

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE NEWSLETTER

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Interview with MEP Struan Stevenson

Agreement finally reached on the North East Atlantic mackerel dispute

Advisory Councils, starting to take shape

Upcoming Events

The Greek Presidency is halfway done, and April will be the last month of this parliamentary term. However, the parliament's work is far from over, since this month, it will be called to adopt major dossiers important to the fisheries sector, such as the EU's Fisheries and Maritime Fund, the Maritime Spatial Planning and three Fisheries Partnership Agreements with third countries.

Looking back, the month of March was crowned with a breakthrough in one of the most lengthy negotiations in the history of fisheries; the adoption of an agreement between the Faroes Islands, EU and Norway on the North East Atlantic mackerel. In this month's edition, we will be looking at the main highlights of this agreement and the reactions of those involved. Moreover, we will be taking a closer look at the Advisory Councils (former Regional Advisory Councils), their state of play and the problems they face. Lastly, MEP Struan Stevenson will shine some light on the state of play of the multi-annual management plans.

We also suggest you check the upcoming meetings section, as April is full of conferences, high level meetings and workshops of relevance to the fisheries and aquaculture sector, such as the Global Ocean Summit in The Hague, Netherlands and a Workshop on sustainable feed for aquaculture in Brussels.

Enjoy the reading and with best wishes,

Despina Symons

Interview with MEP Struan Stevenson

“The development of multiannual plans is essential to fishermen to ensure long-term financial security and ease the administrative burden”



Which are the reasons that made you seek an inter-institutional agreement, prior to the decision from the Court of Justice?

Since 2009, several proposals for multiannual plans have been blocked by the Council due to differing interpretations of Article 43 of the Treaty by the Parliament and the Council. All three institutions were in agreement over the importance of finding a solution to this log-jam in order to sustainably manage our fisheries and ensure long term security for our fishermen. In September last year, the Lithuanian Presidency established the Task Force in an attempt to tackle the deadlock and find a way forward. The conclusions of the Task Force meetings cannot override a court decision but can certainly help to address the key issues in question and the informal agreements made during the meetings

should seek to complement any court ruling. Since September 2013, there have been 10 meetings of the Task Force and 2 informal reports drafted.

What were the main problems encountered during the negotiations with the Council and the Commission?

The Task Force meetings were based on informal documents from the Commission which served the purpose of facilitating the dialogue between the colegislators. The work began with the least complex issue of single stocks, followed by dual species and finally we tackled the most complex issue of mixed stocks. From the outset, the institutions agreed that any future multiannual plan must be based on the best available scientific advice and provide flexibility on annual decisions on fishing opportunities. It was decided that a range of MSY targets, set timeframes, trigger safeguards, fluctuations and a review clause should all be incorporated into any future plan. Scientific bodies should be asked to give a range of Fmsy values to be fixed by the colegislators and the Council would adopt measures on the fixing and allocation of fishing opportunities in order to achieve these fixed values. The safeguard triggers used should relate to the biomass and should act as a supplement to the MSY target. We also addressed the issue of handling 'choke species' (where the early exhaustion of one species 'chokes' the further pursuit of the fishery). It was suggested that we could stagger the end dates for achieving MSY targets, adopt alternative conservation measures or fix overlapping MSY ranges for the two species. The three institutions also agreed that regionalisation plays a role in this process. With

regard to mixed species, specific technical measures may have to be developed to address the key species which should be managed according to MSY. Different fleets may use different exploitation patterns which may require technical measures for some but not others. Similarly, technical measures for by-catch would have to be developed through the regionalisation process based on scientific advice. Such by-catch species may over time turn into target species which would then have to be amended in the agreed multiannual plan.

What are the next steps and the timeframe, regarding the multiannual management plans?

The Task Force will publish a final report of its findings (April 2014) which complements the report published in November 2013 under the Lithuanian Presidency. The report will be the basis for finding a pragmatic way forward and pave the way for the essential development of multiannual plans under a reformed Common Fisheries Policy.

What is your balance on the long-term view of this agreement and how will it be beneficial to fishermen?

