



Managing fisheries in the EU





The Common Fisheries Policy

Fish are oblivious to national boundaries. That is why we need to manage our fisheries resources at the level of the EU. The Common Fisheries Policy is the framework for the management of EU fisheries, both inside and beyond Community waters.

The aim is to establish a rational system for managing fisheries resources which protects fish stocks and safeguards the future of the fishing activity for future generations.

Fisheries management needs to evolve constantly to adapt to both the natural development of resources and to human influence. Increases in the catching capacity of fishing fleets and the environmental impact of industrial activity have had a significant influence on fish stocks, and with each successive enlargement of the EU the Community fleet has increased and Community waters have expanded. Since it began in 1983, fisheries management under the Common Fisheries Policy has needed to adapt constantly to changing circumstances.

The most recent review of the Common Fisheries Policy, the “2002 reform”, was ambitious. The key features of today’s Common Fisheries Policy are:

- a conservation policy for the rational management of our fisheries resources and the activities of our fishing fleet;
- a control policy aiming for effective and harmonised enforcement of the rules through intensified cooperation among Member States;
- a structural policy, providing financial aid to help the industry remain competitive;
- an external policy which allows the Community to be active in managing fisheries resources beyond its waters;
- a policy on governance which ensures that stakeholders are more closely involved in the shaping of the Common Fisheries Policy.

DG Fisheries at the service of the Common Fisheries Policy

This brochure explains how the Common Fisheries Policy is managed at the EU level. The Commission service in charge is the Directorate General for Fisheries: a 290-strong team from professional backgrounds as diverse as marine biology, naval architecture, economics, law, political science and veterinary science.

These officials manage the Common Fisheries Policy in consultation with stakeholders. A number of technical committees, representing Member State administrations, the scientific community, industry and consumers are involved in all matters relating to EU fisheries management.

Commission proposals for fisheries rules are based on the most recent scientific advice, provided by independent international organisations such as the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, the leading scientific body in the North Atlantic. These proposals are discussed and sometimes amended in the Council by national fisheries ministers before their adoption. The European Parliament is also consulted.

In the Directorate for Conservation Policy, a team that includes several scientists monitors the state of fish stocks and proposes measures to safeguard them. Management of fleet capacity and protection of the marine environment are an integral part of conservation policy, as is the promotion of scientific research in fisheries.

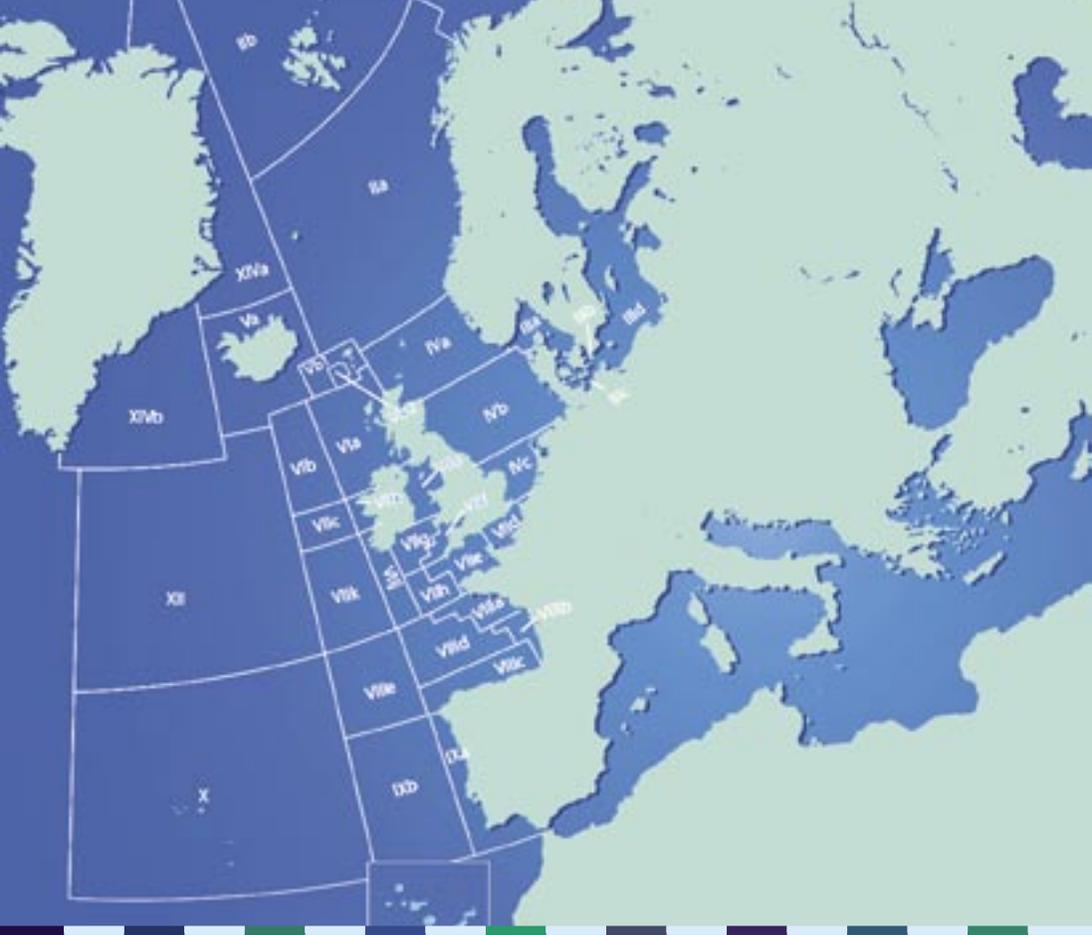
International discussions are part of everyday life for the negotiators in the Directorate for External Relations. They deal with fishing activity beyond EU waters and with international trade issues. A small team, mainly composed of legal experts and economists, handles the market organisation in fisheries products within the EU.

