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CPMR POLICY POSITION

OPINION OF THE CPMR POLITICAL BUREAU

(Approved by the CPMR Political Bureau, 1 March 2013, Alexandroupolis - Greece)

REFORM OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

On 6 February, the plenary session of the European Parliament approved (at first reading) the draft legislative resolution arising from the RODUST¹ report on the European Commission's regulation concerning the future Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The approval of the RODUST report officially opens the negotiations between the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission, the trilogue. More precisely, in line with the key priorities of the Irish presidency of the EU, it is hoped the trilogue will reach agreement on the basic regulation governing the CFP before the summer of 2013. In this context, given the latest guidelines adopted by the European Parliament and the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR):

1. Reiterates that CFP reform plays a strategic role in the future of the European fishing industry. The fishing, aquaculture and shellfish farming sectors are important sources of direct and indirect employment for people living in the coastal areas, and are also a catalyser of "blue growth". They should therefore be preserved and developed. In this context, it is essential that the future CFP creates the conditions that will ensure the competitiveness of the European fishing and aquaculture sectors as well as their environmental, economic and social viability.
2. Asks that the future CFP be built on a territorial approach that can lead to the effective regionalisation of this policy. Consequently, CPMR invites those involved in the trilogue to ensure that the CFP will have:
 - a genuine multi-level governance with full involvement of the Regions, since they are territories concerned both before and after any CFP decisions. CPMR asks in particular that the Regions be full members of the steering and decision-making bodies of their relevant Advisory Councils;
 - a clear legislative perimeter, allowing synergies to be organised between the "local development" strand (formerly Axis 4) of the CFP and the other territorial development strategies agreed on by policy decision-makers at regional and local level;
 - a financial governance that will be able to authorise the introduction, in those Member States that so wish, of a regionalised system for the programming and management of the future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).
3. Although it considers the widening use of multi-annual management plans to be a positive step, both for fisheries covering single stocks and for mixed fisheries, CPMR underlines the difficulties linked to the delays that have accumulated over recent years in the collection of data on the levels of exploitation of different fish stocks. This has generated and continues to generate a lack of expertise and an uncertainty regarding the scientific knowledge, which should not be underestimated – or, worse, ignored – in a context in which, according to the legislative framework being approved, the fate of thousands of European fishermen, as well as that of the economic sector to which they contribute daily, depends on the quality, availability and reliability of such data. In this context, and taking account also of the existence of other phenomena which cannot easily be checked (straddling stocks, level of pollution of sea areas, etc.) CPMR:

¹ Report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy (COM (2011)0425 – C7 – 0198/2011 – 2011/0195 (COD)).

- doubts whether, in the short term, the necessary conditions exist in terms of scientific expertise to provide a reliable estimate, by 2015, of certain “...fishing mortality rates that will allow fish stocks to recover, by 2020 at the latest, levels above those capable of attaining MSY”;
 - is concerned about the socio-economic repercussions the adoption of such rates will have on the fishing industry;
 - doubts that the proposal to interrupt or suspend payments in the event of non-compliance –by Member States– with the obligations concerning data collection and availability, is sufficient to tackle the problem of the lack of scientific expertise. CPRM underlines that, in the short term, supposing payments were suspended, the only effect obtained would be the imposition of a financial penalty on fisheries professionals;
 - invites the trilogue to ensure that financial resources commensurate with the real challenges be mobilised to support data production, collection and analysis. CPRM also asks that any coordination action taken by Member States with regard to data be taken in coordination with and fully exploiting the initiatives set up at regional level.
4. Doubts that the obligation to land all catches (the “zero discards” objective) will provide a sustainable solution to the crucial but complex issue of by-catches. CPRM supports a gradual reduction in by-catches and discards. Towards this end, it asks the trilogue to:
- include a basis for encouraging and developing the adoption of more selective fishing practices and measures, in the CFP. The introduction and use of selective gear have proven a successful method for substantial reduction of discards of important stocks. Selective fishing practices should be developed further through the funding of pilot projects that aim to develop new innovative practices, and to providing financial support to help fishermen acquire technical solutions that have been tried and tested and have proved to be effective. In this context, particular attention should be paid to mixed fisheries. Existing networks and technology centres² could play an important part here to promote professionals’ initiatives in partnership with scientists;
 - review the current legislative proposals which help to determine the conditions that would foster economic opportunities for catches of undersized fish (transformation into animal meal). Consistent with the opinion approved in September 2011 by its General Assembly, CPRM fears that these proposals cast a worrying shadow on the link between the CFP’s environmental objectives and the measures recommended to attain these;
 - in special cases, authorise fishermen to discard those species for which the best scientific advice is available and which enjoy the highest survival rate when thrown back.
5. Recommends that the strong growth of aquaculture – which the EU wants to encourage – should not be allowed to take place at the expense of the sustainability of this sector. It reiterates the importance of economic support for the link between the scientific community and the aquaculture sector, and of research and innovation. These are necessary conditions if aquaculture is to pursue its sustainability objectives. Lastly CPRM reiterates the importance of traditional, low-input methods which have a low environmental impact such as shellfish farming, and calls for these to be developed.
6. Will keep a close watch to see that the budget for the future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), 6.5 billion Euros, is not reduced following the European Council’s vote of the EU budget. Furthermore, in line with the opinion approved by its Political Bureau in February 2012, the CPRM, while satisfied to see the allocation of a specific budget for maritime affairs, will keep a close watch to see that CFP funding is not affected.
7. Given the geographical constraints affecting the small, fisheries-dependent coastal islands, asks that particular attention be paid to these territories. The CPRM asks in particular that when the national envelopes of the future EMFF are calculated, the specific conditions of these territories be taken into account and that support be made available both in terms of funding and in terms of distribution of additional resources.

