



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FOOD

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Mr Cesar Debén
Director
DG MARE, Directorate A
European Commission
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium

Dear Mr Debén,

please find attached the results of the public debate on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, which was conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia in two rounds:

- on 10 December 2009 with the representatives of fishermen, aquaculture operators, processing industry, governmental institutions, scientific institutes and non-governmental organizations;
- on 21 December 2009 with marine fishermen themselves.

The public debate was conducted on the basis of the Green Paper of the European Commission.

For the purposes of the public debate exclusively, tentative position points were prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. However, these tentative position points do not yet represent the official views of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food concerning the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. Our official views will be prepared for the meetings of the Council of Ministers in the year 2010.

Sincerely yours,

Andrej Drašler
Director-General

Prepared by:
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Adviser

Annex: - Summary of the public debate on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

REFORM OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

Public debate conducted in the Republic of Slovenia

The public debate was conducted in two rounds: on 10 December 2009 with the representatives of fishermen, aquaculture operators, processing industry, scientific institutes, non-governmental organizations and governmental institutions and on 21 December 2009 with marine fishermen themselves.

The public debate was conducted on the basis of the sub-chapters of the Green Paper on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. For each of the sub-chapters, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food prepared a tentative position point, however, these position points are meant for the purposes of the public debate only. The participants of the public debate were asked to express their views on the Green Paper sub-chapters and the tentative position points.

On the debate round which took place on 10 December 2009, of all the invited representatives of fishermen, aquaculture operators, processing industry, scientific institutes, non-governmental organizations and governmental institutions, the representatives of the following institutions / interests took part in the debate:

- Biotechnical Faculty - National Biology Institute,
- Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry (including representatives of marine fishermen and aquaculture operators),
- Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Agriculture, Forestry and Food,
- Ministry of Environment,
- Slovenian Association for Sports Fishing at Sea,
- Fisheries Research Institute of Slovenia,
- Ministry of Health,
- Government Office for Development and European Affairs,
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia,
- Morigenos Society for research and protection of marine mammals,
- Radio Slovenia,
- marine aquaculture operators,
- representatives of processing industry,
- Representation of the European Commission to Slovenia.

To the debate round which took place on 21 December 2009, 120 marine fishermen were invited (owners or users of fishing vessels that have been active in the previous year), out of which 15 marine fishermen took part in the debate. The fishermen that took part in the debate represented both active and passive fishing gears.

SUMMARY OF BOTH ROUNDS OF THE PUBLIC DEBATE IN SLOVENIA

1. Addressing the deep-rooted problem of fleet overcapacity

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: Slovenia will address the question of fleet overcapacity in accordance with the Management plan for marine fisheries in waters under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Slovenia and in the framework of the measure Permanent cessation of fishing activities from the Operational Programme for Fisheries Development in the Republic of Slovenia 2007-2013. This is why Slovenia supports the continuation of the Permanent Cessation measure in the future EU legislation on fisheries fund. We are also in favour of the simplification of procedures for the drawing of funds.

Responses:

- A similar plan as the national Management plan for marine fisheries, which targets active fishing gears, should be prepared also with respect to passive fishing gears.
- Slovenian marine fishermen agree with the continuation of the possibility of Permanent Cessation of Fishing Activities also in the future EU legislation on the fisheries fund.

2. Focusing the policy objectives

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: When adopting decisions in the Common Fisheries Policy, we should aim to achieve a balance between the social, economic and ecological objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Responses:

- Fish stocks follow natural laws and cannot be subjected to compromises. When the population of fish falls below the critical level, it will be gone. Short-term measures such as full closures of fisheries should be considered, socio-economic problems should be addressed elsewhere.
- In addition to the measure Permanent cessation of Fishing Activities, also a measure of temporary closures of fisheries should be introduced, in connection with the introduction of compensations for fishermen (in European Fisheries Fund framework).
- Fisheries policy should be connected to environmental policies, considering the adopted international environmental agreements, and there should be more cooperation between the fisheries and environmental policies.
- In Slovenia, marine fishermen target fish stocks that are shared Adriatic stocks, shared with other Adriatic countries. The influence of Slovenian fishermen on fish stocks is very small, thus the management should be conducted on a regional level.
- In future, alternative employment should be guaranteed for surplus fishermen, considering the overcapacity of the fishing fleet.

