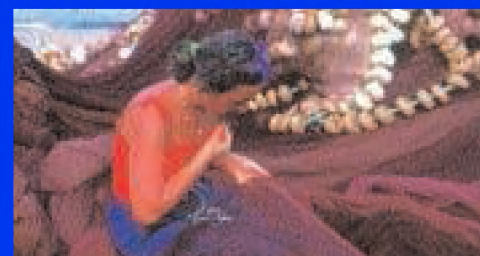
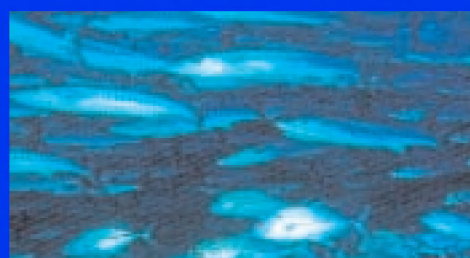
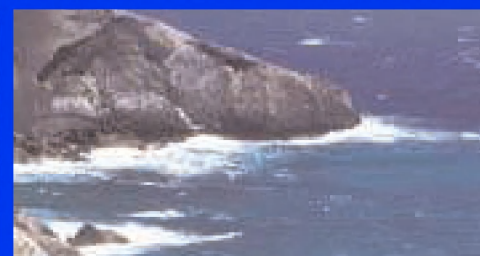
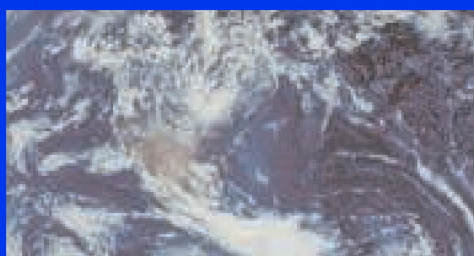
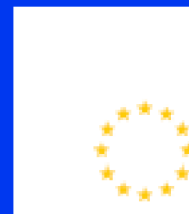


COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION ON THE REFORM OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY ROADMAP



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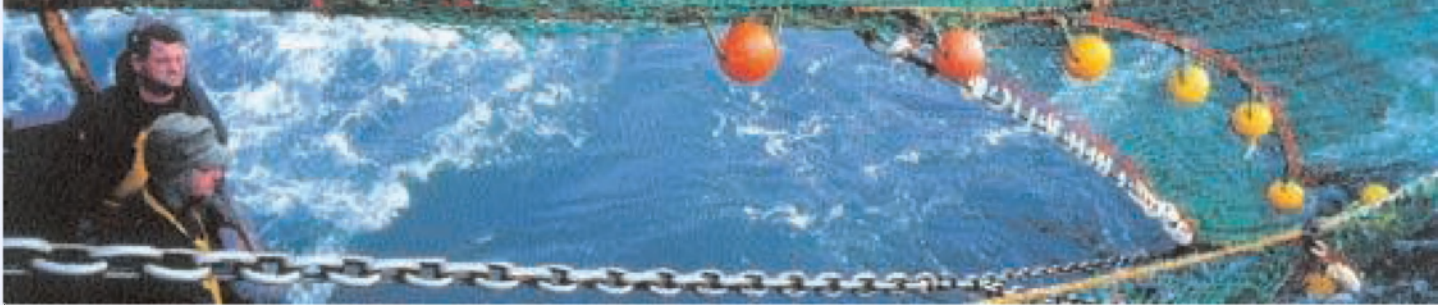
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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION ON THE REFORM OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

>	INTRODUCTION	3
>	OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY	5
>	REFORMS	6
1	CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES	7
1.1	A new multi-annual framework for conservation of resources and management of fisheries	7
1.2	Strengthening of technical measures	8
1.3	Industrial fishing	8
1.4	Fisheries Management in the Mediterranean Sea	8
1.5	Incorporating environmental concerns into fisheries management	9
1.6	An Action Plan for the improvement of scientific advice for fisheries management	9
2	REPERCUSSION OF THE CONSERVATION POLICY ON THE FISHING FLEET	10
2.1	New rules on the granting of aid to the fleet	10
2.2	Measures to limit fleet capacity	11
3	ACCESS TO WATERS AND RESOURCES	12
4	CONTROL AND ENFORCEMENT	13
4.1	A new regulatory framework for control and enforcement	13
4.2	Compensation and sanctions	13
4.3	An Action Plan for co-operation in enforcement	13
4.4	A Joint Fisheries Inspection Structure	14
4.5	Implementing measures	14
5	INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES	15
5.1	An Action Plan to eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries (IUU)	15
5.2	An Action Plan to improve, at the regional and sub-regional levels, the evaluation of stocks that are accessible to Community fishermen outside Community waters.	15
5.3	An integrated framework for fisheries partnerships at national and/or regional level	16
5.4	To build, within regional fisheries organisations, new strategic alliances, in particular with coastal developing countries	16
6	AQUACULTURE	17

7	THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY	18
7.1	Socio-economic impacts of fishing effort limitation schemes	18
7.2	A new strategy to address structural adjustment	18
7.3	Bilateral consultations with the Member States	19
7.4	Action Plan to counter the socio-economic consequences of fisheries restructuring	19
7.5	Reprogramming structural funds to take advantage of existing instruments	19
7.6	A strategy for integrated development of coastal areas dependent on fishing	20
7.7	Reinforcement of Sectoral dialogue	20
7.8	Assessment of working conditions and safety in fishing and fish processing	20
8	ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES IN THE UNION	21
9	EFFECTIVE AND PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING	22
9.1	The establishment of Regional Advisory Councils for fisheries management (RACs) to ensure greater stakeholder involvement at the regional and local level	22
9.2	Clarifying management responsibilities to meet local management needs and emergency situations effectively	23
9.3	The drawing-up of a European Code of responsible fisheries practices with the active participation of fishermen and other interested parties	23
9.4	Dialogue with third country stakeholders	23
9.5	Delegation of powers and simplification of rules	23
9.6	Actions to promote transparency and peer review	24
>	CONCLUSION	25
	Structural, economic and social measures	25
	Conservation	26
	International aspects	26
	Control and enforcement	26
	Other measures	26
>	ANNEX: THE CURRENT STATE OF THE MAIN COMMUNITY FISH STOCKS	27



INTRODUCTION

The current Community legislation foresees the review of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in the course of 2002. It also provides that the Council shall decide before 31 December 2002 on any necessary adjustments to be made, in particular on access to certain Community waters¹.

In March 2001, the Commission published the report on the fisheries situation in the Community², foreseen by the current legislation, and a Green Paper on the Future of the Common Fisheries Policy³, discussing the weaknesses and challenges facing the CFP and presenting a number of options for its reform.

The first shortcoming of the CFP is the alarming state of many fish stocks that are outside safe biological limits. Stock sizes and landings have declined dramatically over the last 25 years. For many commercially important demersal stocks, the numbers of mature fish were about twice as high in the early 1970's than in the late 1990's. If current trends continue many Community fish stocks will collapse⁴.

At the same time, the fishing capacity of the Community fleets far exceeds that required to harvest the available fishery resources in a sustainable manner. The most recent scientific advice from ICES suggests that the level of fishing mortality of the main Community fish stocks needs to be reduced by between one-third and one-half, depending on the type of fishery (flatfish, other demersal, pelagic) and area concerned, in order to ensure sustainable fishing.

Besides a shrinking resource base and fleet over-capacity, most of the Community fisheries sector faces economic fragility, poor financial profitability and steadily declining employment. Over the period 1990-1998, there has been a loss of 66,000 jobs in the catching sector, an overall decrease of 22%. Over the same period, employment in the processing sector has declined by 14%.

Current control and enforcement arrangements have been insufficient to ensure a level-playing field across the Union undermining the credibility of the CFP.

Stakeholders have not been sufficiently involved in policy shaping. This lack of involvement undermines support for and compliance with the conservation measures adopted.

The international environment has changed dramatically over the last twenty years. The legitimate aspirations of many developing States to develop their fishing industry and the requirements of sustainable development and responsible fisheries impose new challenges to the CFP.

Increasing demand for fisheries products and high prices for fish reflecting its scarcity have sheltered fishermen against the effects of declining stocks. This trend should reduce the need for public financial support to the fishing industry.

The Commission launched, on the basis of the Green Paper, a wide consultation with all interested parties. A public hearing was held by the Commission in Brussels in June 2001. Over 300 comments on the Green Paper were submitted to the Commission, from Member States, regional and local authorities, government agencies, the fishing, processing and aquaculture industries, fishworkers, recreational fishermen, non-governmental organisations dealing with environment and development policies and other interested parties⁵.