² European Fisheries Technology Centre

	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT	COUNCIL	CPMR
REGIONALISATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a system of cooperation at the level of the sea basins, which would allow for the adoption of joint measures and would encourage the participation of professional stakeholders in decision-making on national technical measures the Regional Advisory Councils should be able to make recommendations and suggestions to the Commission or to the Member States concerned, inform them about problems linked to fisheries and aquaculture management, and, in collaboration with scientists, collect, communicate and analyse the data required for drawing up conservation measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> differentiated approach in line with the specific characteristics of the different sea basins; cooperation between Member States in adopting “regionalised” national measures as part of the delegation of powers within a multiannual plan or a framework of technical measures the Regional Advisory Councils should be consulted by the European Commission as well as by Member States before any measure is taken; the European Commission and Member States must justify any divergence from the Councils’ recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cooperation between Member States which have a direct interest in the management of a defined geographical area in order to reach agreement on joint recommendations where these recommendations are adopted unanimously by all the Member States concerned and are compatible with the conservation measures concerned, they must be taken into account by the Commission (when drafting proposals or legislation) if necessary, the Commission must propose a legislative act or an act under Article 43.3 of TFEU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a real multi-level governance for an effective regionalisation of the CFP which fully involves the Regions as territories concerned both before and after CFP decisions make consultation of the RACs compulsory in cases where decisions concern the conservation and management of stocks and the regulation of fishing and aquaculture make explicit the right of all players representing the maritime Regions and their interests to take part as full members in the steering and decision-making bodies of the RACs introduction of a financial governance that will be able to authorise the establishment, in the Member States that so wish, of a regionalised system for the programming and management of the future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)
DISCARDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the framework of regionalisation, fishermen will work hand in hand with the authorities to set up concrete measures to prevent unwanted catches being taken in the first place this may mean the use of more selective gear, restriction of access to areas with a high concentration of juvenile fish, real-time closures (etc.) the Producer Organisations (POs) will benefit from funding aimed at helping fishermen to apply the discard ban, to improve product labelling, and to promote the marketing of new products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> widen the ban on discards to include all exploited and regulated species introduce the ban gradually and by fishery (not by species) oblige Member States to set up pilot projects aimed to increase selectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> widen the ban on discards to all species subject to catch limitations, and, in the Mediterranean, to catches subject to minimum landing sizes introduce the ban gradually and by fishery (not by species) with regard to landings of catches of fish that are under the minimum landing size established for conservation, the utilisation of these catches should be restricted and their sale for human consumption should be excluded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> build the CFP on a basis of encouraging and developing the adoption of more selective fisheries practices and measures deletion of the current legislative proposals which help to determine the conditions that foster economic opportunities for undersized captures (transformation into animal meal) take account of the socio-economic dangers for mixed fisheries need to introduce financial measures to deal with the impacts that the obligation to land all catches will have on health and safety conditions on board
MAXIMUM SUSTAINABLE YIELD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the establishment of quotas to be based on MSY so as to allow recovery of stocks by 2015 introduction of multiannual plans setting fishing mortality rates at a level that will help to obtain increased stocks over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the multiannual plans foresee the adjustment of fishing mortality rates in such a way as to ensure that, by 2015, fishing mortality rates will be set at levels allowing fish stocks to return, by 2020 at the latest, to a level <u>higher</u> than the levels required to obtain MSY and to maintain all recovered stocks at these levels introduction of compensation mechanisms for fishermen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> facilitate a transition –that guarantees the exploitation of marine biological resources- enabling the populations of exploited species to be restored and maintained <u>at least</u> at levels enabling the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) to be attained by 2015 if possible and by 2020 at the latest for all stocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the scientific expertise about the state of stocks in particular in the case of mixed fisheries assess the socio-economic impacts of the application of MSY ensure that the financial resources are commensurate with the real challenges to improve data production, collection and analysis introduce compensation mechanisms for short-term losses arising out of the move to MSY, in particular in the case of mixed fisheries