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NWWAC contribution to the Implementation Dialogue on Small-Scale and Coastal Fisheries (SSCF)

NWWAC members strongly believe that unless specifically identified below points also apply to large-scale operators and that there should not be a division of representation between small-scale and large-scale operators.

1. In terms of policy implementation, what are the key elements to ensure the long-term environmental, economic and social sustainability, resilience and generational renewal of the SSCF sector? What is the role of the energy transition in that regard?

The main priority for long-term sustainability of the fishing sector including SSCF is renewal of the fleet through modernisation and innovation.

Additional vital elements to ensure the long-term sustainability include but are not limited to: facilitation of the integration of modern technology on board, sustainable innovations, and digital tools to enhance safety and sector attractiveness, as well as simplified digital and collecting data tools, training courses, and increased attention to physical and mental health.

Decarbonisation and modernisation objectives must address existing barriers, ensuring tailored business and finance opportunities, with EU funds such as EMFAF, Horizon Europe, and potential EIB involvement.

2. Where are the practical barriers for accessing EU and private financial support? Where do the administrative burden and implementation difficulties lie and how can it be reduced?

Challenging aspects include bureaucratic complexity, limited resources towards technological innovation, allocation and uptake, limited flexibility of financial instruments, overcoming current State Aid limitations and mobilising more funding for technological advancement in the fishing sector.

The revised Control Regulation triggered additional rules for small scale operators that will enhance complexity. Operators will need financial and administrative support to overcome obstacles.

3. Are there ways to reduce the complexity of regulatory and administrative requirements for SSCF, especially regarding compliance and access to EU support?

The Commission and Member States should reduce bureaucratic burdens, streamlining application and administrative processes to enhance efficiency and encourage greater participation in relation to accessing support.

4. Are there other data beyond what is already being reported that SSCF and Member States could provide to paint a clearer picture of SSCF and how they operate? What is needed to facilitate this?

Improved work on collecting social data should carried out as well as strengthening the inclusion of social and economic data in the fisheries management models, inclusion of local knowledge the fisheries management, and improving methods for stakeholder consultation. In support of this, a full analysis should be carried out of the efforts and achievements across the various fleets in relation to efforts having been carried out and achievements made in increasing fuel efficiency over the past years.

5. Within the current legislative framework, what good practices or innovations (e.g. collective marketing, labelling or traceability, strengthening the role of SSCF in the seafood supply chain, co-management) can be brought forward, and what support is needed to succeed?

Several initiatives across Europe illustrate good practices and innovations that can improve SSCF operations, safety, and working conditions including the work of

- The French company GLAZ
- The Institut Maritime de Prévention (IMP)
- The Fisheries Working Environment Council (FA)

6. What are the training and upskilling needs of SSCF fishers to improve their resilience and to enable their effective participation in sustainable fisheries management and the seafood value chain, as a means to strengthening relevant policy implementation? What kind of support or initiatives are needed to address these needs?

It is vital to foster a more uniform regulatory landscape across the EU in terms of training and certifications as well as improving training modules and EU-wide certification systems while at the same time preventing reduction in earnings due to suspended fishing activities during training periods.

In addition, fishers must be equipped with practical knowledge on fuel-efficient technologies, sustainable fishing practices, digital tools and AI tools – such as navigation software, real-time data systems, and smart engine monitoring – as well as the financial means necessary to adapt can lead to more efficient operations and reduced environmental impact.