

Fiskekommunerna

Strömstad-Tanum-Sotenäs-Lysekil-Tjörn-Göteborg-Öckerö
Västra Götalandsregionen

(The Fishing Municipalities
Strömstad-Tanum-Sotenäs-Lysekil-Tjörn-Göteborg-Öckerö
Västra Götaland Region)

Consultation on reform of Common Fisheries Policy

The Fishing Municipalities

The Fishing Municipalities, comprising seven municipalities on the West Coast and the Västra Götaland Region, are working in cooperation with stakeholders towards the sustainable development of the fishing industry in our area. This cooperative effort got under way as early as 1995. For the Fishing Municipalities, the fishing industry is of great importance with regard to both securing employment and enhancing the attractiveness of the municipalities for residents, newcomers and visitors alike. Many of the West Coast seafood products are unique to Sweden, and this helps to strengthen the coastal municipalities' identity.

The Kosterhavet Marine National Park in Northern Bohuslän, boasting "Sweden's most species-rich marine environment", is another example of the sea's importance to the West Coast. It highlights the importance of securing a long-term and responsible fisheries policy.

Green Paper

The Green Paper outlines what the Commission believes are the five major structural failings of fisheries policy and raises a number of issues on which we wish to express our opinion.

1. The deep-rooted problem of fleet overcapacity

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

Fleet overcapacity remains an important issue, with the imbalance between fleet size and quota allocation posing a threat to the vision of achieving balanced fish stocks as part of the drive to achieve biodiversity.

Fleet capacity, as well as associated policy controls and instruments, must be designed in such a way as to result in a sustainable and responsible catch. It is important to ensure, however, that scrappage schemes do not contribute towards creating problems or destroying profitability in other fisheries. The industry's involvement in these matters, both as regards formulating overall objectives (national, regional and local objectives) and in terms of implementation activities, will help to ensure the impact of various activities and to create the conditions for an effective and sustainable management approach that achieves the objectives set.

2. Imprecise policy objectives resulting in insufficient guidance for decisions and implementation

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

Ensuring an ecologically sustainable catch is an essential prerequisite for the economic and social future of fisheries. The ecological and economic objectives therefore have to be formulated in a harmonised way so as to set course for a jointly agreed far-sighted vision for European fisheries in 2020.

It is important that the overall objectives for the Common Fisheries Policy also be adapted and formulated on the basis of regional and local conditions. This makes for clearer objectives and shorter decision-making paths. Co-management is one possible way of setting and implementing management objectives. Fishing grounds are another example of an area where there is scope for increased local influence over actions supporting and developing the industry in cooperation with related activities.

3. A decision-making system that encourages a short-term focus

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

The delegation of responsibility for areas of fisheries policy and for implementation decisions to the Member States and/or co-management by the industry would promote long-term responsibility and lead to objectives being achieved more effectively. Implementation can thus be better adapted to specific regional and local conditions, fostering participation, involvement and responsibility for fisheries management. If responsibility is to be delegated, however, the membership of management boards and committees has to be composed in such a way as to ensure that various interests are represented and must therefore be drawn from, for example, public authorities, industry, elected representatives and scientific experts.

4. A framework that does not give sufficient responsibility to the industry

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

It is important that the industry be vested with greater responsibility for the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy. Greater involvement and responsibility among stakeholders would lead to a higher degree of compliance and better results in the implementation of decisions.

If the industry is given the opportunity and power to develop the economically and technically best solutions within the framework of the objectives set by the authorities, and the chance to demonstrate that it is pursuing an activity in a responsible and sustainable manner, this will contribute towards strengthening the identity of fisheries and regional/local competitiveness.

Co-management in northern Bohuslän is a good example of economically and ecologically sustainable management where the industry assumes a large degree of responsibility for addressing administrative issues.

5. Lack of political will to ensure compliance and poor compliance by the industry

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

Local and regional responsibility for fish resources also has an impact on compliance with common rules. In this context, social control also plays a key role. Local initiatives and proposals for the development, simplification and improved efficiency of monitoring can be drawn up in local/regional co-management systems and then tailored to suit local/regional conditions or those of the particular fishery.

It must be ensured that monitoring is uniform and equivalent in all Member States, as any differences are liable to undermine both confidence in the system and the conditions for achieving "a culture of compliance".

Access to EU funding could be an incentive to vigorously strive for compliance, with access to Community funding being linked to effective compliance with control obligations. In practice, this would mean that Member States which did not achieve effective compliance would receive a reduced level of Community funding.

Other comments

The Green Paper sets out a proposal for further improving the management of EU fisheries.

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

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

One proposal outlined in the Green Paper is the possibility of having differentiated management regimes: one for large-scale fleets, where capacity adjustment and economic efficiency are at the core, and another for small-scale fleets in coastal communities with a focus on social objectives. The Fishing Municipalities support the development of differentiated management regimes because specific conditions and issues vary so markedly between individual fisheries. Such an arrangement requires a framework that is set up centrally to underpin locally developed management systems and objectives. The composition of management bodies is important in this context, and (as a minimum) commercial fishing operators, public authorities, elected representatives and scientific experts should be represented at both local and regional level. Such a composition would strengthen the bodies concerned and promote confidence in them.