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¹ Article 14 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 3760/92 of 20 December 1992 establishing a Community framework for fisheries and aquaculture, OJ L 389, 31.12.1992, p. 1.

² SEC(2001) 418, 419, 420, 20.3.2001

³ COM(2001) 135 final, 20.3.2001

⁴ A list of Community fish stocks which are currently outside biological limits is provided in Annex 1.

⁵ The consultation revealed a widespread support for the need for a substantial reform of existing policy instruments in order to improve conservation of resources, for greater stakeholder involvement and for a more level-playing field with respect to control and enforcement.

Several debates took place in the Fisheries Council during 2001 on the basis of the Green Paper. The European Parliament adopted in January 2002 a resolution calling for “a fisheries policy based on rational and responsible management of resources which has as its rationale the preservation of fish stocks and the maintenance of the way of life of those traditionally dependent on the sea and preserves the fundamental principle which derives from these objectives, namely relative stability; a policy which facilitates a fair and equitable regime for distributing fisheries resources tailored to the specific needs of fisheries dependent regions and which is impartial, stable, enforceable and under Community control”. The Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions also issued opinions following the publication of the Green Paper.

The debate on the future of the CFP revealed more clearly not only the shortcomings and internal systemic weaknesses of the Common Fisheries Policy, such as poor enforcement, the lack of a multi-annual management perspective, fleet over-capacity and insufficient stakeholder involvement, but also the external challenges that the Community will need to address over the coming years resulting from new trends in world fisheries.

It also showed a broad consensus that the current policy is incapable of reversing the increasing threats to important fish stocks and of providing economic sustainability to the fisheries sector.

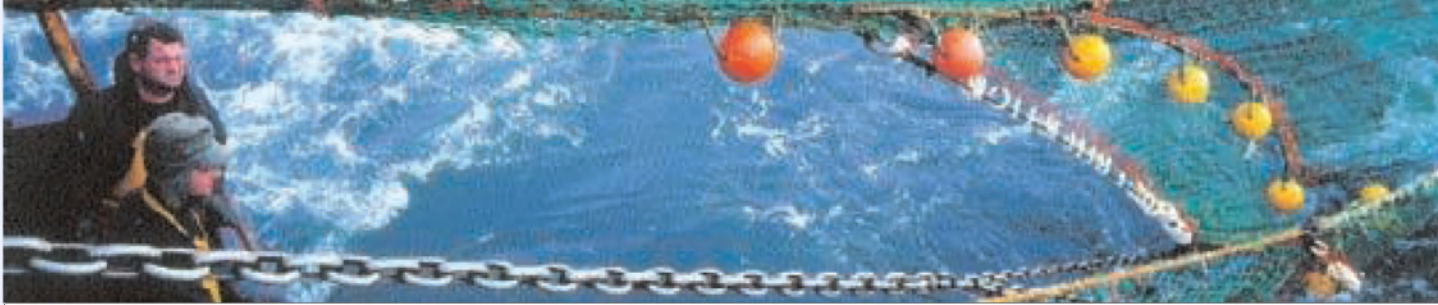
Finally, the debate on the reform clearly demonstrated that the future CFP will succeed only if environmental, economic and social sustainability are put at the heart of its objectives and if good governance principles such as openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence are fully implemented. A broad consensus among the different stakeholders and interested parties can be built on this basis.

The over-exploitation of fish stocks is a major threat to global sustainable development. It was identified in the Community's strategy for sustainable development and the European Council in Göteborg called for the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy to “address the overall fishing pressure by adapting the EU fishing effort to the level of available resources, taking into account the social impact and the need to avoid over-fishing”. It is this challenge that the current set of proposals has to meet.

Today's challenges and, in particular, the critical situation of many stocks, call for a thorough and urgent reform of the CFP.

The purpose of this Communication is to present the Commission's action programme for reform of the CFP and a roadmap for its implementation.





OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

The future CFP needs clear and coherent objectives and principles. Its main areas of activity and priorities also need to be determined.

The reform must lead to a new CFP capable of providing sustainable development in environmental, economic and social terms. This will be achieved through measures aiming at:

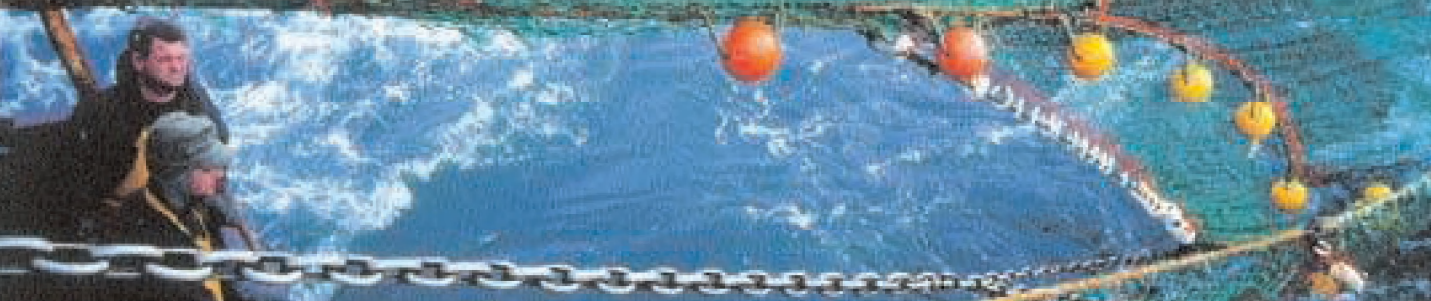
- responsible and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture activities that contribute to healthy marine ecosystems;
- an economically viable and competitive fisheries and aquaculture industry which will benefit the consumer;
- a fair standard of living for those who depend on fishing activities.

In order for the CFP to function effectively, it is essential that good governance principles are embodied into the Policy. The new CFP must therefore aim at ensuring:

- openness and transparency, in particular by improving the quality and transparency of the scientific advice and data on the basis of which policy decisions are taken;
- participation, through greater and broader stakeholder involvement from conception to implementation of policy, including at local and regional level;
- accountability, through a clearer definition of responsibilities at European, national and local level;
- effectiveness, through decision-making processes whose results are properly evaluated, controlled and complied with and
- coherence with other Community policies, in particular environment and development policies, through a cross-sectoral approach.

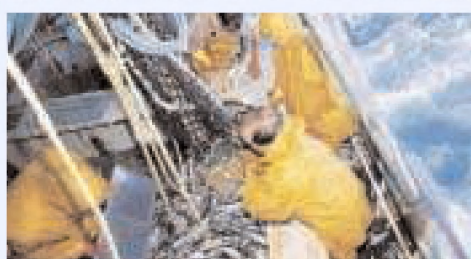
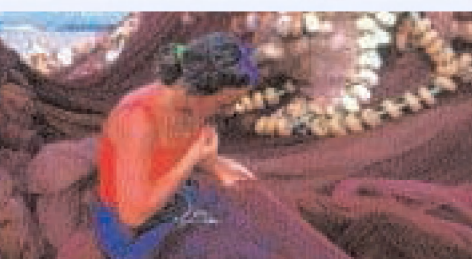
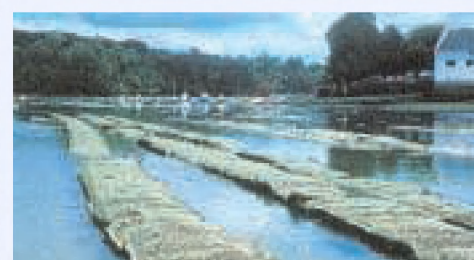
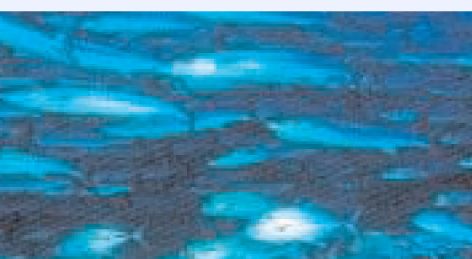
Within this new framework the CFP must give priority to the actions outlined below.

