

EU FISHERIES CONTROL COALITION

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5 priorities of the EU Fisheries Control Coalition

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The EU Fisheries Control Coalition¹ is working to ensure that fisheries management in the EU safeguards ocean health and marine life for generations to come. A robust control regulation is essential to ensure sustainable fisheries management in the EU's Common Fisheries Policy. We therefore **recommend MEPs to take the following five priorities into account:**

1. Remote electronic monitoring

Verified and timely catch data are essential to securing the long-term sustainability of European fisheries. If used correctly, they can deliver stock assessments, inform catch quotas, and determine the conservation risk of protected species. However, the majority of fisheries dependent data continues to be sub-optimal² and vulnerable to widespread misrecording,³ informing management decisions which fail to properly address declining fish stocks, continued non-compliance with the landing obligation, and unprecedented levels of sensitive species bycatch.⁴

We therefore recommend that the introduction of remote electronic monitoring (including CCTV) looks beyond ensuring compliance with the landing obligation. Doing so would provide a mechanism for logbook verification which ensures that the EU's management decisions reflect the best available scientific advice. To facilitate this broader objective, we would expect the revised Control Regulation to mandate remote electronic monitoring (including CCTV) on board all vessels over twelve metres, alongside an additional percentage of small-scale vessels that are at a high risk of breaching the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy.

2. Small-scale fisheries

Small-scale fisheries are critical in supporting the livelihoods of coastal communities and play an important role in sustainable development, but they are not necessarily a synonym for low impact fisheries. Their operations need to be properly assessed, monitored and controlled to guarantee that their impacts are accurately accounted for, especially as 89% of the total EU fleet currently does not have a vessel monitoring system on board and they are responsible for at least 23% of EU catches.

We therefore urge MEPs to extend the use of vessel position data systems to small-scale fishing activities, as proposed by the EP rapporteur and the European Commission. These devices are small, cost-effective, improve fishers' safety as they help locate fishers in case of need and do not interfere with the safe operation

1 The Environmental Justice Foundation, Oceana, Seas At Risk, The Nature Conservancy and WWF, together with Client Earth, The Fisheries Secretariat, Our Fish and Sciaena.

2 World Wildlife Fund, Electronic Monitoring in Fisheries Management, 2015, http://assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/fisheriesmanagement__2_.pdf.

3 European Fisheries Control Agency, Annual Report for the Year 2018, 2019, <https://www.efca.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EFCA%20Annual%20Report%20for%20year%202018.pdf>.

4 Pelagis Observatory Bilan de l'hiver 2018-2019 Captures accidentelles de petits cétacés en Atlantique.

of the vessels and gears. In addition, we urge MEPs to support introducing a completely electronic fishing logbook to record small-scale vessel operations.

3. Traceability

Making seafood products traceable from point-of-catch to point-of-sale is necessary to combat IUU fishing and achieve healthy fisheries. This is especially true for the EU, as the world's leading seafood market which imports over 60% of its seafood.

We ask MEPs to support the proposal for improved and digitised traceability. To improve the ability to verify that the source of the seafood is legal, we recommend that an IMO number for all eligible fishing vessels be added to the IUU Catch Certificate, as well as details on catch area and gear.

4. Transparency

The European Parliament, fishers and civil society do not have the information necessary to assess whether the Control Regulation is effectively implemented. This lack of transparency creates a culture of mistrust, misinformation and mismanagement, ultimately jeopardising the objectives of the CFP.

We therefore recommend increasing the public information available on the implementation of the EU fisheries control system with a view to creating a culture of trust, collaboration and compliance. Concretely, Member States should no longer be able to veto the publication of data on the implementation of the EU fisheries control system (as is currently the case under article 113 of the Control Regulation).

5. Sanctions

Currently, Member States' application of sanctions differs greatly; sanctions are not always dissuasive, proportionate and effective; and the points system is not consistently applied. The European Court of Auditors⁵ and the European Commission⁶ have concluded that this absence of standardisation has undermined the enforcement of the CFP. Indeed, throughout the EU, fishers feel that they are treated unequally and unfairly.

We ask MEPs to support further standardisation of enforcement measures with a view to creating a level-playing field, which in turn fosters a culture of compliance, as proposed by the European Commission.

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5 European Court of Auditors, Special Report: EU fisheries controls – more efforts needed, 2017, No. 08, https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR17_8/SR_FISHERIES_CONTROL_EN.pdf

6 European Commission, Staff working document: evaluation of the impact of the fisheries regulation, 2017, No. 134, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017SC0134&from=en>