

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE NEWSLETTER

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Upcoming Events

The 7th legislature of the European Parliament (2009-2014) has come to an end. In the last plenary in April, MEPs voted on some very important dossiers regarding fisheries, including the third and last part of the fisheries policy reform, the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF), the Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), and 3 Fisheries Partnership Agreements with third countries, which you can all read about in this newsletter. In addition, the month of May will be an extremely crucial one since the MEPs are in full campaign mode for the elections taking place on the 22-25 May. These elections will play a crucial role in shaping up the next Fisheries Committee and its composition.

We also suggest you check the upcoming meetings section as May is replete of conferences, high-level meetings and workshops of relevance to the fisheries and aquaculture sector, such as the Seafood Expo in Brussels and the European Maritime Day in Germany.

Enjoy the reading and with best wishes,

Despina Symons
Director, EBCD

Briefing on the EP elections

The European Parliament held its last Plenary Session in April. The elections for the 8th European Parliament legislature (2014-2019) will take place on 22-25 May. There will be no further activities until the newly elected Parliament meets in Strasbourg on 1-3 of July.

The MEPs who are standing for re-election are now back in their respective Member States to campaign together with the other candidates selected by the national political parties. After the elections and as of the 2nd of June, the European political groups will be constituted during separate meetings; meetings to be held in Brussels, as well as various parts of the EU.

In July, there will be two plenary sessions in Strasbourg, mainly dedicated to the election of the European Parliament President and Vice-Presidents as well as the constitution of the various committees. The constitutive meeting of the new fisheries (PECH) committee is scheduled for the 7th of July and its first meeting will be held on the 22nd of July.

Once the political groups have been formed and the Committees have appointed their Chairs and Members, the new Parliament will be tasked with the selection of the President of the Commission (plenary of the 14th-17th of July). For this post, amongst the candidates put forward by the 5 main political groups (EPP, PES, ALDE, European Greens, European Left), 6 are the frontrunners; centre-right Jean-Claude Juncker (EPP), centre-left Martin Schulz (S&D), liberal Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE), Alexis Tsipras (European Left) and Ska Keller with José Bové (Greens). You can find

further information on them [here](#) -debating Europe and [here](#) -Europe Decides.

Depending on the results of the elections and the composition of the newly elected Parliament, this procedure can have delays and complications.

In parallel to this process, the 28 Member States (MS) will propose their Commissioners for the 27 portfolios (1 portfolio for each MS + the President of the European Commission). The new President of the European Commission will then negotiate with MS the portfolios of the Commissioners, who in turn will be subject to hearings at the EP, where their suitability as a whole will be put to a vote. Should members of the team be deemed inappropriate for their position, the President must then reshuffle his team or request a new candidate from the MS; or risk the whole Commission being voted down.

If all goes well, the new Commission will take over by November 2014, but should complications occur, the process can be delayed by months.

The approval of the European Maritime Fisheries Fund completes the cycle

The 7th legislature term of the European Parliament marks the beginning of a new chapter in fisheries policy: the adoption of the third and final package of the reform. The circle is closed.

Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

Since 1 January 2014, fishermen have a new fisheries policy that sets up a package of new measures that include, among others, the controversial discard ban. Fishing vessels will have to land at least 95% of all catches (ie. 5% exemption) in accordance with a schedule of

specific dates for different fisheries, starting gradually from 2015.



In order to make the **landing obligation operational** certain provisions currently in force need to change. For that to happen, a new framework for technical measures has to be developed. However, this new framework will almost certainly not be in place in time for the first group of fisheries to be covered under the landing obligation (discard ban applies firstly for the pelagic fisheries on January 2015). As a solution, the Commission proposed an **omnibus regulation**, a provisional regulation that sets amendments generally regarded as a mere legal alignment to the new Basic Regulation as they only spell out in clear legal text what logically follows from the introduction of the landing obligation.