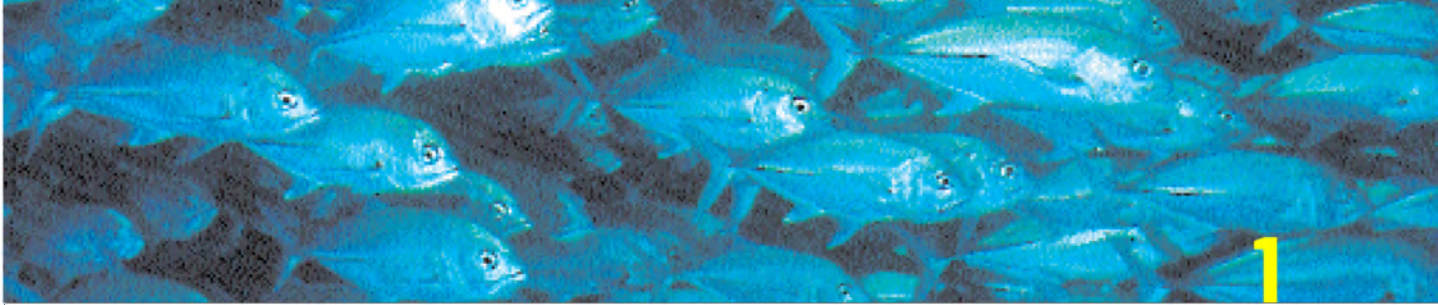




REFORMS

- 1 CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES
- 2 REPERCUSSION OF THE CONSERVATION POLICY ON THE FISHING FLEET
- 3 ACCESS TO WATERS AND RESOURCES
- 4 CONTROL AND ENFORCEMENT
- 5 INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES
- 6 AQUACULTURE
- 7 THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY
- 8 ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES IN THE UNION
- 9 EFFECTIVE AND PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING





CONSERVATION OF RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES

More effective conservation and management of fisheries resources is a clear priority of the Common Fisheries Policy. It is a precondition for achieving other objectives.

The aims of the Commission's new approach to fisheries management are:

- to refocus management on a more long-term approach to securing sustainable fisheries with high yields;
- to manage fishing effort in line with sustainable catching opportunities, which will require an immediate and significant reduction of fishing effort;
- to incorporate environmental concerns into fisheries management, in particular by contributing to bio-diversity protection;
- to move towards an eco-system-based approach to fisheries management;
- to make the best use of harvested resources and avoid waste;
- to support the provision of high-quality scientific advice.

The Commission believes these aims should be the basis for fisheries management in Community and international waters.

To fulfil these aims, the Commission proposes:

1.1. A new multi-annual framework for conservation of resources and management of fisheries.

The Commission proposes multiannual management plans for commercial stocks or group of stocks.

These plans will:

- be based on the best available scientific methods and advice and be designed to ensure sustainable exploitation;
- be consistent with the precautionary approach⁶, in that they will be designed to avoid the risk of collapse, especially by keeping stock size and fishing mortality rates within long-term safe levels⁷;
- be designed to ensure safe recovery of depleted stocks;
- take into account the need to conserve bio-diversity and minimise the impact on habitats;

- within these constraints, be designed to ensure high and stable yields.

In addition, these plans will take into account relevant knowledge about fishing operations and the need to manage fisheries for groups of stocks in certain areas. Account will be taken of the particular needs of the outermost regions of the Union in accordance with Article 299, paragraph 2 of the Treaty.

The plans will in particular lay down:

- Targets for management of the stocks concerned in terms of population size and fishing mortality rates;
- Harvest rules establishing detailed methods for fixing catch and fishing effort limits in such a way that the long-term goals mentioned above will be met, on the basis of the most recent available information about the state of the stocks.

They will also, where appropriate, establish rules for the protection of non-commercial fish species, in particular cetaceans and other marine mammals, and sea-birds.

Where a multi-annual management plan has been agreed, the Council will fix the catch and fishing effort limits for the first fishing year on the basis of the plan and the most recent scientific advice about the state of the stocks. The European Parliament will for the first time be involved in this process. In subsequent years, the operation of the plan will be undertaken by the Commission, assisted by a Management Committee.

>>>

⁶ "Precautionary approach to fisheries management" means management action based on the principle that absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take measure to conserve target species, associated or dependent species and non-target species and their environment. Such action should be: proportional to the chosen level of protection, based on an examination of the potential benefits and costs of action or lack of action and subject to review, in the light of new scientific data.

⁷ See also Commission Communication on the precautionary principle, COM (2001) 1 final of 2.2.2000.

Member States will be responsible for the allocation of quotas and fishing effort between vessels.

1.2. Strengthening of technical measures

With a view to increasing yields from fisheries and to improving their sustainability and reducing their impact on the eco-system, the Commission will come forward with regulatory measures to reduce catches of younger fish, by-catches in mixed fisheries and discards. Such measures will include:

- the introduction of more selective fishing gear, such as nets with larger meshes, square-mesh panels, separator grids, and changes in design and rigging of such gear in order to improve selectivity;
- restrictions on fishing to protect juvenile fish, sensitive non-target species and habitats;
- minimum landing sizes in line with the selectivity of the gear concerned;
- “discard ban trials” in which representative samples of fishing vessels would be encouraged by economic incentives to retain their entire catch;
- the targeting of economic incentives for the use of more selective fishing practices.

The measures introduced will be kept under review and proposals introduced as needed in the light of changes in fish stocks, scientific developments, changes in fishing practices and the development of new fishing gear.

The Commission will also invite the fishing industry to develop, as a supplement to Community rules, a voluntary code of conduct intended to reduce discarding. In addition, the Commission will develop scientific and technical monitoring of fishing practices that result in discarding, and will continue to seek advice on mitigating measures. The Commission will report periodically on progress achieved in reducing discards.

1.3. Industrial fishing

Fishing for conversion to fish meal should target fish for which there is no market for direct human consumption. The enforcement of management measures adopted by the Community has already greatly reduced by-catches of other species which are targets for fisheries for direct human consumption.

Industrial fishing, like other types of fishing, will be subject to the conservation and management measures developed under the CFP, including multi-annual management plans.

The Commission will request ICES to carry out an evaluation of the impact of industrial fishing on marine eco-systems. It will continue to monitor the conduct of industrial fisheries to ensure that their impact on human consumption fish species and other marine species remains low. Improved management of fish stocks which are of interest for both industrial use and human consumption, such as blue whiting, will also be proposed.

1.4. Fisheries Management in the Mediterranean Sea

The general principles of the Community's fisheries management policy are applicable to the Mediterranean. However, the implementation of these principles must take into account the specific characteristics of that region.

Commission considers that the following actions should be undertaken:

- consideration by the Member States concerned of a co-ordinated initiative to establish wider fisheries protection zones;
- Community-level management for highly migratory fish stocks and other shared stocks, such as certain small pelagic and demersal stocks;
- a revision of current technical conservation measures in the Mediterranean Sea, such as revision of mesh sizes and minimum landing sizes, with a view to ensure coherence with Community-level management as described above;
- management schemes for shared stocks based on effort limitation;
- encouraging of co-operation in the Mediterranean Sea, including between fishermen's associations;
- national management for all other issues, within 12-mile zones;
- Community initiatives aiming at strengthening international co-operation for fisheries management in the region, in particular through the regional fisheries organisations concerned.

1.5. Incorporating environmental concerns into fisheries management

In line with Community commitments on biodiversity and environmental protection as agreed at the Cardiff and Göteborg European Councils⁸ the Commission will take account of environmental and ecosystem effects in all the actions described in this Communication. In particular, it will consider environmental and biodiversity aspects when developing multi-annual management plans. Reduction of fishing effort and rebuilding of fish stocks is the most important step in re-establishing ecosystem integrity.

The Commission will develop indicators of environmental impact on the basis of the progress achieved by relevant bodies, including the European Environment Agency, with a view to proposing the adoption of a preliminary set of such indicators early in 2003. These will be used to monitor the extent to which management actions are effective in addressing environmental problems.

The Commission advocates a long-term strategy to promote the protection of vulnerable species, such as cetaceans, sharks, skates and rays and marine birds, and habitats by such means as gear restrictions and closed areas and seasons. As first steps, the Commission will propose during 2002 measures to ensure the protection of sharks, within the FAO International Plan of Action on this subject, including the prohibition of "finning" (the removal of fins and discarding of carcasses) of sharks in Community waters, measures to reduce by-catch of cetaceans and a conservation programme concerning sea-birds.

The Commission will also encourage and support Member States to complete their obligations to protect marine species and habitats in the framework of Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC, undertaking action at Community level, where necessary.

1.6. An Action Plan for the improvement of scientific advice for fisheries management

In addition to continued support for fisheries research under the 6th Framework Programme, the Commission considers that measures have to be taken aiming at improving the quality and timeliness of scientific advice to fisheries managers and providing the necessary financial support. Reliable and consistent scientific advice is essential for effective fisheries management.