- The question of finding alternative employment for surplus fishermen should be considered within Axis 4 of the coming financial perspective, alternative employment should be found for the fishermen in their local area.
- Slovenian marine fishermen pointed out that, with the independence, Slovenia lost a substantial part of the area where Slovenian fishermen conducted fishing. The fishermen see a key difficulty in the fact that since independence, Slovenia has not yet had a comprehensive programme for the development of the fisheries sector.

The fishermen emphasized that ‘the rules of the game’ seem to be changing all the time, which represents a difficulty for them to adapt to, they would like to have stable guidelines for their work, so that fishing would be an economically viable activity.

In addition, the fishermen pointed out that in Slovenian sea, there is a great density of different uses of the sea. With respect to the traffic density, Slovenian sea is one of the most heavily burdened seas, which makes it difficult for fishermen to conduct fishing activities.

3. Focusing the decision-making framework on core long-term principles

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: With respect to the future decision-making framework of the Common Fisheries Policy, the regional management of fisheries is closer to Slovenia concerning technical decisions. This would guarantee that decisions on technical level are in accordance with specific characteristics of fisheries in different regions, such as Mediterranean. Considering this, it will be necessary to guarantee the appropriate representation of Member States, scientists and stakeholders in Regional Advisory Councils.

Responses:

- There was a general agreement that adopting technical decisions on regional level would be beneficial for Slovenian fisheries sector.
- For the regionalisation of decision-making, analogies could be made to the data collection system, where there are regional coordination meetings. There could be a kind of service above the regional levels, to oversee their work.
- The current purpose of the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) is the consultation between the sector and the Commission. With the regionalisation of the decision-making, the RACs that represent the stakeholders should not be abolished, instead, new structures should be created in parallel with the existing RACs.
- In future decision-making, better account should be taken of scientific advice.
- Slovenian fishermen agree with the regional management of fisheries. Nevertheless, fishermen should continue to be represented in Regional Advisory Councils.

4. Encouraging the industry to take more responsibility in implementing the CFP

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: This issue does not pertain to Slovenia directly, since Slovenia has no fishing quotas and we do not yet have a producers’ organisation in the fisheries sector. In

the long-term perspective, Slovenia supports the establishment of producers' organisations in different sub-sectors of our fisheries sector.

Responses:

- In Slovenia, there is a problem of the lack of organisation of sub-sectors in the fisheries sector.
- A possible answer to this lack of organisation would be the set up of a producers' organisation.
- Another way to organise fishermen would be to shorten the supply chain between the fisherman or aquaculture producer and the end buyer of the fisheries products. Every Slovenian consumer should 'adopt' a fisherman or an aquaculture producer.
- A producers' organisation is not the only possible answer. The essential point is that fishermen and aquaculture producers see an advantage in mutual linkages. For example, they could create a wholesaler to sell their products. However, fishermen have had negative experiences in the past, when they created a wholesaler who subsequently began to take business decisions without the participation of the fishermen. This could be avoided by keeping the proprietary connections in the hands of the fishermen.
- Trademarks are very important. Fish from Slovenia could be more recognizable.
- In future decision-making, better account should be taken of the fishing industry.
- Slovenian fishermen are of the opinion that in Slovenia, commercial fishermen should not be made to pay for the use of fish that are a public resource, due to the smallness of the Slovenian fisheries sector. Slovenian fishermen are also against any introduction of fishing quotas.

5. Developing a culture of compliance

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: In Slovenia's view, the control system of the Common Fisheries Policy was revised adequately with the adoption of the *Council Regulation establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy*. Slovenia will participate actively in the preparation of the implementing rules for the new control Regulation within the Commission bodies, to ensure that specific characteristics of our fisheries sector are taken into account.

Responses: There were no responses during both rounds of the public debate.

6. A differentiated fishing regime to protect small-scale coastal fleets?

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: In principle, Slovenia supports the introduction of a differentiated management regime for small-scale fleets, as well as a differentiated access to public financing for this segment of the fleet. However, particular attention will have to be given to the selection of appropriate criteria for the definition of small-scale fleets, in connection with social objectives and the coastal communities.

