



REACTION STATEMENT

Brussels, 24 July 2007

European Commission adopts environmentally harmful subsidy for fisheries

Joint comment by BirdLife International, the Fisheries Secretariat, Seas At Risk, the North Sea Foundation, Oceana and WWF on the adoption of the regulation on “de minimis” aid for the fishing sector by the European Commission.

Brussels – With today’s adoption of a regulation on “de minimis” aid, the European Commission has opened the door to fuel subsidies in the fisheries sector.

In a striking contradiction with its promise to remove environmentally damaging subsidies, the Commission is allowing fishing enterprises to receive up to 30.000 euros of state aid every three years.

Supposedly introduced to support the cost of fishing operations, such cash grants can be used to finance fuel expenses.

Allowing fuel subsidies in the fishing sector is a complete waste of money and a counter-productive measure. The “de minimis” aid will generate further overfishing, by making fuel cheaper, which will encourage fishermen to fish more and longer.

It will also back fishermen to continue using energy-thirsty and environmentally damaging fishing gear, such as trawling, posing a serious threat to the marine environment.

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Note to the editors:

- Operational costs in fisheries entail labour costs, running costs (including fuel) and vessel costs. For a detailed breakdown of each cost, please see the FAO website: <http://www.fao.org/fi/website/FIRetrieveAction.do?dom=topic&fid=12309>
- The “de minimis” aid is a specific type of subsidy, which exempts Member States to notify its allocation to the Commission. Aid of up to 200 000 euros, granted over a period of three years, is

considered as “*de minimis*” aid. For more information, see: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/1765&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

- The European Commission has committed to phase out environmentally damaging subsidies in the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme’s Mid-term review, COM(2007) 225 final, page 13: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0225en01.pdf
- The NGOs joint position paper on the “*de minimis*” regulation is available on: http://assets.panda.org/downloads/ngo_position_de_minimis_070628_1.pdf