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European Affairs Committee

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Opinion on the Commission's Green Paper on Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy – COM(2009)163

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Dear Mr Borg,

Contact
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The Danish Parliament's Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Committee and European Affairs Committee hereby submit a joint opinion on the Commission's Green Paper on reform of the common fisheries policy.

The Danish Parliament's Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Committee examined the Green Paper at several meetings and agreed on a response to be given to the Commission. This response, as presented below, was subsequently endorsed by the European Affairs Committee on 11 December 2009.

Opinion on the Commission's Green Paper on Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

The Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Committee and the European Affairs Committee note that the common fisheries policy faces a number of significant challenges that can only be tackled in close cooperation between the EU institutions, Member States, the industry and other stakeholders. These challenges include overfishing, which may lead to oceans gradually emptying of fish unless far-reaching reform is effected, and an extensive and complex regulatory framework with unintended consequences, particularly in the form of discards. In addition, the rules and control mechanisms in force often relieve fishermen of their responsibility for sustainable management of resources and reduce the incentives for them to adhere to the rules.

In this respect, the Committees find that the overriding aim of the future common fisheries policy should be to ensure the sustainable management of fish resources in the long term, whereby a link should be established between the various policy areas concerned (environmental, regional and agricultural policies, including questions regarding land settlement and tourism), allowing

tangible results to be achieved in terms of reducing overfishing and simplifying rules and control for the benefit of the industry and the authorities alike.

The Committees find that an incentive structure should be introduced at EU level, in order that vessels which fish more selectively, without discards and with less unwanted by-catches, may earn advantages in the form of increased self-management and larger quotas. The freedom to choose among various schemes, combined with tangible advantages, could not only give fishermen the opportunity to select the scheme that suits them best, but also allow them to re-assume responsibility for their own situation.

A way to achieve this aim would be to replace or supplement the fishing regulation currently in force, in which the quantity of fish landed in ports determines whether individual fishermen have met their quotas, with an optional catch quota scheme in which all fish counted towards the quota from the moment it was caught. The reward for participating in such a scheme would be the allocation of a larger quota. Such an optional catch quota scheme would *de facto* remove the incitement to high-grading, which is one of the major flaws of the current fishing regulation. Further, it would provide considerable incitement for individual fishermen to choose the most selective fishing gear and the fishing routes most likely to yield good catches. Choosing selective fishing gear would thus to a larger extent be the natural consequence of the fishermen's own interest in optimising their commercial gain from the fisheries. If such a scheme was introduced, it should be accompanied by an ameliorated monitoring system ensuring that catches were recorded in an adequate manner on board the vessels. This would require the interconnection between satellite surveillance and the monitoring of catches on board the vessels by means of closed-circuit television.

In this respect, the Committees recommend that in future, the regulation of catches should focus on quotas and fishing gear. The double regulation currently in place, which includes both quotas and kilowatt-days, should be changed in such a way that regulation is based exclusively on quotas and fishing gear in future.

Further, the Committees find that there is a need to improve the stock of data on the basis of which maximum sustainable catches are determined for specific fish stocks and territorial waters. In this regard, appropriate advice from ICES for all species of fish would be required, whereas such advice is currently only given for certain species. Further, it is important that sufficient financial resources are earmarked for research and the provision of advice within this field.

The Committees regret that the Green Paper does not address the regulation of fisheries in inshore areas. With regard to the future regulation of fisheries in

the EU, a general distinction should be made between coastal fisheries and ocean fisheries, with the aim that coastal fisheries should to a larger extent be left to national regulation within a general common framework, whereas ocean fisheries should mainly be regulated at EU level.

Finally, the Committees find that the EU's fishing ports should generally play a larger part in the reform of the common fisheries policy.

With kind regards

René Kristensen
President of the Food, Agriculture
and Fisheries Committee

Anne-Marie Meldgaard
President of the European Affairs
Committee