As with every change, it is hard for communities to adapt to the new situation but an open and transparent dialogue between all involved actors, as well the financial support from the fisheries fund (EMFF) can ease the difficult road ahead.

Common Market Organisation (CMO)

The Common Organisation of the Markets was set up in 1970 to stabilise the markets and guarantee

a fair income for producers. Over the years, it has steadily evolved from a system involving market intervention to one that focused more on sustainability. The goals of the Common Market Organisation are thus to

- **stabilise** the market for fisheries products in terms of price quality, regularity and availability;
- make the market more attractive by means of qualitatively upgraded products (**marketing standards**); the marketing standards specify freshness and size categories for fresh products. These are applied in accordance with conservation measures, in particular minimum biological sizes.
- make it more transparent by means of better consumer information (**labelling**); considering that the new CFP introduces a new eco-label to improve consumer knowledge about the sustainability, quality and traceability of fisheries products.

European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

On 16 April 2014, the European Parliament finally approved a fisheries fund for a 7-year period (2014-2020) of 6.5 billion Euros, whose purpose will be to **finance the new common fisheries policy** and support the sector to adapt to the new policy objectives such as the discard ban. Moreover, it will support Europe's blue growth policy through the maritime strand of the fund. For the large bulk of the EMFF money managed under the "shared management" (where projects are co-financed by EU and national funding), it is up to the Member State to choose how and where to spend the money.

The agreement was viewed as tepid by NGOs who argued in particular that subsidies for boats and engine renewal will undermine the sustainability of the fish stocks, although they

were happy with other outcomes such as more money for data collection. Industry and Member States welcomed the outcome, in particular as funding is very much needed to support the big challenges ahead in implementing the EU's new fisheries policy. The Council is expected to formally approve the agreement in the upcoming months, after which it will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

MSP Directive becomes a reality



In March 2013, the European Commission proposed a directive to create a common framework to coordinate the planning of human activities that take place in the sea; the [Directive for a Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Management \(MSP-ICM\)](#)¹.

In the last plenary of the 7th Legislature of the European Parliament (2009-2014), the [MSP-ICM Directive was adopted](#).

The Directive:

Maritime Spatial Planning, or MSP, is a transparent and comprehensive process based on stakeholder involvement, analysing and planning

of when and where human activities should take place at sea.

Integrated coastal management, or ICM, aims for the coordinated application of the different policies affecting the coastal zone and related to activities. It will contribute to sustainable development of coastal zones by the application of an approach that respects the limits of natural resources and ecosystems. It covers the full cycle of information collection, planning, decision-making, management and monitoring of implementation.

The purpose of this Directive will be to facilitate the development of Blue Growth sectors and promote an ecosystem based approach in areas such as:

- renewable energy
- offshore aquaculture
- marine tourism and other growth areas,

as well as reduce existing red tape and administrative burden. It is therefore a tool that will offer opportunities for innovation, sustainable growth and employment, which all contribute to the EU 2020 objective.

Additionally, MSP-ICM plays an important part in the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the environmental pillar of the Common Fisheries policy (CFP), because according to the latter, Member States, amongst others, have the obligation to establish a coherent network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), which can be achieved with the use of the MSP-ICM Directive. It is also designed to properly manage and reduce the cumulative impact of all maritime activities in a given sea area, reducing the impact of these sectors on the environment.

Summarizing, it is a directive that:

- **Will bring Member States and activities sectors together** (maritime surveillance and safety, economic growth, maritime

¹<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0133:FIN:EN:PDF>

innovations, transparency, effective governance, environmental protection, effective stakeholder involvement, etc.)

- **Will promote the sustainable development of the maritime sectors** by reducing conflicts between sectors and creating synergies between different activities
- **Will promote cross-border cooperation and international cooperation** on the high seas (areas beyond national jurisdiction)
- **Will promote the exchange of data between all involved players.**
- **Will encourage investment** – by instilling predictability, transparency and clearer rules.
- **Will protect the environment** – through early identification of impact and opportunities for multiple use of space.