The development of multiannual plans is essential to fishermen to ensure long-term financial security and ease the administrative burden. Fishermen need the measures in place to be able to plan ahead. The differing opinion over Article 43 straddles other areas of European policy, not just fisheries so any decision made by the Courts will have a huge impact on all future EU decision making.

Agreement finally reached on the North East Atlantic mackerel dispute

The EU, Norway and the Faroe Islands set quotas on the mackerel up to 1.6m.tons

A five-year mackerel deal was signed by the **European Union, Norway and the Faroe Islands** on the 12th of March, setting the total allowable catch for the Northeast Atlantic stock at **1.6 million metric tons**. Iceland was absent from the deal, although Maria Damanaki, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said that *"The door is still open for Iceland to join the other parties in the near future"*.



The agreement on mackerel comes after the latest negotiations between the four coastal states — the Faroe Islands, Norway, the EU and Iceland — broke down in Edinburgh a week before. The quota was set at 1.24 million metric tons, from which:

- The Faroe Islands will receive 12.6% (156,240t) of the TAC, an increase from the prior 4.83%;

- The EU will receive 49% (611,000t) of the TAC, a drop from the previous 68.65% and
- Norway will receive 22.5% (279,140t) of the TAC, meaning a drop from 31.35%.
- Another 42,000t have been set aside for international waters regulated by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission.

This agreement came on the same day that ICES (International Council for the exploration of the Sea) said it would review its 2014 quota advice in late May.

Moreover, reaching an agreement on mackerel also enabled to unlock a series of other fisheries arrangements that were pending: bilateral agreement between Norway and EU was sealed allowing the fishing fleets of both states to fish in each other's waters. In particular TTACs and quotas for shared stocks in the North Sea include Norway and the EU exchanging quotas for species such as shrimp, saithe and redfish. Norway and the Faroe Islands agreed on a restrictive mutual access in their waters, while EU and the Faroe Islands also reached an agreement on reciprocal exchanges of fishing opportunities.

Divided opinions from the stakeholders.

Commissioner Damanaki welcomed this agreement saying that it will ensure a long term sustainability of the stock, a stable framework for fishing and that it will provide fishermen with a long awaited solution.

Reactions from **the European Parliament were less positive** and they requested the Commission to put pressure on Iceland to reach an agreement.

Struan Stevenson MEP said it was a relief for Europe's pelagic sector and in particular, for Scotland's mackerel fleet, but considers that providing the Faroes Islands with 12.6% of the total allowable catch for the next 5 years is way too much.

For Faroese ministry of fisheries, Mr Vesteegaard, the deal is fair enough, stating that this will move in the right direction in removing EU sanctions on Faroese imports of herring and mackerel. He welcomed this is a positive outcome from the many intense consultations in recent weeks, noting that it should now herald a new and more constructive era in fisheries cooperation in the North East Atlantic.

That said, **pelagic fishermen and producers do not agree with Faroese in this positivism**: they criticized the deal for rewarding the Faroes' 'rogue' behaviour of the past four years, while condemning the role of Damanaki in the negotiations.

The Shetland fishermen's association dispraised the European Commission for "*falling to protect the long-term interests of the UK's pelagic fleet*". The Danish pelagic producers' condemned the deal which made the EU, and particularly Denmark, the most affected after the negotiations since Danish quota will be reduced by 20%.

The pelagic fisheries trawler association also noted that rewarding the Faroes with a higher quota share sets a bad precedence for the future management of shared stocks: "*We see already that Greenland has copied the approach developed by Faroe Islands and – being outside the agreement – has awarded themselves a 2014 mackerel quota of 100,000t,*" said its president, van Balsfoort. "*In fact the Faroe Islands*

has already copied their mackerel behaviour by stepping outside the existing coastal state agreement for Atlanto Scandic herring in 2011 and setting unilaterally much higher quota for this vulnerable stock”.

Meanwhile, **Iceland stressed the importance of reaching an agreement in line with the advice of the ICES**, noting that the agreed allocation exceeds ICES's advice by almost 18%. Icelandic Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Mr. Sigurdur Johannsson, stated that EU, Norway and Faroe Islands will take full responsibility for this overfishing.

