
Management measures for the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean Sea

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Brussels, 30 March 2010.

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Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Mrs Maria Damanaki made clear yesterday that there will be no postponement in the implementation of the Mediterranean Regulation no. 1967/2006. Speaking at yesterday's Council meeting of EU Fisheries Ministers, the Commissioner recalled that the Member States have had three years to implement the rules they had unanimously agreed to and that the Commission will, therefore, not permit a further delay.

Commissioner Damanaki said: "At my hearing at the European Parliament I pointed out that I am fully committed to improve fisheries management in the Mediterranean in order to achieve sustainable fisheries and a level playing field."

Recent inspections show that Member States are not fulfilling their obligations on management plans or the designation of fishing protected areas. Commissioner Damanaki underlined: "As Guardian of the Treaties, the Commission will have no choice but to take the necessary steps to ensure that EU legislation is complied with. I will therefore not hesitate to make full use of the instruments provided for by the Treaties."

There is a sense of urgency in all this, because many stocks are in an alarming state and fishermen are catching less every year. More than 54% of the stocks that were analysed by scientists are overexploited.

For many stocks such as hake, red mullet, deep-water rose shrimp, Nephrops or sole, scientists recommend drastic mortality reductions of between 30 and 80%. In addition, there is insufficient data for a substantial number of important stocks, so we don't know their current state.

Commissioner Damanaki said: "This is like playing Russian roulette, they may be OK or they may be on the brink of collapse, we simply don't know."

More than 3 years after its entry into force, "the level of compliance remains totally insufficient". Member States have clearly not done enough to implement the rules and to ensure their respect by fishermen. Commissioner Damanaki stressed that the Commission services "will help facilitate implementation but not postpone it".

The Commissioner clarified that the Regulation does not ban any traditional or "special" fishing. On the contrary, it allows for derogations from the specific rules, as long as the scientific assessment shows that their impact on species and habitats is compatible with the aims of the CFP and as long as they are managed under a national plan.

Commissioner Damanaki made the point that Mediterranean fisheries cannot be effectively managed by this Regulation or by the European Union alone. "If we want equal conditions for our fishing sector, we have to take action in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and, more especially, in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). To give but one example, the GFCM has adopted the minimum mesh size of 40mm square, matching our provisions in the Mediterranean Regulation."