



Response from the North-Norwegian county councils of Troms and Nordland to the EU Commission's Green Paper on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

Introduction

Troms and Nordland are two coastal counties in northern Norway bordering the Norwegian Sea and the Barents Sea. Activities connected to the sea have been important in all aspects of life and vital to the economy since the area was settled approximately 10 000 years ago.

The fishing industry is a major sector in Northern Norway today: 90% of all seafood is exported and approximately 60% goes to the EU-marked. 70% of the total Norwegian quota for codfish is caught outside North-Norway and 40% of the farmed salmon is produced here.

The North-Norwegian county councils welcome the initiative to reform and improve the current European Common Fisheries Policy, (CFP). The CFP has failed to deliver sustainable fisheries in Community waters and we support the current review and new measures taken to improve the situation towards a more holistic and sustainable approach. The new Control Regulation coming into force shortly is a sign of strengthening control and monitoring within the Community. In spite of the CFP being an EU policy issue for members of the Community we, as EEA regions, appreciate the opportunity to part take in the consultation process.

The debate on future sustainable fisheries is important and we would like to stress that we all have a responsibility to make this happen. We are talking long term planning and we need to see beyond short term needs even if this is difficult at times, especially now since the fishing industry has been hit hard by the financial crunch.

Norway is dependent on a well functioning CFP in the EU, even if the CFP is as mentioned, not a direct part of the EEA-agreement. However, several EU members point to Norway and our way of managing our fisheries when debating the CFP and for this we are grateful and humble. We must emphasize that Norway has not solved all problems and we have our challenges too, but our fish stocks seem healthier than fish stocks in the EU at present

A fishing policy for the future needs to be determined by the greater needs of the coastal communities and environmental concerns and not the fishing industry alone.

Key regional suggestions from the North

We have not answered every question in the Green Book and the paragraphs listed below are our contribution towards the future debate aiming to turn a future CFP in a more sustainable direction on multiple levels. The CFP needs to be given the same attention as other sectoral policies and must be part of a holistic approach to secure healthy management of the seas in the future – a prerequisite for an ecosystem-based fishing policy.

A reformed CFP needs to be based on sustainability, and use “the principle of caution”

- These must be the main elements in future management. When aiming for a holistic approach to the management of our seas and fishing resources, it is in our view important to manage the food chain at large and see the species in relation to each other. Sea mammals like seals and whales have a huge impact on the ecosystem and fish stocks. In Norway these species are managed through our Fishing Policy whilst in

the EU they are managed through the Habitat Directive. If we do not secure the management of species in relation to other species in the food chain, an unhealthy balance will develop over time.

Elimination of discards and high grading

- The current discard of fish gives the CFP a bad reputation. In Norway there is now a total ban on discard, which has helped recover our stocks. Discard results in waste of valuable resources and maintains instability harmful to the environment and the business. Together with IUU-fishing – discard is adding to instability and unpredictability, making it difficult to obtain correct data and giving predictions needed to set quotas etc. A ban on discard must be a priority for the future CFP.

Addressing fleet over-capacity and adjusting the fishing fleet to the resources available

- Norway has had and still has to a certain degree over-capacity in the fishing fleet. Measures have been forced, adjusted to resources available. The challenge is the constant technical developments increasing efficiency in the fishing fleet. Norway has carried out actions of vessel condemnation and structural measures to better adapt fleet capacity to the resources and thereby strengthening remaining vessels economic viability. The total quota is as a result distributed among fewer vessels.

Removal of public aid concerning fleet investments and running costs

- When traditional and other public aid is cut, fishing will naturally diminish and fish stocks will in turn recover, the fishing industry will be made more responsible and the motivation of the remaining actors will increase, as will the cost benefits. Public aid is however needed for economic diversification and restructuring of coastal communities to protect traditional skills, culture and to develop tourism and new businesses.

Research and knowledge-based resource management: High quality impact assessment based on best available data

- We have a common responsibility for managing the seas and our bio marine resources, based on reliable data and innovative research – research that can foster a competence industry developing new products and new use of maritime and marine species. Opportunities to diversify the fishing industry lie in new research. As an example, world-class research on bio-prospecting is currently being carried out in northern Norway. This research is of value to all of Europe and the world.

Instruments for stricter enforcement of management strategies

- Stable annual quotas
- Regulations (prioritising specific types of fleet, tool groups and fishing areas)
- Regulative actions:
 - Developing adequate catch data
 - Electronic catch reports from each individual vessel
 - Temporary closing of fishing areas containing small and immature fish

- Preservation (e.g. halibut and Norwegian haddock can only be caught at certain times during the year)
- Minimum size of caught fish, assisted by:
 - Technical measures like mesh size, which will let the young fish pass through
 - Trawl grading mesh – protecting spawn
- A maximum 10 % allowance of under-sized fish and protected species

Stricter sanctions and penalties for IUU-fishing

- Measures have been taken at a European and international level and it is important to continue this fight. Tracking of quotas and origin are important actions we now see in the new Community Control System. We welcome this development and hope sanctions and monitoring will stop IUU-fishing in the future.

