

New fisheries rules strengthen data collection

A new regulation simplifying and strengthening the current system for the collection of biological, environmental, technical and socio-economic data in the fisheries sector has been adopted by the European Council.

These rules will allow in particular for the gathering of extensive and reliable information on issues such as the state of fish stocks, fisheries management measures, and mitigation measures, and will make data available at regional and European level, thereby providing a solid basis for scientific advice and policy making.

The aim of the new regulation is to align EU rules with the objectives of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), including the protection of the marine environment, the sustainable management of all commercially exploited species, and in particular the achievement of good environmental status in the marine environment by 2020.

The regulation will enter into force on the twentieth day following the publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

Meanwhile, the European Commission has published its evaluation of the fisheries control regulation, showing that Member States have generally implemented the main obligations set by this regulation, which remains a key instrument to deliver the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

However, the Commission concluded that many MS are yet to fully implement it. As a consequence, uneven situations emerged within the EU.

Although the regulation simplified and rationalised the previous system, the evaluation highlighted a number of shortcomings in the current text, which reduce its effectiveness.

"Today's report highlights that the EU fisheries control regulation has helped stepping up a culture of compliance with the Common Fisheries Policy. Our evaluation however showed that more needs to be done to fully implement certain provisions," pointed out Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime affairs and Fisheries.

The Commissioner also stated that it is clear that the current legislative framework is not entirely fit for purpose.

In his opinion, it is necessary to improve the overall performance of the control regulation, aiming at securing sustainable fisheries while at the same time improving synergies with other policies.

Since its adoption in 2009, the fisheries control regulation has contributed to improve the overall level of compliance with the CFP and has also helped enhancing communication and data sharing among stakeholders, providing more and better quality fisheries data, as well as fostering the level playing field among operators.

Shortcomings in the implementation mainly concern sanctions and point system, follow up of infringements, data exchange and data sharing, traceability, but also monitoring and catch reporting tools for vessels below 12 metres. In addition, the lack of clarity in some provisions and the exemptions granted to smaller vessels are considered by bigger actors to hamper the effectiveness of the entire fisheries control system.

The evaluation revealed that many stakeholders have concerns with regard to the control of some of the new obligations set in the reformed CFP, as for instance the landing obligation.

The Commission will present the result of the evaluation to Member States, to the European Parliament and relevant stakeholders to identify joint and effective solutions.

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