Making the most of our fisheries

The Fishing Municipalities' comments: The discarding of fish is objectionable

A system of management by landing quotas is quite unreasonable as it leads to discards, i.e. excellent edible fish are thrown overboard because fishermen are not allowed to land them. This system must not be continued – it upsets both consumers and fishermen, as well as undermining confidence in public authorities, the objectives of measures taken and compliance. New systems and solutions must be developed and carefully tested so as to achieve the desired effect while at the same time raising consumer confidence in the fishing industry. The industry has to be involved in the work of designing new systems as it has a full overview of the effects which various measures and regulations have.

Relative stability and access to coastal fisheries.

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

The principle of relative stability, established in 1983, means that each Member State's share of each Community quota should remain constant over time.

Nowadays the system has been found to have several adverse effects, since amongst other things it leads to fish being discarded, which reduces the sector's scope for effectively utilising its resources and introducing other types of fishing and techniques. The system should be refined in such a way as to more effectively support the focusing of objectives and ensure that flexibility in the management of the CFP is not reduced.

Financial incentives whereby the amount of Community funding is linked to quota share (a reduced quota share giving an entitlement to increased EU support for diversifying the fishery) are a possible alternative way of encouraging efforts aimed at developing and diversifying the fishing industry within the Member States.

Trade and markets – from catch to consumer

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

Only a small share of the price the consumer pays for fish actually goes to the fishing industry. Within particular "fishing areas", support can be given to various activities leading to the development of new sales channels, greater cooperation between the various players, etc. Such activities may relate, for example, to the provision of training or the creation of cross-sectoral "meeting places" and may be directed at increased

processing, traceability initiatives, tourism ventures or new forms of cooperation. In this context it is above all small-scale fishing activities, with their major contribution to employment in coastal regions, which have the potential for further development.

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

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

In a coherent marine management regime, fishing is just one of many sectors (aquaculture, recreation/tourism, energy etc) which will interact within a common maritime space and have a bearing on the development of coastal communities. Fisheries cannot be left out of this overall picture with an isolated management setup. An integrated maritime policy will make it possible to undertake coordinated activities covering, for example, research and development, environmental and climate issues, the more efficient use of energy, etc.

Creating the conditions for the development of fishing tourism is another example of an area where an Integrated Maritime Policy would simplify matters and permit a coordinated approach to various issues such as classification, licensing, etc.

The knowledge base for the policy

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

Scientific knowledge and data are of vital importance to the Common Fisheries Policy. Activities and projects promoting various stakeholders' involvement in, commitment to and responsibility for the knowledge base are important, with a view not only to incorporating stakeholders' knowledge in research-based advice but also to strengthening communication between researchers, decision-makers and stakeholders. Scope for such involvement and commitment should be available at both regional and local level, e.g. through the RACs and local co-management.

Structural policy and public financial support

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

Support should be used, *inter alia*, as a policy instrument for achieving overall objectives and as a tool for developing fisheries or restructuring them where necessary. Climate change is set to affect both fishing conditions and the stocks themselves, which means that fisheries will also have to change in future if maritime resources are to be preserved as a source of food for future generations.

Aquaculture

The Fishing Municipalities' comments:

Aquaculture will assume greater importance in the future and thus holds major development potential. National efforts will be implemented in this domain, one example being the addition of a coordinating secretariat for aquaculture development.

Aquaculture should be integrated as a fundamental pillar of the Common Fisheries Policy and be regarded as part of the fishing industry. It can, for example, provide a source of income for small-scale coastal fisheries. However, the further development of aquaculture may also include innovative fields of application such as cultivation of algae or other species to produce biogas or fertilizers.

The Fishing Municipalities' concluding remarks

Fisheries and aquaculture make up an industry that is currently in flux but is rich in future promise. For the path forward is paved not only with challenges, such as the price of fuel, the level of fish stocks and climate change, but also with development potential. Such potential resides especially in small-scale fisheries, with particular importance attaching, for example, to fishing tourism, increased processing, aquaculture and cooperation with other stakeholders.

It is important to involve industry people in management questions as they are the ones who can fully understand the effects of various measures and can prevent regulations coming into being which lead, for example, to the discarding of fish. They can also make proposals for rule changes and simplifications designed to develop or diversify activities with the aim of improving profitability but without increasing the fishing effort. The regulations governing fishing-tourism operations are a case in point – this is an area where the rules are currently opaque and provide a disincentive for development of the industry.

Increased involvement in management questions will take time – this is about building confidence and skills to create a consensus on a common vision of the objectives to be set. It is a process which much be allowed the time that is needed.

The European Commission's Green Paper on Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy has identified central issues with a vital bearing on the creation of a coordinated fisheries policy designed to improve stewardship of the industry from the environmental and socio-economic perspectives. The key to the fishing industry's future lies in finding answers and solutions for these issues – in harnessing the various stakeholders' skills in order both to set goals and to ensure that rules and measures are put in place to achieve those goals.

The Fishing Municipalities

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