

## FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE NEWSLETTER

JULY-AUGUST 2014



### New EP Fisheries Committee

### Italian Presidency

### Deep Sea Fishing

### Generalised Scheme of Preferences

### Upcoming Events

This month marks the beginning of the new European Parliament, its first plenary and the first meetings of its committees, including the fisheries one, whose members, board and outcome of its first meeting can be found in this newsletter. In addition, this month kicked off the Italian Presidency, whose priorities can be read in this month's edition. Furthermore, an issue that has caught some press light in these past few months is the deep sea fishing and the proposed ban of bottom trawling, and you can read about the latest developments regarding some NGOs' actions to ban bottom trawling. Lastly, you can catch up on the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) of the European Union with third countries and read on the different schemes and each country's role in that scheme.

I wish you all a very relaxing summer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Despina Symons'.

*Despina Symons*  
Director, EBCD

## New EP Fisheries Committee



The 8<sup>th</sup> legislature of the European Parliament (2014-2019) has already begun its activities with a first plenary session on the 1-3 July and a second one on the 14-17 of the same month. During the first session, the number of committees and their members was decided upon.

### Fisheries Committee

This legislature will have a new fisheries committee (PECH) of a total of 38 members (24 active and 14 substitute MEPs)<sup>1</sup>. This new committee has some MEPs who were re-elected, such as MEPs Alain Cadec (FR, EPP), Isabella Lövin (SW, Green), Werner Kuhn (DE, EPP), Joao Ferreira (PT, GUE/NGL), Gabriel Mato Adrover (ES, EPP), Ulrike Rodust (DE, S&D) and Isabelle Thomas (FR, S&D); and some new faces, such as Renata Briano (IT, S&D), Miguel Arias Cañete (ES, EPP), Richard Corbett (UK, S&D), Remo Sernagiotto (IT, EPP) and Ricardo Serrão Santos (PT, S&D). The distribution of the committee is

<sup>1</sup> List of PECH members:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/pech/members.html?action=1&webCountry=&webTermId=&name=&politicalGroup=&bodyType=&bodyValue=&type=&filter=#menuzone>

distributed according to the results of the European elections of 23-25 May 2014, where, the Group of the European's people's party (Christian democrats- EPP) has 6 members, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) has 6 members, the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) has 3 members, the Europe of freedom and direct democracy group (EFDD-former EFD) has 3 members, the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) has 2 members, the Confederal Group of the European United Left- Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) has 2 members, the Greens/European Free Alliance has 2 members and lastly, 1 Non-Attached (NI) member.

### Constitutive meeting

The PECH committee held its first meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014, where the political groups proposed their candidates for the chair and vice-chairs (4 seats) of this newly formed PECH committee, for a mandate of two and a half years. Hence, the French MEP Alain Cadec (EPP) was approved as the new Chair of the Fisheries Committee. At the same meeting, the new Vice-Chairs were approved. These are:

1. Swedish MEP Isabella Lövin (Green/ EFA),
2. Polish MEP Jaroslaw Leszek Walesa (EPP),
3. German MEP Werner Kuhn (EPP),
4. Italian MEP Renata Briano (S&D)

Regarding the election process, the chair and vice-chairs were accepted unanimously, via acclamation, except for the 3rd vice chair. For that seat, the MEP originally proposed was Italian

Marco Affronte (EFDD), but was outvoted by MEP Kuhn (12 votes in favour, whilst MEP Affronte received 9 votes in favour). Prior to the vote, MEP Lövin stated that MEP Affronte should be given the seat and MEP Kuhn should step down, to ensure that all political views be respected (with MEP Kuhn there would be 3 vice-chair seats belonging to the EPP). The EFDD group expressed its disapproval for this decision<sup>2</sup>.

### 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the PECH committee

The committee held its 1<sup>st</sup> meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2014, where the European Commission presented its budget for the year 2015 and specifically for the fisheries sector, which accounts to 0,7% of the total budget. MEPs expressed their strong disagreement to this small allocation of funds to such an important sector of the European economy. They asked for more funding on issues such as the correct implementation of the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), control and enforcement measures, data collection, monitoring of fishing activities, protection of small scale fisheries, promoting a level playing field for European fishermen, operational tools and human resources, specifically regarding the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA), who will be the main tool to ensure that all the above are respected.

