



NGO priorities for the plenary vote on a Western Waters multi-annual plan (PECH A8-0310/2018)

October 2018

WE CALL ON MEPS TO SAFEGUARD ATLANTIC FISHERIES—AND NOT WATER DOWN EU LAW

In 2013, the European Parliament overwhelmingly voted for a reformed EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) that ends overfishing by 2020 at the latest and ensures that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimised, as a means to secure profitable fisheries and prosperous coastal communities. **NGOs now call on MEPs to uphold this commitment to sustainability and to protect our seas.**

On Thursday (25 October) the European Parliament will vote on MEP Alain Cadec’s report concerning the European Commission’s proposal for a multi-annual plan for demersal fisheries in the EU’s Western Waters.ⁱ This proposal also amends the multi-annual plan for the Baltic Sea, adopted in 2016.

NGOs urge you to reject harmful amendments and significantly strengthen the report adopted by the Fisheries Committee on 9th Octoberⁱⁱ to ensure that the law is implemented, and that all EU fisheries become sustainable and profitable:

1. ENSURE THAT THE 2020 LEGAL DEADLINE FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHING IS RESPECTED

The plan must ensure that fishing pressure stays within levels that will allow all fish stocks to recover above sustainable levels. The 2020 deadline to achieve these “maximum sustainable yield” (MSY) fishing levels must be respected. Postponing the deadline enshrined in the CFP would delay an end to overfishing, as well as jeopardise the recovery of fish stocks and the associated economic benefits. As the CFP legal requirements and objectives apply to all sea basins, the Western Waters plan must be in line with these.

2. END OVERFISHING FOR ALL STOCKS

As required by the CFP, the plan must ensure that targets to restore fish stocks above sustainable levels apply to all stocks, whether they are the primary target of fishing or unwanted bycatches. Fishing in a range that goes beyond the limit prescribed in the CFP, even under a landing obligation, will not restore stocks to healthy levels, and will lead to negative socio-economic impacts in the long term. Where scientific knowledge is insufficient to determine MSY exploitation levels, additional caution should be taken to ensure that stocks are given a comparable degree of conservation.

3. MINIMISE ECOSYSTEM IMPACTS AND IMPLEMENT ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

The plan must support achieving the objectives of current EU environmental legislation, in particular the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive. The plan must therefore implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management and ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimised and where possible eliminated. Management measures must be adopted to avoid the by-catch of protected species, in particular seabirds, whose populations have been shown to be declining due to fishing.

The plan must also contribute to the elimination of discards by avoiding and reducing, as far as possible, unwanted catches as stipulated in the CFP, as well as respecting areas closed to fishing in order to recover fish stocks.

4. FOLLOW THE BEST AVAILABLE SCIENTIFIC ADVICE

Fisheries management measures should be taken in full accordance with the best available scientific advice provided by international and independent bodies, recognised at European level. The plan should also be monitored in a transparent manner to ensure that its objectives are being met.

5. ENSURE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD AND LONG TERM SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

Multiannual plans for the Baltic Sea and the North Sea have already been adopted, which include requirements to meet the CFP's 2020 deadline and to continue sustainable management thereafter. The Western Waters plan must not include any clauses which restrict the validity of specific provisions governing fishing opportunities and safeguard measures to a limited period of time, as this risks creating a legal gap and legal uncertainty as a result.

We look forward to supporting the European Parliament in adopting a robust Western Waters multi-annual Plan that is fully in line with the CFP, coherent with existing EU environmental legislation, and which secures long term environmentally and economically sustainable fisheries for EU fishermen.

ⁱ European Commission (2018) [Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual plan for fish stocks in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Regulation \(EU\) 2016/1139 establishing a multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea, and repealing Regulations \(EC\) No 811/2004, \(EC\) No 2166/2005, \(EC\) No 388/2006, \(EC\) 509/2007 and \(EC\) 1300/2008](#). COM(2018)149 final/2 - 2018/0074 (COD)

ⁱⁱ [Draft European Parliament Legislative Resolution on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual plan for fish stocks in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Regulation \(EU\) 2016/1139 establishing a multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea, and repealing Regulations \(EC\) No 811/2004, \(EC\) No 2166/2005, \(EC\) No 388/2006, \(EC\) No 509/2007 and \(EC\) No 1300/2008](#). (COM(2018)0149 – C8-0126/2018 – 2018/0074(COD))