Responses:

- In addition to the regionalisation of the technical decision-making, this part of the reform is most important for Slovenian fishermen.
- Slovenian fishermen proposed the following definition of small-scale coastal fisheries: *small scale coastal fishing means fishing carried out by fishing vessels not using towed gear and operating exclusively in the territorial waters of the coastal Member State.*
- For Slovenia, small-sized enterprises are the most vulnerable in the fisheries sector, while the Green Paper also speaks about the medium-sized enterprises. In the context of small-scale fisheries, only small-sized enterprises should be considered, and not medium-sized enterprises.

7. Making the most of our fisheries

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: Since Slovenia does not have any fishing quotas, this issue does not pertain directly to Slovenia. In general, Slovenia supports all proposals that aim towards the conservation and sustainable management of fisheries resources.

Responses: There were no responses during both rounds of the public debate.

8. Relative stability and access to coastal fisheries

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: The question of relative stability does not directly pertain to Slovenia, since Slovenia does not have any fishing quotas. In general, Slovenia supports solutions leading towards the conservation and sustainable management of fisheries resources.

The decision on the use of the 12 nautical mile zone from the point of view of fisheries should be left to individual EU Member States, since the uses of this zone differ across EU Member States, also considering the size of the territorial sea of different Member States.

Responses:

- There was a general agreement that the decision on how to use the 12 nautical mile zone should be left to the coastal Member State.
- In Slovenia, the 12 nautical mile zone is used also for fishing by larger fishing vessels.
- In addition, there are other uses of the 12 nautical mile zone (nautical routes, passenger traffic, transport, tourism etc.).
- Slovenian fishermen agree that the decision on how to use the 12 nautical mile zone for fishing should be left to the coastal Member States. This is particularly important for Slovenia, since Slovenian territorial sea is very small.

9. Trade and markets – from catch to consumer

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: Slovenia supports solutions that will lead to the increasing sales of those fisheries products that are obtained through sustainable fisheries, taking into account EU legislation, to ensure equal conditions for competition on EU markets.

Slovenia is in favour of conceiving solutions for the functioning of the market for fisheries products more widely than solely through producers' organisations. In addition, producers' organisations should be established in Slovenia as soon as possible in order to be able to benefit in this area in accordance with EU legislation.

Responses:

- A common brand could be created on EU level for those fish caught in an ecologically acceptable manner.
- However, we should first achieve sustainable fisheries.
- Slovenian fishermen felt that in Slovenia, there is a problem because there is no wholesale market for fish, and Slovenian fishermen transport their catches to the wholesale market in Trieste. In addition, there is the problem that Slovenian consumers are not used to eating fish. Slovenians eat too little fish and buy cheap imported fish instead of buying fresh catches from Slovenian fishermen.

10. Integrating the Common Fisheries Policy in the broader maritime policy context

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: Slovenia supports the integration of the Common Fisheries Policy in the broader maritime policy context, as well as appropriate co-financing through the European Fisheries Fund or other financial instruments. In addition, funds should be made available for the integration of fisheries into the implementation of measures of the broader maritime policy.

Responses:

- Ecosystemic approach should be demanded. First we should know the ecosystems and only then, management should follow (and not before).
- The timetable for the Common Fisheries Policy should be connected to the timetable for the implementation of the Marine Strategy.
- New ways for the use of the sea could be found, in particular to increase the domestic supply of fish through aquaculture and processing.
- A debate ensued about the fact that there are less and less mature fish in the sea. There was a suggestion that in marine aquaculture facilities, fish could be reared for repopulation of the sea. This was met with some scepticism in light of the fact that most of Slovenia's fish stocks are shared with other Adriatic countries and that in practice, only a few species from all the marine species that are currently overfished can be reared in aquaculture facilities.
- Repopulation with only some of marine species could disturb the balance of fish populations in the sea. Those fish species that are currently threatened the most are cartilaginous fish, and these can not be reared in aquaculture facilities, therefore, repopulation is not a realistic possibility. Among the

finfish, there is still enough potential for reproduction, therefore, their numbers would probably recover if the fishing effort was decreased.

11. The knowledge base for the policy

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: Slovenia supports the proposals of the Green Paper concerning the inclusion of appropriate knowledge base into decision-making framework the Common Fisheries Policy. In this context, Slovenia emphasizes the importance of regional scientific projects such as FAO Adriamed (that covers the Adriatic Sea area) that know well the specific characteristics of fisheries in different marine sub-regions.