In the same meeting, the Director General of Maritime Affairs, Mrs Lowri Evans, addressed the PECH committee and gave an overview of the key issues of the fisheries sector that will hold the attention of the fisheries committee in the near future, such as:

- Achieving Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015 (2020 at the latest): Regarding the Baltic and North Sea, stocks are in very good condition and the goal is expected to be achieved on time. On the other hand, for the Mediterranean basin, stocks are in a very bad condition and management plans will have to be put in place. This is something the European commission will address before the end of the year and the existing fishing rules for the Mediterranean basin will have to be examined under the new CFP light (introduction of TACs and quotas, management plans, etc.).
- Multi-species management plans: After the summer break, the European Commission will propose a plan on the Baltic sea. Other regions to follow will be the Celtic sea, Iberian sea, North Western Mediterranean and so on.
- Discard ban/Landing obligation: Mrs Evans stated that the discard plans proposed by regional organisations surpassed her highest expectations and are awaiting scientific approval. First signs show that it is highly possible that they will be approved (expected early October).
- Omnibus regulation: She emphasized the urgency and importance of adopting this legislation before the end of the year. Next year, the European Commission will propose new technical measures for fishing that will be in line with the new CFP and make this regulation obsolete.
- EMFF: Most Member States have put together and proposed operational programmes that will be examined over autumn.

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<sup>2</sup> The issue of the EFDD losing a seat in a committee board also happened in other committees as well (e.g. the budget (BUDG) committee).



- Driftnet ban: Although this issue was not raised by Mrs Evans but by an MEP, she stated that the Commission had proposed the regulation but it was up to the Council and the Parliament to make any changes they see fit.
- Eco-labelling: This issue was raised by the Chair, and Mrs Evans replied that a report on this is to be expected by early next year.
- Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs): Particularly concerning:
  - Mauritania: Negotiations are underway but the situation has worsened and it is probable that an agreement will not be reached. As a note, the Mauritania coast guard has received orders from its national administration that the agreement ends 31st July, which is not the case since legally it ends 15 December. This has caused political unrest and has reached the high levels of governance with Commissioner Barroso writing a letter to the Mauritanian high authorities.
  - Senegal: Negotiations are having a positive outcome and agreement is expected to be reached by September.
  - Guinea-Bissau: Negotiations have picked up and it is expected to be discussed in Council after the summer break. An agreement is expected to be reached by September/October.

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## Italian Presidency

On 1 July and for the next 6 months, Italy took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, after the Hellenic one. Unlike the Greek Presidency, which had the maritime policies among its fields of action, fisheries and marine issues are not a top priority for the Italian one.



## Presidency priorities

During the last Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers' Council meeting on 14 July, the Italian Presidency presented its priorities regarding fisheries and aquaculture sector.

- **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF)**

The Presidency intends to monitor the start-up of the new CFP and the EMFF, implementing them in time and in an effective manner.

- **Discard ban**

The Presidency has coordinated with coastal Member States on drafting and evaluating management plans for discards.

- **Aquaculture**

It will aim to promote aquaculture in view of its increase in production in the EU, as well as to enhance its competitiveness in the global market.

- **Fishing opportunities for 2015**

The Presidency will have to deal with the establishment of the Total Allowable Catches (TAC) and quotas for 2015 for EU and shared water fish stocks, taking into account the objective of the maximum sustainable yield (MSY).

- **Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs)**

The aim of the Presidency will be to coordinate and represent the EU's position with third countries and with multilateral organisations.

- **Bluefin tuna**

The Presidency will aim to simplify and update the existing long term recovery plan of this species.

- **Mediterranean Sea**

The Presidency stated that it will mostly focus its attention to that specific basin and try to resolve the issue of data limited stocks in the Mediterranean and propose appropriate resource management measures, in accordance with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

- **International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas**

Another important issue on its agenda will be the preparation of the ICCAT annual meeting in November 2014.

### Pressing issues

The Presidency is also faced with some time pressing dossiers, such as the Omnibus

regulation, which needs to be in effect by January 2015 to prevent legal uncertainties from the introduction of the discard ban (1 January 2015 for pelagic fisheries). Also, earlier this year, the European Commission proposed an introduction of a ban on all driftnets in EU waters to take effect from the start of next year. Hence, the Italian Presidency will have to start negotiations with the European Parliament on these files aiming for an adoption of these regulations by the end of 2014.

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### **Deep Sea Fishing**



Deep sea fishing has become one of the most controversial dossiers regarding fisheries in the EU. Environmental organisations (lead by the French NGO Bloom Association and Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, which gathers together NGOs such as Greenpeace, PEW, Seas at Risk and Oceana, among others) are pushing for a complete ban on deep sea fishing in the North-East Atlantic, while other stakeholders support, in their opinion, a more realistic and scientific based approach.

## **Background**

In July 2012 the European Commission launched a legislative proposal that will gradually phase out deep sea bottom trawling and gillnetting by EU fishing fleets in the North East Atlantic. It also requests for impact assessments for deep sea fisheries in new fishing areas and calls for a scientific and precautionary approach in setting quotas for deep sea fishing.