Ocean based cross-border management with greater responsibility for geographical macro regions

- Like the Barents Sea, North Sea, Norwegian Sea.

Demanding a more environmentally friendly sector

- Energy saving through catch-methods minimizing fuel needs, improvement of trawl bag tows. The coastal fleet is proven more environmentally friendly.

Diversifying the fishing industry

- Supporting the process of readjusting and strengthening economic life in coastal communities. This will help preserve and carry on traditional knowledge, culture and provide for increased tourism.

Aquaculture

- This should not be controlled by CFP. Aquaculture in coastal zones belongs under the overall Integrated Maritime Policy and is covered by coastal zone management under a national and regional responsibility. Considerations are given to coastal fisheries, aquaculture, leisure activities, protection and preservation areas and where biological diversity must be safeguarded. ICZM must be the responsibility of states and regions.

Developing a culture of compliance

- In Norway there is close cooperation between the national levels of authorities and the fishing organizations. This provides for codetermination and joint responsibility concerning the management of fish stocks and creates a culture of compliance.

Value of international regional cooperation and multi level governance

The CPMR is a lobby organization of considerable value for peripheral maritime regions in Europe. Through the CPMR our northern regions have had the opportunity to channel views

on IUU-fishing and EUs Discard Policy, both harmful for much needed stability and predictability. The CPMR Political Bureau has previously encouraged European authorities to intensify the follow-up mechanisms, traceability and labelling of fish products, work for a better recognition of local artisan fisheries, promote the adoption of more selective and energy-saving fishing practices, reduce discards and enforce comprehensive protection measures for breeding grounds and nursery areas and emphasising the principle of subsidiarity. These are measures that will improve the current situation and empower regions and businesses to be part of the process.

It is in our common interest that EU Fishing Policy makes a foundation for sustainable and healthy fisheries. (In the north of Norway the coastal fleet and aquaculture is of great significance and many local communities and businesses depend on them.) A greater element of subsidiarity into the CFP is needed to achieve sustainability and good governance in the future.

North-Norway shares the vision of attractive living coastal communities, also in the years to come. It is an important part of our culture and our history and the fishing industry is instrumental for future growth and jobs. We want our fisheries to be economical, social and environmentally viable. To achieve this we need a good ecosystem-based policy framework. Every level of management must be responsible, including the fishing industry. Multi level governance enhances every level to take greater responsibility and to adhere to international laws and legislations to achieve long term sustainable solutions.

In light of the vast challenges ahead to recover fish stocks and strengthening fishing dependent communities, international cooperation is crucial. Today the EU and the Norwegian state share the management of certain fish stocks in the North Sea and have bilateral agreements. Common challenges require common solutions and we are aware of the current difficulties between Norway and the EU to come to an agreement for 2010.

As of January next year, all fish products entering the EU must come with catch certificates validated by the country whose flag the fishing boat which caught the fish is flying, a move the EU hopes will aid the fight against IUU-fishing. This is an important step forward – and should be part of a new CFP.

Conclusion

The Green Paper calls for a sustainable and holistic approach when managing the fishing industry. North-Norway supports this aim and emphasizes the importance of a Common Fisheries Policy taking into account the following main elements:

- A reformed CFP needs to be based on sustainability and use “the principle of caution” and this must be the main elements in future management of the seas – this includes control over IUU-fishing and elimination of discards
- CFP needs to be given the same importance as other sectoral policies to achieve a holistic approach and to secure healthy management of the seas in the future – a prerequisite for an ecosystem-based fishing policy

- In the reformed CFP it is necessary to make room for local and regional considerations but within a national and international framework based on sustainability to secure healthy communities – the principle of subsidiarity must be taken into account
- Research on and management of bio-marine resources

This creates in sum a better compliance of rules and regulations and a fishing policy better adjusted to regional circumstances. However, it goes without saying that the North-Norwegian fishing industry also struggles when the Norwegian Government makes decisions not always popular to those affected.

Nevertheless, the Norwegian experience of ecosystem-based management including discard ban, strict technical measures, temporary closures, structural measures for the fleet, and good governance leads us to conclude this is a system which is more sustainable on all levels than the current CFP. North-Norway welcomes the EU Commission's strong will and humble approach to change the current unsustainable situation in Community waters.

Norwegian and other Nordic fisheries management can be used as good examples in the process of reforming the current CFP, not saying these models fit all European regions. However, they can act as a source of inspiration towards a better future for all.