These measures include:

- Improvement in data collection, extended to include environmental impact;
- improved support at national and Community level for scientific work in scientific advisory bodies and implementation of appropriate validation and peer-review processes;
- reinforcement of Community structures for scientific advice, in particular the Scientific Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture (SCFA);
- closer co-ordination between the Commission and national fisheries research laboratories concerning priorities and resource allocation in this area;
- the development in the longer term of a European Centre for Fisheries Assessment and Management, bringing together scientific expertise at Community level.

* COM(1999)363 "Nature Conservation and Fisheries Management", COM(2001)143 "Elements of a Strategy for the Integration of Environmental Protection Requirements into the Common Fisheries Policy", and COM(2001)162, Vol. IV "Biodiversity Action Plan for Fisheries".

REPERCUSSION OF THE CONSERVATION POLICY ON THE FISHING FLEET

Fishing effort limits are an essential part of the multiannual management plans referred to in the previous section and will gradually become the prime management instrument for mixed fisheries. They will in general require a reduction in the activity of the existing fleet. Scientific advice currently recommends reduction in fishing effort of up to 60 per cent in several important Community fisheries. Where effort limits are part of a multiannual management plan which foresees a significant reduction in fishing mortality, the reduction in activity will also be large⁹. This will have obvious repercussions for fleet capacity.

The reduction of fishing capacity in response to the fishing effort limits should be the responsibility of the Member States. The role of Community fleet policy will therefore be to create an environment which will encourage this reduction in capacity.

Over-capacity in the fishing fleet not only constitutes a risk to the survival of fish stocks but also produces negative economic effects in the fishing industry. It reduces the ability of each vessel to remain profitable, which in turn reduces the possibility of paying for the modernisation which is necessary for competitiveness. An overall reduction in the level of capital employed in the catching sector is the first essential step towards improving economic performance.

Public aid to investment in the fishing fleet works against this objective. It promotes over-supply of capital by artificially reducing the costs and risks of investment. Each subsidised fishing vessel reduces the productivity and profitability of every other vessel in the fishery concerned. Subsidised and unsubsidised vessels share the same fishing grounds and markets, so competition is distorted. Aid to investment in new fishing vessels also reduces the efficiency of public aid to reduce the fishing fleet.

The Commission proposes the following measures:

2.1. New rules on the granting of aid to the fleet

- Restriction of aid for modernisation, renewal and export of fishing vessels.

There can be no legitimate expectation by Member States that money, earmarked for fleet renewal and modernisation within FIFG programming, will be available for this purpose after MAGP IV has finished at the end of 2002. Article 3 (4) of the current FIFG regulation (2792/1999) provides that "for the remainder of the programming period not yet covered by a multiannual guidance programme approved by the Commission, the programming information shall be purely indicative". Thus after this time any such money will be available for reprogramming to other areas.

Given the urgent need to reduce fishing effort, the use of public aid for new vessels or to make existing vessels more efficient may be counter-productive and can no longer be justified.

The Commission therefore proposes that

- the possibility of granting public aid for the introduction of new capacity be removed;
- public aid for the export of fishing vessels or the establishment of joint enterprises with third countries be removed;
- public aid for modernisation of the fleet be restricted to measures that concern safety on board, more selective fishing techniques or improvement of the quality of production and that do not concern engine power or tonnage¹⁰ (such aid would also be conditional on overall fleet capacity limits being met);
- Member States' programmes under the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) be adapted in order to give priority to measures that will permanently reduce fishing capacity.

⁹ In the case of the recovery plans for cod and hake, for example, the average reduction in fishing effort for the fleets concerned is 43% (COM(2001) 724 final of 11.12.2001).

¹⁰ Investments that would increase the capacity of the vessel measured in terms of tonnage or power, or concern the engine, the hull or spaces inside the vessel cannot be invoked to justify public aid. The Commission may decide on a list of eligible investments that could be supported with public aid.

- Special measures for vessels affected by multi-annual management plans
 - Vessels forced to reduce their activity by more than 25% under the multiannual management plans will be eligible for an increase of 20% in the level of the scrapping premiums available under FIFG;
 - based on the assumption that amounts originally programmed for export or joint ventures are reprogrammed towards scrapping of vessels, the Commission estimates that there will be a need to allocate € 272 million more to scrapping in the period 2003 to 2006 in order to implement the multi-annual management plans. Given the timing of the operation to re-programme funds, € 32 million will be made available as extra money in 2003. For the remaining € 240 million Member States will be called upon to reprogramme amounts allocated under the Structural Funds within the context of their mid-term review;
 - Community co-financing of national aid to tie-up schemes would be available for one year after adoption of the management plan, provided that a re-structuring plan involving scrapping is put into effect for the vessels concerned.



2.2. Measures to limit fleet capacity

MAGPs have shown their limits as a too complicated and insufficiently ambitious tool to manage the fleet. Nevertheless the Commission will ensure that Member States who have not in the past respected their obligations on the withdrawal of capacity from the fleet face legal proceedings.

For the future, the Commission proposes a simple system for limiting fishing capacity.

Within this system an overall ceiling for fishing capacity for national fleets will be fixed, in order to prevent the expansion of fishing fleets and to ensure that Member States have complied with their obligations under MAGP IV.

New fleet “reference levels” will be fixed, based on the final objectives of MAGP IV. Any new entry will have to be accompanied by at least an equivalent withdrawal of capacity (entry/exit ratio of 1 to 1). When capacity is withdrawn with public aid in future the reference levels will be automatically adjusted downwards by the amount of capacity withdrawn.

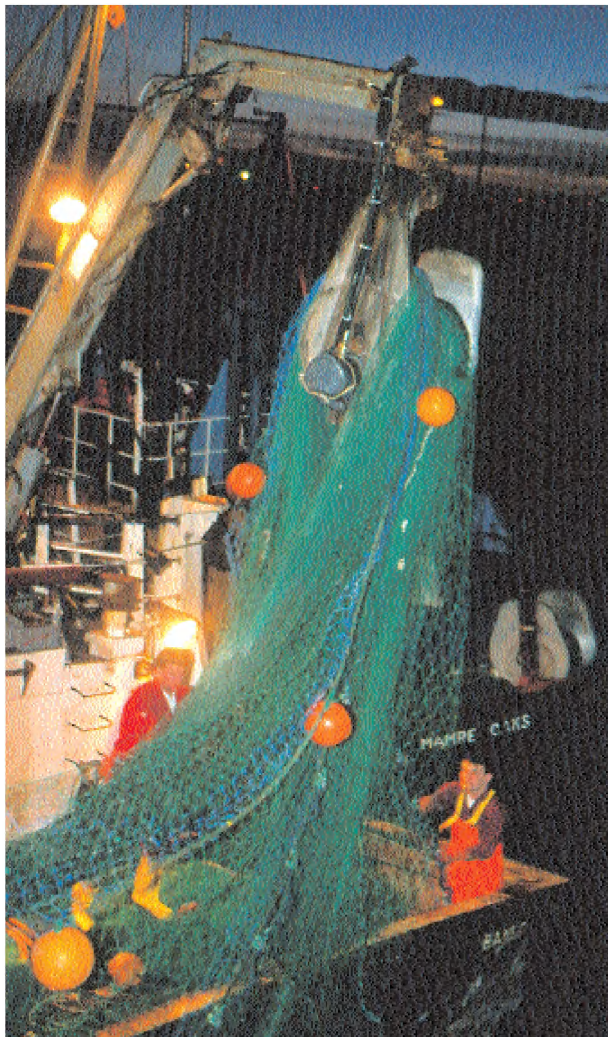
Member States whose fleet does not comply with these reference levels or which does not comply with its reporting obligations on fleet capacity and withdrawal of capacity with public aid will face the withholding of all public aid under FIFG provisions, with the exception of normal aid for scrapping, until it has complied with these obligations. Failure to meet obligations may also result in a reduction in the allocation of fishing opportunities or fishing effort.

The Commission and Member States should regularly exchange information on and monitor progress in the reduction of the capacity of the Community fishing fleet towards lower levels that correspond to sustainable fishing mortality rates over the next years (2003-2006). Progress towards these levels will be assessed by the Peer Review process described in section 9.6 below. The Commission will take appropriate measures in the event that Member States do not comply with reference levels for fleet capacity.

ACCESS TO WATERS AND RESOURCES

Access to fish in the 6-to-12-miles zone will continue to be reserved to the vessels operating out of adjacent ports and those enjoying historical rights, in order to protect the most sensitive part of the coastal zone and to preserve traditional fishing activities in these areas.

In accordance with the Acts of Accession of 1985 and 1994, respectively, all Member States fleets will have access to all Community waters on a non-discriminatory basis, subject to the general access limitations that apply in some areas such as the Shetland Box. From 1 January 2003 access to resources beyond 12 miles will be based on Council decisions in conformity with the objectives of the CFP.