Next steps:

After its final adoption by the Fisheries Ministers' Council, Member States will have to transpose it into their national legislation by 2016, as well as nominate a competent authority in charge of implementing this directive.

In addition, Member States will have to draft national plans, by 2021, following their specific economic, social and environmental priorities, and their national sectorial policy objectives and legal traditions, but in respect to the minimum requirements of the Directive. Some Member States had already begun implementing this Directive prior to its official adoption and have already proposed planning systems for their offshore areas, in coordination with the European Commission.

EU promotes sustainable fishing with third countries

On 16 April 2014, the European Parliament gave its consent to the EU's Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs) with the Union of the Comoros, the Republic of Madagascar and the Republic of Seychelles. These FPAs are especially beneficial for the tuna fleet from Spain, France, Portugal and to a lesser extent, Italy.



These three agreements provide fishing opportunities for European Union vessels in the fishing zone of its partners within the limits of the available surplus while at the same time promote sustainable fishing. Their general aim is to strengthen the cooperation between both parties by creating a partnership framework within which to develop a sustainable fisheries policy and sound exploitation of fisheries resources in the fishing zones, in interests of both parties. Negotiations with Seychelles include an access for fishing vessels flying the flag of the Seychelles to waters and marine biological resources of Mayotte (as of 2014 is an outermost region of the EU, hence its EEZ is considered EU EEZ).

The FPAs under the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

More than a quarter of the fish caught by European fishing fleet is actually taken outside EU waters. Around 8% of the EU catches are made under fishing agreements with countries outside the EU. The FPAs with Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros are included among them. These bilateral fishing agreements have been a feature of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and since 2004 they have been known as Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs). The CFP establishes that these agreements not only focus on the fishing for surplus stocks on the third country's exclusive economic zone which the contracting party cannot or does not wish to fish, but also on resource conservation and environmental sustainability.

FPAs promote sustainable fisheries in the partner countries by strengthening their administrative and scientific capacity through a focus on sustainable fisheries management, monitoring, control and surveillance. For this purpose, the EU provides the partner with a financial contribution. In addition each FPA is based on a comprehensive scientific assessment and once in place EU vessels can only fish under it. This ensures total transparency of the activities of EU operators in the area.

Stakeholders' views

On the one hand, NGOs and environmental organisations (Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA) and OCEANA) believe that these agreements do not have such a positive outcome since they are considered just a “cash to access” kind of deal. In their opinion, the concept of the “surplus stock” has not been respected in the European Union agreements. In addition, the main determining factor of the financial contribution provided by the EU remains the level

and conditions of EU fleets access to developing countries' resources, rather than the developmental needs of the third countries. For NGOs there should be more transparency afflicting the management of developing countries fisheries.

On the other hand, representatives of the fisheries sector are more optimistic when it comes to the FPAs, focusing their point of view on the mutual benefits and showcasing that FPAs are well founded on a basis of economic, social and environmental sustainability. In relation to the social aspect of the sustainability, a social clause² was approved by Europeche and Cogeca and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) on 9 April 2014 to be inserted in the FPAs which refers to labour and standards of social protection and aims at ensuring decent working conditions for non-EU fishermen working on-board vessels operating through the agreement.

²

http://www.europeche.org/sites/default/files/attachedfiles/EP27%20Social%20clause%20-%20press%20release_0.pdf



May 2014			
5/6-May	EU Council	<u>Informal</u> Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers' Council	Brussels, Belgium
6/8-May		Seafood Expo Global/Seafood Processing Global	Brussels, Belgium
07-May	Greek Presidency	<u>Informal</u> Maritime Ministerial Council	Athens, Greece
19/20-May	EU Council	Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers' Council	Brussels, Belgium
19/24-May	FAO/GFCM	38th Session of the Commission (Annual meeting)	Rome, Italy
19/24-May	EC	European Maritime Day 2014: Information stakeholders' sessions	Bremen, Germany