

Move to increase EU's seafood supply-chain transparency welcomed by environmental groups

The European Parliament's Committee on the Environment (ENVI) has voted in favor of steps that would bring more transparency to E.U. fisheries activities and traceability to seafood supply chains.

ENVI's proposed amendments to the fisheries control regulation include:

- Vessel tracking and catch reporting to be required for all E.U. vessels.
- The use of cameras on part of the fleet to ensure full and verifiable documentation of seafood catches.
- Migrating the current paper-based seafood traceability systems into a digital format.
- Information on fisheries monitoring and control efforts to be made public.
- Making the sanctioning system more effective and considerate of environmental rules in all member states.

According to the E.U. Fisheries Control Coalition – which comprises campaign groups the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), The Nature Conservancy, Oceana, Seas At Risk, WWF, ClientEarth, The Fisheries Secretariat, Our Fish, and Sciaena – the amendments mark a pivotal step to secure sustainable seafood and healthy marine ecosystems in the E.U.

It is calling on the Fisheries Committee (PECH) to lock in the course ENVI has set in its upcoming vote, while strengthening measures for onboard CCTV – saying that this will ensure the E.U. is successful in achieving fully-documented, transparent, and sustainable fisheries as laid out in the common fisheries policy.

Oceana Europe Campaign Director for Illegal Fishing and Transparency Vanya Vulperhorst, said 75 percent of the E.U.'s 80,000-plus vessels have, until now, been allowed to remain mostly off the radar, thereby obscuring authorities' view on the true nature of fishing activities.

“ENVI's proposal for vessels to transmit their position in close to real-time or maximum every 10 minutes is one that PECH must stand by, as it will improve fishers' safety as well as the E.U.'s ability to manage its fisheries sustainably,” Vulperhorst said.

WWF Europe Senior Seafood Policy Officer Katrin Vilhelm Poulsen said a traceability system is essential if the E.U. is serious about sustainability.

“In the E.U., we import more than 60 percent of the seafood that we eat,” Poulsen said. “If we, as European consumers, don't want to unintentionally contribute to unsustainable fisheries across the world, we need proper legislation and effective tools to ensure our seafood is traceable, legal and sustainable. A digital traceability system for fish products is critical.”

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