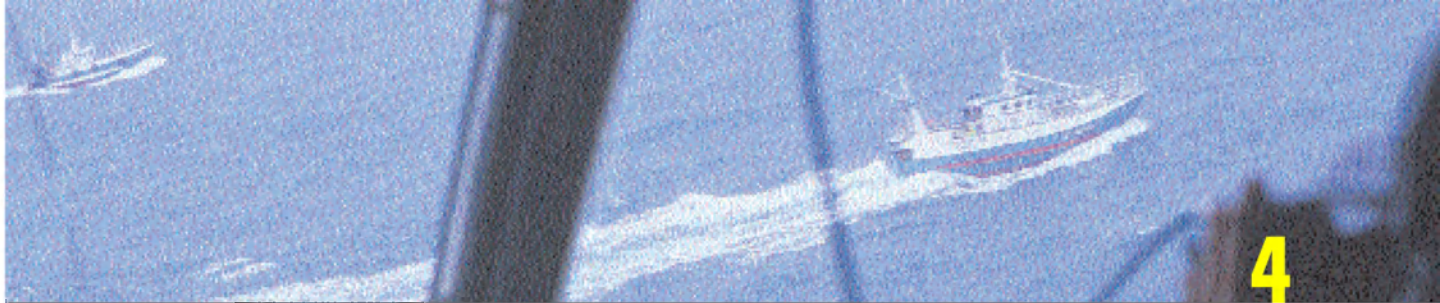


Derogations to the principle of free access to Community waters such as the Shetland Box will have to be reviewed to ensure that only those justified by conservation purposes are maintained.

The Commission proposes:

- to continue the current regime applicable to the 6-to-12-miles zone;
- for Community waters beyond the 6-to-12-miles zones:
 - to identify, before the end of 2003, those access arrangements that correspond to genuine conservation needs and to remove those that do not;
 - to complete the current framework for fishing access by regulating all relevant stocks in Community waters.

Fishing possibilities between Member States will be allocated in accordance with the “relative stability” principle. The Community should, however, decide on an allocation key for each stock. This decision should also take account of any special conditions for allocation, such as the so-called Hague Preferences, thereby removing any uncertainty about how relative stability is to be applied. The Commission considers that this allocation key should be designed to reflect changes in fishing activity over time, by, for instance, basing allocations on an average share of catches over the preceding five or ten years.



CONTROL AND ENFORCEMENT

The Commission proposes a new regulatory framework for control and enforcement and will come forward with an Action Plan for co-operation between national authorities.

4.1. A new regulatory framework for control and enforcement

This framework will respond to the need for simplification of existing provisions and better enforceability of the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy. It also includes a new balance between the basic provisions adopted by the Council after consultation of the European Parliament and implementing measures adopted by the Commission¹¹.

The Commission proposes:

- a clear definition of responsibilities for control and enforcement;
- the basic conditions for engaging in activities related to the exploitation of fish stocks;
- uniform rules for the enforcement of the Common Fisheries Policy including levels for sanction as well as measures to prevent the continuation of serious infringements;
- a Community framework for co-operation and co-ordination between national authorities responsible for control and enforcement and a Community fisheries inspection report;
- a clear definition of the role of the Commission including the powers and duties of Commission inspectors when controlling the implementation of the rules of the CFP by Member States;
- rules for the acceptance by national courts of inspection reports made by Community inspectors or those from another Member State.

In addition, following a feasibility study to be carried out in co-operation with the Member States in 2002, the Commission intends to come forward with a proposal for a Joint Inspection Structure at Community level.

4.2. Compensation and sanctions

The measures proposed in order to increase the effectiveness of the new control and enforcement framework include:

- when a Member State fails to comply with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy, decisions of the Commission on compensation for losses of common resources, in particular in the form of deduction of quota to Member States or, if that is not possible, equivalent financial compensation;
- introduction of rules for the suspension by the competent authorities of fishing permits/licences granted to Community fishing vessels, as a preventive measure, in the case where such vessels have committed serious infringements.

The Commission will also make effective use of the Treaty rules on infringements by Member States in respect of their control and enforcement obligations, including the possibility to ask the Court of Justice to impose a lump sum or penalty payment on the Member States concerned.

4.3. An Action Plan for co-operation in enforcement

The Action Plan will list actions to be implemented jointly by the competent authorities in the Member States and the Commission. These actions will promote co-ordination and co-operation between all authorities involved in fisheries control and contribute to the creation of a common control and enforcement culture throughout the Community.

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¹¹ It will provide the possibility of adoption of secondary legislation and transposition of recommendations adopted by Regional Fisheries Organisations through Commitology rules.

Actions will be identified in the following areas:

- specific monitoring programmes for fisheries subject to recovery plans (fixing of common inspection priorities, benchmarks and harmonised procedures for inspection);
- training and exchanges of inspectors;
- a code of conduct for inspection clarifying the duties of inspectors and the procedures to be followed by both inspectors and masters during inspections;
- strengthening the information exchange and facilitating the data flow between Member States' authorities and inspectors;
- co-operation between inspection authorities and authorities responsible for follow-up of infringements including the establishment of a network of national contact-points.

4.4. A Joint Fisheries Inspection Structure

The Commission intends to propose the establishment before mid-2004, of a joint inspection structure at Community level, which will pool national means of inspection and surveillance in relation to fisheries or other areas and manage them within a Community framework. Pooling of means will include the operation of multinational inspection teams in both Community and international waters.

The joint fisheries inspection structure will be based on the following elements:

- agreement on the form of organisation, its set-up, its scope and the tasks to be performed;
- a definition of the relationships between the structure, national authorities and the Commission;
- the association of interested parties, including the fishing industry, within the joint inspection structure;
- financing for inspection and surveillance.

The establishment of a joint inspection structure will not change the distribution of responsibilities for fisheries control and enforcement between the Commission and the Member States, in which the Member States are primarily responsible for the control and enforcement of Common Fisheries Policy rules and the Commission is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the correct application of Community law by the Member States.

4.5. Implementing measures

The following technical modalities will be included in the implementing measures:

- an extension of vessel monitoring by satellite (VMS):
 - as from 1st January 2003, removal of existing exemptions (vessels operating exclusively within territorial waters or making trips less than 24 hours and extension to all fishing vessels exceeding 15 metres in length),
 - as from 1st January 2004, extension to all fishing vessels exceeding 10 metres in length,
 - by 2004, VMS will be complemented with a remote-sensing vessel detection system;
- stricter VMS rules:
 - prevention of tampering through the adoption of uniform specifications for systems and on board fishing vessels,
 - improved surveillance by compulsory inclusion of speed and course in position reports and uniform reporting frequency;
- a framework for the deployment of observers on board fishing vessels:
 - the tasks of observers on board will include the recording and reporting on the activities of the vessel as well as the level of compliance with applicable rules,
 - procedures for deployment of observers and the arrangements for financing of expenditure incurred by observer schemes,
 - observer schemes will be proposed by the Commission on a case-by-case basis when other control systems are considered inadequate (for example respect of a discard ban, reduction of by-catch or non-target species or use of illegal gear);
- progressive introduction of electronic logbooks (electronic recording and reporting of data on fishing activities) linked to VMS:
 - the Commission will propose further pilot projects by 2003,
 - on the basis of the results of the pilot projects, introduction of electronic logbooks on a voluntary basis for all vessels but compulsory for larger Community fishing vessels (> 24 m) and third country vessels operating in Community waters.

INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES

The Community's actions in this field shall aim to promote and strengthen international co-operation and ensure sustainable and responsible fisheries outside Community waters with the same commitment as in its own waters. The Community shall aim to ensure sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources both in its own external fisheries activities and in international trade in fisheries products.

This new approach is reflected in the bilateral and/or regional sectoral policy dialogues, which take into account interests of the Community and the legitimate development aspirations of its partners, and which respect their ownership of the development strategy. The Community will thus contribute to the sustainable development of world fisheries, at the same time encouraging a greater participation and responsibility of the stakeholders and a greater flexibility and transparency, as required by the principle of good governance. In this way the coherence between the CFP and other Community policies will be increased in the external field.

In this context, access to the waters of third countries will be limited to surplus stocks as defined by UNCLOS (Article 62).

These actions will be undertaken under a Strategy for European distant-water fisheries that the Commission will propose, consisting of the following elements:

5.1. An Action Plan to eradicate illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries (IUU)

The IUU Action Plan will involve initiatives to:

- strengthen and complete the international legal order with a view to eliminating both the use of flag-of-convenience vessels and the practice of landings in ports without proper controls. This should be achieved, inter alia, through the adoption of international instruments that will define both the notion of "genuine link" to the flag state for fishing vessels, so that such vessels are properly controlled by the flag States, and the rights and obligations of the port States to ensure the effectiveness of conservation and management measures;

- reform the Community framework for control of fishing activities outside Community waters and in Community ports, as specified in chapter 3.4.

