

Parliament needs to uphold strong position on fisheries reform

NGO priorities for the Plenary vote on the Baltic Multi-Annual Plan (2014/0285(COD))

16th of April 2015

On the 28th of April MEPs will vote on Jarosław Wałęsa's report concerning the EU Commission's proposal for a Baltic Multi-Annual Plan (MAP).¹ This MAP is the first of its kind under the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP),² which was significantly shaped by the EU Parliament. It thus represents a first opportunity for MEPs to demonstrate Parliament's role in ensuring effective implementation of the agreed reform. We urge you to support and further strengthen the Report from the Fisheries Committee, which voted on the file on the 31st of March 2015. In particular we urge MEPs to support the following points:

1. Objectives of the plan must be in line with the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy

In its report, the Fisheries Committee ensured that the objectives of the Baltic MAP are more closely aligned with those of the newly reformed CFP, which the European Parliament supported by overwhelming majority in 2013. The Committee voted in favour of amendments which state that the Baltic MAP must restore *the concerned* fish stocks by **“achieving maximum sustainable yield exploitation rates that will restore and maintain populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield”**. Whilst an improvement to the Commission proposal, the Committee's amendment still falls short of the CFP which includes all exploited living marine biological resources in its objectives. The plenary should improve the Committee's text to ensure that all exploited stocks are managed in line with the CFP objective, including plaice, flounder, turbot and brill.

We therefore urge you to support and improve the Fisheries Committee report to ensure that the plan's objectives (Art.3) are fully coherent with the reformed CFP.

2. Sustainable fishing exploitation rates must ensure an end to overfishing

The Fisheries Committee's vote on fishing exploitation rates (Art.4) is a substantial improvement over the Commission's proposal. Article 2.2 of the CFP requires exploitation rates that restore and maintain populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY). To achieve this objective, exploitation ranges in Article 4 must be set below F_{MSY} . Yet, the Commission proposal included exploitation rates around F_{MSY} , thus exceeding F_{MSY} . In its report, the Fisheries Committee amended Article 4 to set F_{MSY} as the upper limit of fishing mortality rates. Although still inconsistent with the objective noted above, this is a big step toward meeting the objectives of the CFP and the UN Fish Stock agreement.

We urge you to support and enhance the text of Fisheries Committee report on Article 4 and specifically to support amendments which keep F below F_{MSY} .

¹ Multi-Annual Plan for certain stocks in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks [2014/0285 (COD)].

² Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy.

3. Conservation reference points – ensuring that fish stocks remain healthy

The Fisheries Committee report amended the Commission proposal to ensure that management measures must be taken if stocks fall below the biomass levels capable of producing MSY. The text therefore ensures that fish stocks remain at healthy biomass levels that can produce a sustainable high yield for fishermen. In addition, the Fisheries Committee report requests the Commission to report on progress towards restoring and maintaining fish stocks above levels capable of producing the MSY.

We urge you to support the language of the Fisheries Committee on Article 5 that ensures that fisheries remain healthy and produce a continued sustainable yield for fishermen.

4. Minimising impact of fisheries to the wider environment

The Fisheries Committee report reflects that the Baltic MAP must deliver on the CFP objective to ensure that the negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimised and to avoid degradation of the marine environment. It also included **the integration of the ecosystem based approach to fisheries management** in several Articles and Recitals (New Recital 7a, Recital 9, New Art. 3a, Art. 9). Furthermore, the Fisheries Committee report requests that that the Baltic MAP contributes to **achieving Good Environmental Status** under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

We urge you to support the language of the Fisheries Committee report regarding minimising the negative impacts of fishing on the wider marine ecosystem and to integrate the ecosystem based approach to fisheries management.

We look forward to supporting the European Parliament in adopting a robust Baltic MAP which is fully in line with the reformed CFP, coherent with EU environmental legislation, and secures sustainable fisheries for EU fishermen.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for any additional information.

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