After long and difficult consultations in December 2013 the European Parliament's plenary session adopted its opinion on the Commission's proposal. The Parliament approved a report to restrict bottom trawling and gillnetting in the North East Atlantic, but rejected the initial proposal of the Commission to ban them altogether, this meaning that deep sea fishing should be banned in areas with vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), but bottom trawling should not yet be phased out altogether. Regarding VMEs, member states must use the best scientific data available to identify them and the Commission should list these areas which would be closed to all EU vessels if the areas are located in the high seas and to all vessels if they are located in Union waters.

The Parliament asked a clause to be included requiring an evaluation after 4 years of the impact of deep sea fishing gear on vulnerable species and ecosystems. Should the evaluation show that deep sea stocks are not well protected, then a general ban could be introduced.

This is not the first regulation EU launches to manage deep sea fishing in the North East Atlantic. In 2003, the EU started taking measures to regulate this fishery: capacity restriction, data collection, effort monitoring and control were the main components of this regulation. The EU closed

several areas to deep sea bottom fishing in Scotland and Ireland to protect corals and prohibited bottom trawling and bottom gillnetting below 200 meters in Azores, Canary Islands and Madeira. EU also prohibited bottom gillnets in EU waters below 600 meters depth.

Despite efforts of NGOs to convince the Greek presidency to put this issue in the presidency's agenda, and due to the European elections of May 2014 and an overloaded agenda this was not possible. Therefore the European Parliament did not have sufficient time to enter into dialogue with the Council of the European Union, which in the meantime has been dealing with this on a working group level and was therefore put on hold, until the new parliament would start its term and pick up where the previous one left off. The next step is to assign an MEP to this dossier and begin the bilateral negotiations to try to find a solution (Isabelle Thomas is likely to be selected as the rapporteur of this dossier). In the meantime the Italian Presidency has stated that it will not address this issue in the upcoming six months.

## **NGOs actions**

Some NGOs have been pushing for a ban of deep sea fisheries through different persuasive campaigns:

- Petitions were launched to ask for support against deep sea fishing activities: in May Greenpeace, WWF, Oceana and Deep Sea Conservation Coalition asked the Spanish government to support and propose management measures to minimise impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems and ensure the sustainable exploitations of deep-sea fisheries resources; Bloom Association made the same petition in December 2013 to MEPs



and to the French President, Francois Hollande, asking them to support the ban on deep sea trawling.

- NGOs reached an agreement with two supermarket chains in December 2013: Casino announced it will blacklist species caught by deep sea bottom trawling while Carrefour gradually stopped selling deep sea species by June 2014.
- On 14 July, while the Council of the European Fisheries Ministers met in Brussels, several street artists under the leadership of Bloom and its associates, produced pieces of street art simultaneously asking EU governments to ban bottom trawling, considered by NGOs as the most destructive gear for species and fragile habitats used at the sea. Brussels, Rome, Madrid, Berlin, Lisbon and London were the cities chosen to host this initiative.
- In June this year Portugal, which mainly has small-scale deep sea fishing, issued a decree prohibiting deep sea fishing in an area of 2.280.000 square km off its coast to ensure the conservation of deep sea ecosystems and to promote sustainable fishing. In addition, this decree establishes a requirement to collect samples of accidentally captured corals and sponges, thus contributing to the database of VMEs.
- Bloom Association has promoted a twitter campaign asking the citizens to tweet demanding the ban of bottom trawling to the French Government and Fisheries Minister, Frederic Cuvillier and to Segolene Royal asking her to ban deep sea fishing and make publicly available the information of the activities of the French fishing fleet on deep sea fishing.

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## Generalised Scheme of Preferences



The EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) is an instrument to help developing countries (DC) to export their products to the European Union in order to impulse their economic development. This is done in the form of reduced or non-existent tariffs for their goods when entering the EU market. Once a partner country is deemed non-developing it comes out of the preferential system. The GSP only applies to those countries that do not have another preferential trade agreement with the EU, such as a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) or an autonomous preferential arrangement that provides, at least, the same level of tariff preferences.

The current scheme was established by Regulation (EU) No 978/2012 ([click here](#)) and will last until 31 December 2023. However according to Art. 43.3 of the regulation, the "expiry date shall neither apply to the special arrangement for the least-developed countries, nor, to the extent that they are applied in conjunction with that arrangement, to any other provisions of this Regulation."

## **Structure of the GSP**

There are three kinds of arrangements under this scheme (see more info below for countries in bold):

- **GSP (standard arrangement)**: offers partial reductions or entire removal of tariff on two thirds of all product categories. Entered into force November 2012.