5.2. An Action Plan to improve, at the regional and sub-regional levels, the evaluation of stocks that are accessible to Community fishermen outside Community waters.

This action will demonstrate the Community's commitment to contribute to responsible fisheries through its participation in stock evaluation, for the mutual benefit of Community's fishermen and the third countries involved.

The Community will take initiatives through the relevant regional fisheries organisations and through the FAO. The first such initiative will be undertaken in West African waters. In this way, the Community will aim to obtain better scientific advice on the state of the stocks before concluding new partnership agreements with the third countries concerned.

5.3. An integrated framework for fisheries partnerships at national and/or regional level.

The purpose of this action will be to enhance a policy dialogue between the EC and developing countries, in the spirit of the Cotonou agreement (Article 8) (notably those which have concluded fisheries agreements with the Community), in order to help them develop a fisheries policy that can gradually improve their capacity to achieve sustainable fisheries while contributing to their development objectives, including the maintenance of the quality, diversity and availability of fisheries resources in the context of food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

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For this purpose, the Community needs to identify the instruments of co-operation at the bilateral and regional levels that can contribute to this objective and promote the various European public interventions and the mutual interest of the parties to establish sustainable fisheries. The integrated framework will define the objectives, instruments and procedures of this new approach.

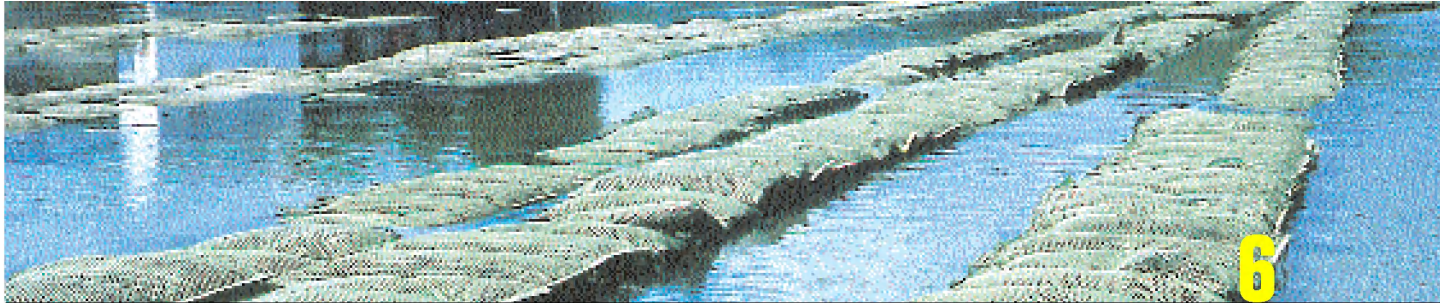
Within this framework, Community public aid under fisheries Agreements should be increasingly focussed on helping partner countries to implement sustainable fisheries management and to develop their own fisheries sector, while the owners of the Community vessels benefiting from such Agreements should progressively assume greater responsibility for the financial compensation paid to partner countries in exchange for fishing rights.

This new partnership should also enable fisheries agreements to benefit from the same systems of monitoring environmental, economic and social impact as the other agreements with the countries concerned. During the discussions with partner countries the Commission will conduct a sustainability impact assessment on the basis of the best available data.

5.4. To build, within regional fisheries organisations, new strategic alliances, in particular with coastal developing countries.

In order to defend the legitimate objectives of its fishing industry, the EC must seek new alliances with Parties, in particular Coastal Developing States, which have similar interests in sustainable commercial fishing activities within the framework of regional fisheries organisations. In addition, in relation to co-operation at the national and/or regional levels, the Community will endeavour to convince its Partners to implement sustainable exploitation of resources based on sound scientific advice, measures to manage fishing mortality, such as TACs and/or fishing effort limits and better control and enforcement systems, which are prerequisites for an economically viable and competitive fishing industry.





AQUACULTURE

The Community's role is to provide the best possible conditions for the sustainable development of European aquaculture. This implies, first and foremost support for research and for developing appropriate environment and health standards.

The Commission proposes a strategy which aims at:

- assuring the availability of healthy products to the consumer;
- promoting an environmentally sound industry;
- creating employment in particular in fishing dependent areas.

Such a strategy shall contain inter alia the following measures:

- the creation of a set of common standards for organic aquaculture. Demand for "bio" products is growing, including organically certified fish, but the EU legislation on organic farming does not include specific provisions for aquaculture products. A minimum set of common standards produced at European level will avoid competition distortions;
- the adaptation of Community legislation on fish diseases to recent developments in production, technology and management systems and to the new diagnostic techniques;
- rules for the respect of welfare, biological needs and health of farmed fish. This will improve the public perception of intensive aquaculture, and reduce in certain cases the environmental impact or competition distortions;
- measures to reduce aquatic pollution from aquaculture, such as eutrophication due to nutrient outputs;
- measures to prevent the introduction and escape of alien species.





7 THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

Even though structural adjustment will facilitate the environmental, economic and social sustainability of fishing over the long-term, it is bound to have short-term consequences for the fisheries sector and for the economy of a number of coastal areas dependent upon fisheries. The mobilisation of public funds will thus be required, not only to accelerate the scrapping of redundant fishing vessels but also to address the social problems this may generate.

The challenge is to help the fishing sector bridge the gap between the short-term negative consequences of the multi-annual management plans, which will adapt fishing effort and fishing capacity to the productive potential of existing resources, and the long-term gains resulting from the reconstruction of this bio-economic potential.

7.1. Socio-economic impacts of fishing effort limitation schemes

It is not possible at this stage to quantify the regional employment effects of fishing effort limitation schemes. It is in particular very difficult to estimate the potential loss of employment resulting from fishing effort limitations, given that:

- loss of employment will depend on the range and scope of the management plans and fishing effort limitations schemes finally adopted by the Council and on Member States' decisions on the distribution of fishing effort limitations between different groups of fishing vessels;
- alternative employment opportunities in the fisheries sector vary from region to region, and in some areas fishermen losing employment on one vessel would have no difficulty finding employment on another vessel, since the sector has been facing serious recruitment problems in the recent years.

However, the Commission has assumed, based on earlier experience with the restructuring of the Spanish and Portuguese fleets that previously fished in Moroccan waters¹², that a maximum of 28,000 fishermen, representing around 11% of the total employment at sea, could be affected by these measures¹³.

7.2. A new strategy to address structural adjustment

To deal with the structural adjustment that will be necessary following reduction of employment opportunities in the fisheries sector resulting from a commitment to sustainable fishing and to improve living and working conditions in the fisheries sector, the Commission intends to adopt a strategy involving the following components:

- conducting bilateral consultations with the Member States to assess the likely socio-economic impacts of fishing efforts limitation schemes;
- on the basis of these consultations, formulating an Action Plan to counter the socio-economic consequences of fisheries restructuring;
- reprogramming structural funds to take advantage of existing instruments to deal with the likely socio-economic impacts of fishing efforts limitation schemes;
- developing a long-term strategy for integrated development of coastal areas dependent on fishing
- reinforcing sectoral dialogue;
- assessing working conditions and safety in fishing and fish processing.

¹² This figure corresponds to approximately 1 job lost for every 10 tonnes of fishing capacity scrapped.

¹³ Based on 1998 figures. This would mean an average net reduction of 7000 fishermen per year over the period 2003-2006. It should be noted that the average annual employment reduction observed in the fishing sector in recent years was 8000 jobs.

7.3. Bilateral consultations with the Member States

Although it is difficult at this stage to have a clear indication of the regions/areas that would be most affected by fishing effort limitation schemes, the Commission recognises that these proposals will require substantial restructuring efforts. It will thus organise bilateral discussions with the Member States to address the following issues:

- the likely employment impact of fishing effort limitations and reductions in vessel numbers in the light of proposed recovery plans;
- the identification of the regions in which fishermen may require special assistance to find new jobs;
- the scope for adaptation of existing Community aid regimes (FIFG, ERDF and ESF), notably in the context of the mid-term review in 2003-2004, in order to improve the effectiveness of aid in facilitating the transfer of fisheries workers to other sectors and generating new employment opportunities.

Appropriate account will be taken of the need of the outermost regions.