The Directorate for Structural Policy oversees the investment programmes of the individual Member States under the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance, which provides financial support to the EU sector. An interdisciplinary team of scientists and economists is dedicated to this task. They also deal with aquaculture, a field of growing importance within the Common Fisheries Policy.



Around 25 fisheries inspectors accompany national inspectors on control missions and take part in surveillance campaigns on the high seas. They work in close collaboration with the licensing and control service, where legal experts examine requests for fishing licences and work with Member States on enforcement. Lawyers oversee legal proposals and examine state aids in the fisheries sector. They also initiate legal procedures against Member States which fail in their enforcement responsibility.

The close working relationship between DG Fisheries and other Commission services, such as Environment, Development, Regional Policy, Consumer Protection and Research, ensures consistency in the rules proposed and the actions taken across different policy areas.



TACs & Quotas

ICES FISHING AREAS

I	Barents Sea	Vla	West Scotland (Clyde stock)	VIIIa	South Brittany
IIa	Norwegian Sea	Vlb	Rockall	VIIIb	South Biscay
IIb	Spitzbergen and Bear Island	VIIa	Irish Sea	VIIIc	North and North-west Spain
IIIa	Skagerrak and Kattegat	VIIb	West Ireland	VIIId	Central Biscay
IIIb	Sound	VIIc	Porcupine Bank	VIIIe	West Biscay
IIIc	Belt	VIIId	Eastern English Channel	IXa	Portuguese coast
IIId	Baltic Sea	VIIe	Western English Channel	IXb	West Portugal
IVa	Northern North Sea	VIIIf	Bristol Channel	X	Azores
IVb	Central North Sea	VIIg	South-east Ireland	XII	North Azores
IVc	Southern North Sea	VIIh	Little Sole	XIVa	East Greenland
Va	Iceland	VIIj	Great Sole	XIVb	South-east Greenland
Vb	Faroes	VIIk	West Great Sole		



Conservation policy: long term management objectives

The seas and oceans of our planet do not abound with fish as they used to. One reason is that far too many fish are being taken from the sea by fishing, leaving too few adult fish to reproduce and rebuild the stocks. Today, a number of important fish stocks, such as cod in the North Sea, are on the verge of collapse.

Independent scientific advice

The top priority of the 2002 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy has been to reverse this trend by changing the way our fisheries are managed. Annual measures are being replaced by long-term strategies. On the basis of independent scientific advice, biologists propose long-term targets for the size of a number of endangered fish stocks. They also work on proposals for the quantities of fish that fishermen are allowed to catch without threatening the targets.

Limiting the quantities of fish that vessels are allowed to land is only one way to protect fish stocks. Others include a limitation on the days a fishing vessel can spend at sea, or the closure of areas where young fish or spawning fish congregate. Regulations may also concern the use of certain fishing gear, the size of net meshes and the minimal landing sizes for fish.