Though the discussions have been going for seven years, negotiations started last year when EU and Norway were in dispute with Iceland and the Faroe Islands following their move four years ago to significantly increase their mackerel quotas outside of an international management plan. It was impossible to reach a deal since all four coastal states maintained completely opposite points of view on setting the quotas.

Advisory Councils, starting to take shape

As part of the previous reform for the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) back in 2002, the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) were established. Their role was to act as a common voice for all stakeholders in the fisheries sector and the vehicle through which to present their recommendations into policy.

Now, with the adoption of the new Common Fisheries Policy in January 2014, a number of changes to the **name, role, functioning and number of the RACs** have been made:



➤ **New Name: From RACs to ACs.**

The Regional Advisory Councils will be renamed as Advisory Councils (ACs), dropping the "regional" branding. This was done due to the introduction of new councils, such as the one on Market and Aquaculture.

➤ **More important role: ACs became mandatory consultative bodies.**

Under the new CFP, the ACs play an even more important role than before, since Member States and EU institutions are now legally bound to consult them. They provide recommendations in the context of the regionalisation of the policy, especially concerning multiannual management plans and the upcoming discard ban (first one to apply on January 2015 for pelagic stocks), something the existing RACs are already addressing. Additionally, they will be tasked with informing Member States and EU institutions of problems regarding the socio-economic and environmental aspects of fisheries and aquaculture. Lastly, these councils are destined to play a significant role in the collection and management of data crucial to the development of conservation measures.

➤ **Status quo in the functioning, main changes in the composition.**

The functioning will continue to be articulated through a General Assembly, an Executive Committee, a secretariat and a number of working groups to tackle issues on their geographical sector or policy area. What has changed considerably is the composition: the new Advisory Councils will be consisted of representatives from the industry and other interest groups, with a 60% and 40% allocation of seats in the General Assembly and Executive Committee, respectively (whereas before it was 2/3 sector, 1/3 other interest groups)

Lastly, Advisory Councils will have the right to participate, as active observers, in meetings with third countries, including Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

➤ **Increased Number: 4 more ACs.**

In addition to the current 7 Regional Advisory Council an extra 4 are to be established, those being:

- Outermost region AC
 - West Atlantic sea basin

- East Atlantic sea basin
- Indian Ocean

- Market AC
- Black Sea AC
- Aquaculture AC

Next steps:

Work on the setting up of the new Aquaculture and Market ACs is progressing: discussions are underway and are expected to be set up before the end of this year. For the Black Sea one, the stakeholders involved have started coordinating their actions, but are still in an initial phase. For the outermost regions AC, not much has taken place so far.

At this meeting the Director General of DG MARE, Mrs Lowri Evans, stated, there are difficult tasks ahead, time is of the essence and that an open and transparent dialogue between all involved members will ensure a fairly smooth transitional period for fishermen.



April 2014			
31-Mar/1-Apr	Baltic Sea AC	Working Group on Discard Ban	Copenhagen, Denmark
31-Mar/4-Apr	UN	1st meeting BBNJ & informal consultation of States parties to UNFSA	New York, USA
01-Apr	European Economic and Social Committee and FREMSS	Presentation of the FREMSS foundation	Brussels, Belgium
2-4 Apr	EP	EP plenary	Brussels, Belgium
3-4 Apr	EATIP	6th Annual General Meeting	Brussels
3-4 Apr	EC	Workshop on "Marine environment and fisheries – applying the new CFP and environment policy together"	Brussels
7/9- Apr	FAO/GFCM	Extra ordinary Session of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean	Greece
07-Apr	CBD/SBSTA	Mediterranean Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs)	Malaga, Spain
07-Apr and 10-Apr	EP	Fisheries Committee	Brussels, Belgium
08-Apr	North Sea AC	Focus group on Landing obligations	Paris, France
10-Apr	Pelagic AC	Joint Working group on discards	The Hague, Netherlands

22/25-Apr	Government of The Netherlands	Global Oceans Action Summit for Food Security and Blue Growth	The Hague, Netherlands
24-Apr	RACMED	General Assembly and Executive Committee	Rome, Italy and Slovenia, respectively
24/25-Apr	BSRAC	General Assembly	Gdynia, Poland