worldwide while ensuring coherence between our fisheries and trade policies
- ✓ Ensure that fisheries policy-making always takes account of MSFD principles

5. THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION

Sustainable fisheries agreements with third countries allow EU vessels to fish exclusively for surplus stocks of the country concerned, in a legally regulated environment. The focus for fisheries agreements is on resource conservation, environmental sustainability, and fostering the social and economic development of these countries, having particular regard to the protection of human rights that such agreements shall guarantee through an explicit human rights clause. The EU pays the partner countries a financial contribution for the access as well as sectoral financial support to enhance their administrative and scientific capacity. The contribution to access costs by EU ship-owners should be gradually increased.

Just as agricultural products, seafood is under strong global competition.

Indeed, the European norms and standards that are the foundation of our values result in higher production costs than elsewhere. It is therefore imperative to pay very special attention to free trade agreements so that they are fair and equitable including for European fishermen and do not contradict our policy objectives in fisheries.

As the world's largest market for imported fish and fishery products, the EU has the potential to change behaviour through commercial incentives and international trade. Illegally caught fish and fishery products produced under unacceptable labour conditions need to be banned from being imported into the EU. Since the entering into force of the IUU Regulation in 2010, tangible progress has been made: Non-cooperating third countries cannot import their products to the EU. The S&D Group fully supports the Commission in its efforts to tackle illegal fishing and the disrespect of labour and human rights. However, these measures can only be effective if proper controls are carried out.

Objectives/actions:

- ✓ Promote sustainable fishing in third countries by making EU sectoral support more targeted to help social and economic development and subject to regular monitoring
- ✓ Ensure fair free trade agreements
- ✓ Guarantee that every fish and fishery product imported into the EU is produced under acceptable labour and human rights standards
- ✓ Keep pressure to states to combat IUU fishing and enhance controls

6. BLUE GROWTH: FISHING FOR THE FUTURE

Over the past decades, human activities at sea have multiplied. The potential for growth and jobs is enormous and should be used within the ecological limits of the marine environment. With the related upstream and downstream industries, fisheries and aquaculture play an important role in the marine economy. The creation of synergies with other sectors could be beneficial to further their potential (e.g. tourism activities related to fisheries, use of aquaculture products in local gastronomy, circular economy, etc.) and should be promoted. Moreover, responsible fisheries and aquaculture are key to sustainable development and a healthy marine eco-system. More research and scientific data is needed, for which EMFF funding is available, in

order to achieve a balance between the good environmental state of the oceans and strong fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

For several years now, fishing has had to share its territory with other uses, more and more conflicts arise. In terms of marine activities, marine energy and mining are the greediest in surface or impact. It is important that fishing be integrated into this vision of the future of the sea that is blue growth and that local governance tools such as maritime spatial planning are put in place to enable collaborative decision making, fair and effective in terms of distribution of the marine space.

It is very important to take into account the opinion of local populations from the very beginning of the process, especially of young people and women, as participation is the key for success of development strategies.

Objectives/actions:

- ✓ Push for (further) creation and implementation of sea basin strategies
- ✓ Use EMFF funding in order to facilitate marine research and innovation to obtain up-to-date and comprehensive fisheries data to create a basis for informed policy making and to boost sustainable growth