



EC proposes new rules to boost control system

The European Commission (EC) has proposed new fishing rules intended to monitor that the EU's fisheries are sustainably managed, which in turn guarantees the long-term viability of the EU fishing sector and protects the livelihoods of fishermen.

“The EU's Common Fisheries Policy has already gone a long way towards making sure our seas are healthy, while building a strong fishing industry and thriving coastal communities. At the same time, we need to keep up the work and make sure the commonly agreed rules are enforced across the EU,” pointed out Commissioner Karmenu Vella, responsible for the Environment, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs.

The Commission's proposal includes the following:

- Measures to improve the enforcement of the Common Fisheries Policy, with a common list of criteria for what qualifies as a serious infringement and corresponding sanctions and strengthening of the existing point system for licenced vessels to work as the systems for traffic offences to motorists in most Member States;
- A more reliable and complete fisheries data system, including fully digitised reporting of catches, applicable to all EU fishing vessels (including vessels below 12 metres), an electronic tracking system for all vessels, new weighing procedures for fisheries products and reinforced catch registration rules for recreational fisheries;
- Enhanced traceability of EU and imported fishery and aquaculture products. Due to digitisation, controls will be made possible all along the supply chain for all fishery and aquaculture products whether imported or coming from the EU;
- Reinforced rules on fishing gear. Abandoned, lost or disposed fishing gear is a source of marine litter in European seas. The Commission is proposing to improve reporting on lost fishing gear, in line with the proposal to reduce the impact of certain plastic products in the environment in addition to producers helping cover the costs of waste management and clean-up of fishing gear;
- Revising the mandate of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) to fully align its objectives with the Common Fisheries Policy and upgrade its inspection powers.

The Commission ensures that the reviewed rules will strengthen the enforcement of EU rules, update data management, and finally, will make the control more efficient and benefit EU fisheries.



In addition, it argues on fisheries will intensify the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Furthermore, it will further support the effective implementation of the landing obligation, which comes fully into force as of next year and requires that fishermen land all catches to stop the wasteful practice of throwing unwanted fish back to the sea.

On the other hand, the non-government organisation ClientEarth deems that several key aspects have not been taken into consideration by the Commission when drafting its proposal.

"The proposed rules on sanctions against illegal fishers are an improvement but the Commission does not tackle the most important issue here, evidenced by our research, which is enforcement by EU countries. So far sanctions against illegal fishers have been rare and set at very low levels," the NGO lawyer Elisabeth Druel stressed.

In particular, the organisation is asking for more clarity on the proposal to use cameras onboard certain fishing vessels to control the landing obligation, which is designed to prevent the wasteful practice of throwing undersize fish overboard, since in its view, this control measure should apply to vessels which are at risk of illegally discarding fish.

The Commission's proposal will now go to the European Parliament and Council for adoption.

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