



Maritime Affairs & Fisheries: The results of the CFP Green Paper are published and a stakeholder meeting is held

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Summary: The European Commission has published a synthesis of the written responses from stakeholders it obtained from a consultation on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy held last year. These results were presented to stakeholders face-to-face in a large conference held in Spain on the 2-3rd May. The Commission has also been consulting stakeholders at a series of meetings in Brussels on key issues for the reform.

Synthesis of the Consultation on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

The European Commission has published a synthesis of the stakeholder consultation responses to the Green Paper on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in the form of a Working Staff Document¹. A total of 382 contributions (plus a mass email campaign of 1329 responses) were received by the Commission during the consultation period from April to December 2009. Of the total, 117 contributions were submitted by fishing industry-related organisations, and 63 were received from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The remaining contributions were provided by Member State administrations, academia and the general public. Stakeholders commented on all topics highlighted in the Green Paper including the key issues being governance, access to resources, a differentiated regime for small-scale coastal fleets, integration of the CFP into the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), and the knowledge base for the policy.

With respect to the future governance of the CFP, the responses generally expressed support for decision-making where the Council and European Parliament adopt the overarching principles and policy objectives. Indeed, calls were made for the elimination of short-term, top-down management and taking detailed negotiations away from the Council. Stakeholders generally agreed that decision-making should have a long-term focus in an ecosystem context, and many advocated the delegation of powers in specific fields, such as technical measures. With regards to increased regionalisation of decision-making, a significant number of stakeholders identified the need for a separate regional body, with varying responsibilities and degrees of power. Most, including the European Parliament see the role of this new body as one which will facilitate dialogue and discussion. Others envisage a regional body as the implementing entity for long-term plans with some scope for taking operative

regulating decisions. Regarding the composition of the regional body, most contributions envisage it to be Member State led. In some cases membership of industry and stakeholders is advocated, while others propose the stakeholders keep an advisory role through the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs).

On the issue of access to resources, the Green Paper questioned the retention of the relative stability principle, suggesting alternatives such as a more market-based model for fishing rights, or effort based management in mixed fisheries. A large majority of respondents (including most Member States) were in favour of retaining the principle of relative stability, as it provides security and stability. A small number of respondents were in favour of some sort of revision of the principle, towards market-based rights allocation or effort-based management. A number of environmental NGOs called for radical change to resource allocation based on environmental or equity criteria.

The Green Paper's suggestion of having a differentiated regime for small-scale coastal fleets (because of their links to local communities, use of passive and selective gear, and lower fuel consumptions) received support from the European Parliament and some Member States. However, some respondents noted that problems might arise when different fleets target the same stocks in the same grounds, and many responses highlighted that small-scale coastal fisheries can have a considerable impact on the resources so they should not be exempted from conservation and control measures. The variety of situations across the EU lead to a large number of respondents favouring a flexible approach, adapting the definition of small-scale fleets to the specifics of the region or fishery. Many responses suggested the definitions be based on a number of selection criteria, including vessel length, radius of the fishery, trip duration, catch volumes, and gear type. Social criteria such as link to the local/regional community were also suggested.

On the issue of integrating the CFP into the broader maritime policy context, stakeholders view the development of the IMP as an opportunity to have a greater voice regarding the activities of other sea users, and to further influence political decisions which impact on fisheries. A large majority were in favour of bringing the CFP in line with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD); however opinions differed over how that integration should be done. In general the fishing industry argued that fisheries should be prioritised over other activities, and environmental NGOs favoured equal weighting of fisheries and environmental interests.

Finally, with regards to the knowledge base for the policy, there was a consensus among stakeholders that the CFP must be based on the best available scientific knowledge. Some were of the opinion that scientific advice should always be followed. The majority of contributions were concerned about the availability and quality of scientific data (e.g. social and economic data, discards data, etc). Suggestions to address this problem included calls for greater investment in research and data collection, the creation of incentives for fishermen to provide good data, and some propose a new EU structure to ensure better coordination of resources.

Stakeholder conference in La Coruna, Spain

The results of the Green Paper consultation were followed up by a large stakeholder conference on the reform of the CFP on the 2nd and 3rd of May in La Coruna in Spain^{2,3}. The conference was hosted by the Spanish Presidency and the Commission, and its aim was to review the results of the Green Paper consultation and allow a further opportunity for public consultation and input to the informal Council meeting held 4th and 5th of May in Vigo. The stakeholders, including representatives from Member State administrations, RACs, industry, NGOs and members of the European Parliament participated in the consultation in Vigo and a summary of the discussion is soon to be posted on the Commission website.

Prior to this meeting in Vigo, the Commission hosted three workshops on three themes, governance, resource management, and small scale coastal fleets in Brussels. The presentations and summary of the debates at these three workshops have been posted on DG Mare's website.

Next steps

The results of both the stakeholder conference and the Council meeting will feed into the future developments on the reform and contribute towards an impact assessment of proposals coming forward at the end of the year. A Council meeting in Luxembourg in 28 to 29 June will be the next opportunity for ministers to discuss the reform. The conclusive phase of the reform will come at the end of the year when the Commission will weigh up the options and alternatives and produce a legislative proposal to negotiate with the Council and the Parliament.

References

1. SEC (2010) 428 final. Commission Staff Working Document, Synthesis of the Consultation on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, Brussels, 16.4.2010 [http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/sec\(2010\)0428_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/sec(2010)0428_en.pdf)
2. Europa Press Release, Conference on the Reform of the CFP, La Coruna, 2-3 May 2010, 04.05.2010, http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/news_and_events/events/seminar_020510/index_en.htm
3. Europolitics, Tough debate ahead on CFP reform, Anne Eckstein, 03.05.2010, <http://www.europolitics.info/sectorial-policies/tough-debate-ahead-on-cfp-reform-artb270759-11.html>

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