GSP beneficiaries are: China (People's Republic of), Colombia, Congo (Republic of), Cook Islands, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Marshall (Islands), Micronesia (Federate States of), Nauru, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Niue, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Syrian (Arab Republic), Tajikistan, Thailand, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

- **GSP+**: offers full removal of tariffs to developing countries which already are benefitting from GSP and ratify international conventions relating to human and labour rights, environment and good governance, and ensure their effective implementation. Entered into force January 2014.

GSP+ beneficiaries are: Armenia, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Georgia, Mongolia, Paraguay and Peru. Among these, Costa Rica and Georgia are negotiating a FTA with the EU and so GSP+ will only cover the transition period to the new trade regime.

El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama and Pakistan are the new additions to the scheme for 2014.

- **Everything but Arms (EBA)**: applies to least developed countries (LDCs) and grants duty-

free quota-free access to all products but arms and ammunitions. Entry into EBA is automatic (when a country fulfils all requirements, the grants will be applied automatically without any previous request from the country) and, unlike the other GSP arrangements, the EBA has no time-limit. Entered into force November 2012.

Beneficiaries of the EBA agreements are: Angola, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Butan, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Myanmar/Burma, Mozambique, Niger, Nepal, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Samoa, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Yemen and Zambia.

## **Countries of interest**

Regarding some countries that belong in one of the aforementioned schemes:

- **Ecuador** is likely to graduate from GSP+ and is expected to come out of this scheme on 1 January 2015 since the World Bank has classified it as an upper-middle income country, three years in a row. On 17 July, and after weeks of negotiation, Ecuador and the EU reached a trade agreement regarding some goods, markets and services. Ecuador is an important supplier of canned tuna and shrimp to the EU.
- **Thailand**, which lost its privileges in terms of processed products on December 2013 for the



same reasons as Ecuador, faces losing its preferential rate of the GSP scheme of 20.5% tariff on canned tuna exports to EU. According to Thai officials, this is not expected to have a great impact on its fishing sector, because Thailand uses the GSP on only 10-15% of its exports and. Discussions on a FPA between Thailand and the EU started in 2013 and negotiations were ongoing until on 23th of June when the Foreign Ministers' Council in Luxembourg decided to suspend relations with Thailand until a more stable, democratically elected government is put in place.

- Maldives are also likely to lose their all tariff benefits under the GSP on the basis of Maldives' attitude towards religious freedom and discrimination against women, and there are no open negotiations on a FTA with the EU, as of right now. Maldives lost the GSP+ status on 1 of January 2014 after being removed from the list of least developed countries.
- Philippines had applied for the GSP+ status in December 2013 but the European Commission asked it to submit it again because it was "lacking in certain details"; second draft was submitted in February 2014 and it was endorsed by the Commission in July. Now the Parliament and Council have two to four months to approve or reject Commission's decision. If approved, this would mean that Philippines could export processed

tuna to the European Union with a 0% tariff. As of right now, without the GSP+ preferential tariffs, it is the second largest country, after Thailand, regarding exports of preserved tuna to the EU. On this issue, various EU stakeholders have expressed their disagreement with the Philippines entering this scheme. This is the case of the Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC), which sent to the European Commission a recommendation to consider the implications such an action would have on the EU fishing fleet and seafood market.

It should be noted here that on 10th June of this year, Commissioner Damanaki announced that Philippines (and Papua New Guinea) have been warned (yellow card) of not tackling in an efficient way Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. The European Commission, in the upcoming months, will enter negotiations with Philippines and Papua New Guinea to come up with an action plan to combat IUU, tailored to each country's needs and resources.

# Upcoming EVENTS

September 2014			
03-04 Sept	EP	<b>Fisheries Committee</b>	Brussels, Belgium
10-12 Sept	YOUMARE5	<a href="#">Opportunities and Solutions – Research For Our Changing Oceans</a>	Stalsztung, Germany
11-18 Sept	IWC	<a href="#">International Whaling Commission 65th Meeting</a>	Portoroz, Slovenia
15-18 Sept	EP	<a href="#">EP Plenary</a>	Strasbourg, France
15 Sept	ICES	<a href="#">Annual Science Conference</a>	A Coruna, Spain
17 Sept	NWWAC	<a href="#">General Assembly</a>	Dublin, Ireland
22-26 Sept	NAFO	<a href="#">36th Annual Meeting</a>	Galicia, Spain
22-23 Sept	EP	<b>Fisheries Committee</b>	Brussels, Belgium
24 Sept	NSAC	<a href="#">General Assembly</a>	Stockholm, Sweden
25-27 Sept		<a href="#">Icelandic Fisheries Exhibition 2014</a>	Kópavogur, Iceland
30 Sept	EP Intergroup CCBSD, IUCN, European Commission	<a href="#">Nature-based Solutions</a>	Brussels, Belgium