7.4. Action Plan to counter the socio-economic consequences of fisheries restructuring

On the basis of these consultations and as soon as the Commission has received all the necessary information from Member States, it will present an Action Plan to counter the social, economic and regional consequences of fisheries restructuring. This Action Plan will complement and fine-tune the provisional estimate of lost jobs and will also address the financial needs in order to accompany the reform of the CFP.

7.5. Reprogramming structural funds to take advantage of existing instruments

The Commission will call upon Member States and the regions concerned to review the needs for re-programming of structural funds programmes, and where necessary, the eligibility of Objective 2 areas. The mid-term review of the 2000 to 2006 period in 2004 offers an opportunity to do so.

The Community is already equipped with structural policy instruments that can contribute to addressing the problems of fishermen affected by the restructuring of the sector. In the framework of the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG), the following social measures are already available:

- part-financing of early retirement schemes, either for vessel owners wishing to reduce their fishing effort or for crew members;
- individual compensatory (lump sum) payments to fishermen employed on board vessels having stopped their activities on a permanent basis;
- non-renewable individual compensatory payments to fishermen to help them retrain;
- non-renewable individual compensatory payments to fishermen to help them diversify their activities.

These instruments are so far not widely used but the large-scale structural adjustment now required in the fisheries sector may result in more demand for such support, at least in areas particularly depending on fishing.

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The proposal to exclude, as from 2003, public aid for the transfer of fishing vessels, including in the context of joint enterprises, and aid for constructing new fishing vessels and to restrict aid to modernisation of fishing vessels to certain purposes will have the effect that a substantial amount of public aid under FIFG cannot be used as planned in national programmes. Member States, which are responsible for fixing priorities in respect of use of all Community structural funds, should decide to re-programme this amount in whole or in part to social measures.

Some 80% of fisheries-dependent areas are located in Objective 1 or 2 regions. This means that financial support is programmed at regional level to help productive investment (in particular in SMEs and craft sector or for tourism) in these regions or retraining for professional reconversion under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

ESF also provides funding to help adapt and modernise policies and systems of education, training and employment in all Community regions.

Based on the assumption that amounts originally programmed for construction and modernisation of vessels (estimated to € 460,6m for the period 2003-2006) would be reprogrammed in favour of socio-economic measures, the Commission estimates that additional resources in the order of 88 million Euros might be necessary to co-finance these measures. However, it will take some time for management plans and effort limitation schemes to be adopted. Additional resources for social measures are thus unlikely to be needed before 2004. These additional resources would then be covered by further reprogramming of the structural funds, after the mid term review.

7.6. A strategy for integrated development of coastal areas dependent on fishing

Given the lengthy time period over which stock recovery will be needed, a long-term strategy for integrated development of coastal areas currently dependent on fishing should be considered for implementation after 2006, aiming to:

- recognise the role played by fishermen and other fisheries stakeholders in maintaining the social and cultural heritage of coastal areas, maintaining populations in remote areas where few other economic activities exist, and providing leverage for the development of alternative activities, tourism in particular;

- promote the development of complementary coastal activities which may provide alternative employment on a full-time or part-time basis to coastal populations depending upon fishing.

7.7. Reinforcement of Sectoral dialogue

The Commission will also invite the social partners, in particular the “Maritime Fisheries Committee of Sectoral Dialogue”, to consider measures aiming at improving living and working conditions in the fisheries sector.

This dialogue could:

- generate such contributions as the social clause recently recommended by the above mentioned Committee for introduction into Community fisheries agreements;
- ensure a better image of the sector, especially in order to improve employment of young people by stimulating the development of a culture of health and safety in the fishing industry;
- enhance the role played by women in the fisheries sector, as the status and social protection granted to them remains often insufficient.

7.8. Assessment of working conditions and safety in fishing and fish processing

With respect to improvement of living and working conditions in the fisheries sector the Commission will assess the implementation of Community legislation on safety and working conditions for fishermen and fish industry workers, as fishing remains one of the most hazardous professional activities with significantly higher accident rates than in the rest of the primary sector. Where necessary, the Commission will submit proposals for improvements of the relevant legal framework.



ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES IN THE UNION

The Commission considers that the fisheries sector is still characterised by specific features which make the application of normal economic conditions, such as free competition between producers and freedom of investment, difficult to apply in the short term. These include the structural imbalance between scarce fisheries resources and the size and power of fishing fleets, the continuing dependence of certain coastal communities on fisheries and the absence of similar conditions of competition for operators in different Member States, due to different national attitudes towards public aid to this sector.

If the Community takes action to address these issues, on the basis of the proposals now put forward, it will gradually create a climate that will be more favourable to the introduction of more normal economic conditions and the elimination of such barriers to normal economic activity as national allocations of fishing possibilities and the principle of relative stability.

Meanwhile, the Community needs to consider ways in which the economic dimension of fisheries management can better contribute to the objectives of the CFP.

The Commission will therefore organise, during 2002, workshops on economic management with representatives of fisheries administrations, the fisheries sector and other interests to discuss the scope for provisions within Community and/or national fisheries management systems for:

- a system of tradable fishing rights (individual or collective);
- payment for the right to fish and/or recovery of fisheries management costs from the fishing sector.

The Commission will report during 2003 to the Council on the outcome of these debates and, when appropriate, make proposals or recommendations for Community and national follow-up.

The Commission will ensure strict consideration, monitoring and control of State aids in order to avoid negative impacts on fisheries resources and to strengthen the link between Member States' compliance with the objectives of the CFP and the approval of State aid.



EFFECTIVE AND PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING

There is a need to adapt and improve the governance¹⁴ of the Common Fisheries Policy with a view not only to open up the policy-making process to interested parties but also to promote greater accountability and responsibility for all those involved.

The Commission proposes:

9.1. The establishment of Regional Advisory Councils for fisheries management (RACs) to ensure greater stakeholder involvement at the regional and local level

- The RACs will have the following advisory functions:
 - to submit suggestions, of their own accord or at the request of the Commission or a Member State, on matters relating to fisheries management to the Commission or the Member States concerned;
 - to give an opinion on Commission or Member State proposals on conservation and management dealing with a fishery relevant for the region concerned;
 - comment on and recommend improvements in the implementation of the Community legislation in the region concerned;



- conduct any other activities which are necessary to fulfil their functions.

- Membership rules will be flexible enough so as to ensure participation of all parties with a real interest in fisheries issues concerned, although the configuration of interested parties will vary according to the subject to be addressed by the RAC. At the broadest level, membership would include fishermen's organisations, scientists, the relevant national, regional or local administrations, environmental and other interested NGO's, representatives from aquaculture and processing industries, recreational fishermen, wholesalers and fishworkers.
- The Commission and Member States will not be bound by the recommendations, opinions or reports of the Regional Advisory Councils but may explain in the explanatory memorandums of their proposals how they dealt with the opinion given by the competent RAC.
- The new Council Framework Regulation on conservation and management will provide the appropriate legal base for the establishment of RACs and will spell out the principles that shall govern their operation.

9.2. Clarifying management responsibilities to meet local management needs and emergency situations effectively

Member States will be authorised, under the new Council Framework Regulation on conservation and management, to take non-discriminatory fisheries management measures applicable to all vessels within their 12-mile zones and to vessels flying their flag within waters under their jurisdiction, provided that the measures are notified beforehand to the Commission and other Member States concerned and that they are compatible with (and no less stringent than) relevant Community measures.

¹⁴ Governance means rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised, particularly as regards openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence.

The Commission may require the cancellation of any measures which are not in conformity with Community law.

A Member State (or more than one Member State) will also be authorised to take emergency measures to apply no longer than three months within waters under its/their jurisdiction applicable to all vessels, provided such measures are notified beforehand to the Commission and other Member States and the Commission does not object to such measures within a short period of time.

The powers of the Commission to take emergency measures will be strengthened by extending the maximum duration of such measures to one year. This will allow more time for the adoption by the usual procedures of new Community rules to meet the needs of the situation.

9.3. The drawing-up of a European Code of responsible fisheries practices with the active participation of fishermen and other interested parties

Voluntary rules, in the form of principles and standards of behaviour for responsible fisheries practices such as those promoted by the FAO Code of Conduct, can supplement the regulations in force, by improving the commitment of fishermen to responsible fishing. Discards is one area where voluntary rules agreed in the framework of future RACs can bring added value to general rules foreseen in the technical measures Regulations.

As a first step, the Commission will invite the stakeholders operating in the framework of the Advisory Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture to contribute to the development of a European Code of responsible fisheries practices. Such a Code should be then completed by a set of best regional practices to be developed by the relevant RACs.