Past experience shows that trying to limit catches alone cannot save fish stocks from collapsing if there is too much fishing. Technological development in fishing equipment has increased the catching capacity of fishing fleets to a level which is much too high for the available fish resources.

The Fleet Management Unit works with Member States to reduce fleet capacity by strict monitoring of the rules limiting new entries into the fishing fleet and by providing financial incentives for the permanent removal of fishing vessels. Public subsidies for the construction of new fishing vessels will end in December 2004.

Stakeholder involvement

Fisheries management at EU level involves stakeholders in the decision making process. Fishermen, processors, fish farmers, consumers and environment and development groups are all represented on the Advisory Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture and provide input on Commission proposals. Regional workshops are held on specific fish stocks or fisheries areas. The 2002 Reform has increased stakeholders' involvement by providing for Regional Advisory Councils that will bring together fishermen, administrators and scientists with an interest in a specific EU fisheries region – the North Sea or the Mediterranean, for example – to promote dialogue and understanding among all the parties concerned in fisheries management.



International dimension

When a country joins the EU, the Community represents that country's fisheries interests on the international scene. Commission officials negotiate bilateral fisheries agreements with third countries and defend Community interests in international organisations responsible for the management of fisheries on the high seas or in international bodies such as the Food & Agriculture Organisation or the World Trade Organisation.

The Community is an active member of many international fisheries management organisations, promoting multilateral cooperation and taking the lead in the fight against illegal fishing worldwide. It agrees common fisheries management measures with fellow sea-faring nations and strives continually to strengthen control and enforcement on the high seas.

Traditionally, an important part of the European fishing fleet has fished in non-EU waters. To ensure continuity for this fleet, the Community concludes bilateral partnership agreements with third countries. These partnerships establish a close working relationship between the EU and the third country concerned, where both partners cooperate to achieve the development objectives of the local fisheries sector and the rational management of fish resources in the third country's waters.

Financial aid

Any area of economic activity needs to adapt continually to an evolving market. The fishing industry, dependent as it is on a precious and fragile natural resource, has had to adapt to rapidly changing conditions over the past decades in order to remain competitive. To support this process of change, the EU provides financial aid under the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG).

Aid from the FIFG can go to fish processing companies, to aquaculture farms needing help to comply with EU rules on sanitary conditions, to fishermen wishing to improve safety on board their vessels, or to producer organisations which take measures to balance the supply of fish by their members and the demands of the market. Equipment for fishing harbours and projects to support small-scale fisheries can receive funding as well.



DG Fisheries desk officers and Member State authorities work together to define FIFG investment programmes, to monitor their implementation and to review objectives if necessary. The fisheries development programmes need to contribute to the global economic health of the Member State concerned. Country desk officers therefore continually assess the effectiveness of EU support to the fisheries industry.

Effective control & enforcement

Enforcement of the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy is the responsibility of the Member States. They must provide national control services, organise inspections and decide on appropriate sanctions for those found infringing the rules. As the Commission has to ensure that EU laws are correctly applied, legal experts at DG Fisheries check if Member States meet their obligations in this field and initiate infringement procedures against those which fail to do so.

At any stage “from the ship to the shop”, that is from the catching to the landing, marketing, transporting and selling of fisheries products, a number



of rules apply. For example, vessels need to be equipped with satellite monitoring equipment so their position can be determined and verified at any time. At the other end of the process, fish products on sale need to be labelled with information on the names of the products, whether they were caught or farmed, and where.

International cooperation

Around 25 Community inspectors accompany national inspectors in their control tasks, by aircraft, on inspection vessels and ashore throughout the EU to ensure the equitability of enforcement. Yet the task remains challenging, and there are constant calls from fishermen for more uniformity in enforcement procedures and follow-up sanctions. The 2002 reform has introduced a number of measures to better harmonise control and intensify cooperation among Member States so fishermen can be confident that the rules are enforced everywhere according to the same standards.

To strengthen cooperation at EU level and make control of fisheries activities more effective, a dedicated Community fisheries inspection agency is to be created. The agency will play a crucial role in increasing consistency in control across the EU. Its multinational inspection teams will ensure confidence in the uniform enforcement of CFP rules.

The Directorate General for Fisheries is one of the 35 major departments of the European Commission. It shares with them a culture of service to the citizens of the EU – reflected in its commitment to safeguard the future of the EU fisheries sector.

Find out more on the Common Fisheries Policy from our internet site at

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/fisheries>

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