When scientific bodies that serve also as advisory bodies for the Commission are established, all Member States should be notified about this and invited to propose their experts. It is important that the Commission informs the Member States regularly about the list of advisory bodies and to ensure that Member States have access to opinions adopted by advisory bodies.

Responses:

- The problem with research in the EU is that it is currently concentrated in those waters where management is conducted through a quota regime, and there is not enough data about the Mediterranean. Even if there are no quotas in the Mediterranean (save for the tuna), more resources should be invested into research projects to cover this region.
- There is communication between scientists, the problem is that nobody hears them.
- Slovenian marine fishermen felt that they should be informed regularly about the results of research in fisheries conducted by such bodies as the Fisheries Research Institute of Slovenia. Some feedback information from the biologists and economists would be beneficial for their work as fishermen. As the research conducted by the Fisheries Research of Slovenia is financed through public finance, also the results of the research should be available publicly, and the fishermen should be informed about the site where research results can be accessed.

12. Structural policy and public financial support

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: Public financial support should be granted in consideration of the specific characteristics of fisheries sector and its sub-sectors in individual Member States. Slovenia does not support the immediate abolishment of permanent fisheries subsidies (such as return of fuel excise taxes), particularly with respect to the circumstances of the economic crisis. In addition, we support the simplification of procedures for the implementation of the measures of the European Fisheries Fund.

Responses:

- Funds should be available for the restructuring of fisheries sectors, e.g. for the creation of new kinds of employment.

- To enable quick disbursement of funds in cases of crises in European fisheries, we could look for solutions in the Comitology procedure (procedure through Commission committees).
- Slovenia should support differential access to public funding in favour of small-scale coastal fisheries.
- There was a suggestion that in the next financial perspective, Slovenia could decide to use funds for the construction of artificial reefs. The construction of artificial reefs would be desirable, for example, under marine aquaculture facilities, but not in those marine areas where natural ecosystem still remains. However, it was recalled that during debates for the current financial perspective in Slovenia, it was decided that the construction of artificial reefs would not be included into Slovenian Operational Programme for Fisheries Development 2007-2013 due to environmental unacceptability.
- Slovenian marine fishermen strongly supported the retention of indirect support in the form of return of fuel excise taxes. They felt that Slovenian fisheries sector would be in danger of collapsing if such support was cancelled.

13. The external dimension

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: Slovenia supports the objectives and proposals of the Green Paper in connection with the external dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Responses: There were no responses during both rounds of the public debate.

14. Aquaculture

Tentative position point – for debate purposes only: Aquaculture is very important for Slovenia, since catches in fishing have fallen below the levels of aquaculture production in the last few years. This is why Slovenia supports measures that stimulate further development of European aquaculture, particularly through the elimination of administrative obstacles and the addressing of the problem of predatory birds (cormorants).

Before including aquaculture into the Common Fisheries Policy framework, however, it should be first determined in more detail, what such an inclusion would mean and what consequences it would have for aquaculture in different Member States. If aquaculture is included into the Common Fisheries Policy, the specific characteristics of aquaculture sub-sectors in individual Member States should be taken into account.

Responses:

- Currently, aquaculture is in crisis because of the general economic crisis.
- Aquaculture should be separated from fisheries.
- An important question in aquaculture is the issue of fish feed. An alternative source of fish feed in aquaculture would reduce the pressure of aquaculture on fishing. In this respect, the new strategy for European aquaculture should stress the use of alternative sources of fish feed in aquaculture.
- With respect to the issue of cormorants, the EU should take initiative, since the problem is a European one and cannot be solved on the level of sub-regions.

- With respect to the rearing of fish for repopulation, it should be considered which fish and which waters would be repopulated. This is important for rivers as well, since the effects of repopulation can be positive and negative. The case at hand is the example of the Soča trout (*Salmo trutta marmoratus*), which nearly disappeared from the Soča river due to repopulation with another species of fish that fed itself with trout eggs. However, after repopulation was made using Soča trout, its numbers recovered and it is no longer endangered.
- Aquaculture should become a pillar of the Common Fisheries Policy, but separate from fishing and with respect to the specific characteristics of aquaculture sub-sectors in individual Member States.