9.4. Dialogue with third country stakeholders

This action involves the creation of a framework for dialogue and consultation involving interested stakeholders and civil society from third countries, on the international fisheries activities of the Community, and in particular on the negotiation of future fisheries partnerships with developing countries.

9.5. Delegation of powers and simplification of rules

- The Commission proposes a greater recourse to “framework regulations” that will establish the basic objectives, principles and rules of a given aspect of the CFP, such as conservation and management and control. On that basis more detailed technical and procedural rules shall be laid down by the Commission assisted by a Committee composed of representatives of Member States. Examples of such implementing decisions include the adjustment of catch or fishing effort limits concerning species subject to multi-annual management plans, the transposition of international recommendations that will become binding on the Community and the implementation of control and enforcement rules.
- The national obligatory co-financing of projects financed under the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) will no longer be subject to the control under state aid rules. Thus FIFG financing could be disbursed quicker and the administrative burden both for Member States and the Commission will be reduced.
- Depending on the progress of reform, the Commission may propose that certain types of state aids to the fisheries sector, particularly social aids, will no longer have to be notified by Member States because they are unproblematic.

9.6. Actions to promote transparency and peer review

- A regular dialogue between the Member States and the Commission on the implementation of the CFP will be established in a so-called “peer review” process. One subject will be fleet policy, on the basis of reports that will be prepared by the Commission. In this process Member States will be invited to present national measures for ensuring compliance with obligations under Community law and to respond to questions and comments from other Member States and the Commission. Other subjects for peer review would include the economic and social aspects of fisheries management.

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- The Commission will provide greater public transparency of Member States' performance in respect of the rules of the CFP by regularly publishing a "Compliance Scoreboard", in which information concerning national catch and fleet reports, inspection activity and other relevant indicators of compliance with CFP rules will be made available. Summary information concerning infringement procedures against Member States will also be included.
- Transparency of decisions taken with the Common Fisheries Policy shall be increased by a systematic publication of all decisions taken in the Official Journal and on the Internet. Aggregate data, such as those on catches, fishing efforts and capacity of fleets of Member States, shall be made public.

REVIEW

The Commission proposes that the conservation and fleet policy aspects of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy be the subject of a further review in 2008.





CONCLUSION

The CFP has reached a turning-point. The challenges are urgent and serious. The current poor sustainability performance of the CFP proves that many of the instruments applied over the last twenty years have reached their limits. In this state of crisis there is a need for major change. Reform of the objectives, principles, priorities and instruments of the CFP is more than ever necessary to deliver sustainable development and to ensure that the European fishing industry has a secure future.

The present Communication now presents the first package of reform proposals. These are:

ROADMAP

Council Regulation on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the CFP, establishing the framework within which conservation measures, measures to adjust fishing capacity and control and enforcement measures may be taken under the CFP.	1st January 2003
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Council Regulation establishing an emergency Community measure for the scrapping of fishing vessels over the period 2003-2006.	1st January 2003
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Council Regulation amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2792/1999 laying down the detailed rules and arrangements regarding Community structural assistance to the fisheries sector.	1st January 2003
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Action Plan to integrate environmental protection requirements into the Common Fisheries Policy.	
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Action Plan for the eradication of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU).	
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The Commission will also come forward with the following legislative proposals and other actions for Reform as follows:

ROADMAP

STRUCTURAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MEASURES

Action Plan to counter the social, economic and regional consequences of the restructuring of the EU fishing industry.	Second half of 2002
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Report on economic management of fisheries within the Union. The Commission will present its report to the other European Institutions.	2003
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CONSERVATION

Action Plan for the improvement of scientific advice for fisheries management.	Second half of 2002
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Action Plan on discards.	Second half of 2002
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Action Plan for fisheries management in the Mediterranean.	Second half of 2002
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Code of Conduct for responsible fisheries in Europe. ACFA will be invited to develop such a Code.	End of 2002
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INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS

Integrated Framework for fisheries partnerships at national and regional level.	Second half of 2002.
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Action Plan to improve stock evaluation in non-Community waters.	End of 2002
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CONTROL AND ENFORCEMENT

Action Plan for co-operation in enforcement.	Second half of 2002
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Communication on a Joint Inspection Structure. The Joint Inspection Structure should be in place by mid-2004.	End of 2002
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OTHER MEASURES

Strategy for the development of European Aquaculture.	Second half of 2002
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Communication on transparency, performance and compliance.	Second half of 2002
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ANNEX - THE CURRENT STATE OF THE MAIN COMMUNITY FISH STOCKS

Overview

The quantities of mature demersal fish in the sea as assessed by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) have, in many cases, declined significantly over the last 25 years. On average, these quantities were about 90% greater in the early 1970's than in the late 1990's. The general decline in landings is similar. For some stocks such as cod even more drastic reductions in mature fish have occurred. The biomass of pelagic and industrial species increased by, on average, 20% since the late 1970's and mid 1980's at least in part following the recovery of herring from the low levels of the late 1970's.

The overall trend is of an increased proportion of the stocks being taken each year (increased fishing mortality rate) which has led to the erosion of the quantities of mature fish. In recent years for many stocks the quantities of mature fish in the sea have been below or very close to the minimum levels required to provide high probability of sustainability (precautionary levels of stock biomass), whereas historically they tended to be above such levels. Similarly, many stocks have been subject to a level of fishing mortality rate in excess of precautionary levels whereas, historically, the fishing mortality rate was less than the precautionary level.

From a biological point of view, the sustainability of a high number of stocks will be threatened if the current levels of exploitation are maintained and, at present, this risk is highest for demersal round fish stocks which are of high commercial value.

The situation is better for pelagic stocks. Stocks of small pelagic species (herring, sprat, mackerel, horse mackerel, anchovy, sardine) and species which support industrial fisheries (Norway pout, sandeels) have generally not deteriorated over the last twenty years and especially not over the last ten years.

In the case of benthic resources (Norway lobster, flatfish) a general economic overexploitation pattern can be observed but at the biological level the situation cannot be considered as systematically serious.

Finally, there are also resources such as skates and rays, and the minor flatfish species (including turbot, brill, lemon sole, witches, dabs) that are not subject to detailed scientific follow-up but which may also be overexploited.

The situation varies from one zone to another, especially in terms of apparent evolution of fishing mortality in the mid-to long-term. In the Baltic, the current situation does not seem to be sustainable. In the North Sea, it has not been possible to reverse the decline of round fish stocks nor to ensure in the case of sole and plaice a security margin in accordance with the precautionary principle which would have also improved the economic situation for these fisheries. In Western waters, fishing mortality rates have been increasing catching up with and often exceeding historical levels observed in the North Sea. In the Mediterranean, the available scientific data are less complete but there is a large consensus that many important stocks are being over-fished.

To sum up, many stocks are at present outside or almost outside safe biological limits. They are too heavily exploited or have low quantities of mature fish or both. At present, the situation for most stocks is not catastrophic. If current trends continue, however, many stocks will collapse. Improvement in the state of many fish stocks is urgent.

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Stocks for which scientific advice recommends recovery plans

- Blue whiting (combined stock, I-IX, XII and XIV)
- Cod in Kattegat
- Northern hake in the North Sea
- Northern hake in Skagerrak and Kattegat
- Northern hake in Western waters (Vb, VI, VII, XII, XIV)
- Cod in North Western waters (Vb, VI, XII, XIV)
- Cod in the Irish Sea (VIIa)
- Cod in western waters (VIIIb-k, VIII, IX, X, CECAF)
- Whiting in the Irish Sea (VIIa)
- Norway lobster in the Cantabrian Sea (VIIIc)
- Norway lobster in the Western Iberian region (IX, X, CECAF)
- Norway lobster in the Bay of Biscay (VIIIabde)
- Sole in the Northern part of the Bay of Biscay (VIIIab)
- Haddock in the Irish Sea (VIIa)

Other stocks outside safe biological limits

- Anglerfish in Norwegian Sea and North Sea (IIa, North Sea)
- Anglerfish in the Iberian region (VIIIc, IX, X, CECAF)
- Anglerfish in western waters (Vb, VI, XII, XIV)
- Anglerfish in the West of Ireland (VII)
- Anglerfish in the Bay of Biscay (VIIIabde)
- Horse mackerel in the western Iberian region (VIIIc, IX)
- Horse mackerel in the West of Scotland, West of Ireland and Bay of Biscay (Vb, VI, VII, VIIIabde)
- Megrim in the Bay of Biscay (VIIIabde)
- Sole in the Western English Channel (VIIe)
- Sole in the Norwegian Sea and the North Sea (II, N. Sea)
- Sole in the Celtic Sea (VIIIfg)
- Plaice in the Celtic Sea (VIIIfg)





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