

STATEMENT OF THE BULGARIAN FISHERIES ADMINISTRATION AND THE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTOR IN BULGARIA IN RELATION TO THE PROPOSED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION GREEN PAPER ON THE REFORM IN THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

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The Green paper, presented by the Commission, is published in a very important moment, in order to give an answer to the emerging necessity for integrating the Common Fisheries Policy with the other Community policies and to solve the existing structural disadvantages at present.

1 TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SPECIFICITY AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS AND THE FISHERIES SECTORS OF THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

On the basis of the experience acquired after the accession to the EU and taking into account the specificity of the Black Sea, it is extremely important for Bulgaria to follow an approach for the management of the fisheries, which is based on the standards and the general principles adopted at EU level and taking into account the specific regional conditions to maximum extent.

In this respect the reformed CFP should accelerate the processes to find the appropriate form of collaboration in regions, like the Black Sea region, including the management of the fish resources.

The Black Sea has specific natural geographic and political features as follows: only two of the six coastal countries are members of the EU (Bulgaria and Romania) and their share in the catches is very small compared to the other countries especially Turkey. Another specific feature is that before and after the accession of the two Member States to the EU there is no form of collaboration among the six coastal countries for common management of the fish stocks. The present situation creates serious difficulties in the management of the resources, which cannot be done only by the two MS of the EU, moreover taking into account their small share in the total catches. At this stage the necessity to apply a differential approach to the measures for conservation of the fish resources, where the two basic aspects should be pointed out:

- Measures for conservation of the species, characterized as “local”
- Measures for conservation of the species, characterized as “Shared” stock

All measures for conservation of the fish resources, such as programs for adaptation and management of the fleet, restriction of the catches – application of quotas and sustainable levels of the catches on annual or six months basis, closed zones and seasons for fishing, technical measures for restriction of the by-catches and the discards and multi-annual plans for management and recovery of the stocks could be efficient only if they are applied by all the participants in the exhausting of the allowed fishing opportunities for catches of commercially important species. In relation to the presented above and for the purpose of the sustainable management of the shared stocks, CFP should facilitate the establishment of regional fisheries organizations (RFO), that have to apply in the most effective way the Community policies, taking into account the following:

- Cooperation among the Commission, MS and third countries (in the case of management of shared stock) to create RFOs for the purpose of identification of the necessity of undertaking measures for conservation (where the measures may aim full participation in the management of the multiannual plans, technical measures, restriction of the catches, etc.);

- Regulated exchange of data at regional level for assessment of the stocks of commercially important species;

- Providing opportunity to RFO to use individual approach in the management of the stocks and measures for their conservation and recovery in safe biological limits. The decisions and proposals of RFOs may be coordinated and changed by the EC where necessary;

- Exchange of information in the framework of the actions and management of the RFOs for the applied fishing gears, fishing practices, fishing fleet capacity and existing fishing opportunities;

- Implementation of a pilot project for sustainable implementation of CFP in the Black Sea region.

2. OVERCAPACITY OF THE FISHING FLEETS

Regarding the overcapacity of the fleet, the Bulgarian fisheries administration considers that an individual approach should be followed to identify the necessity for adaptation, based on data from scientific assessment of the state of the fish resources and fishing efforts for a period of minimum five years.

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The fleets should improve their economic stability and adapt to the changes of the environment and the market. The steps undertaken for adaptation, including the voluntary removal of ships and transition to fishing practices, using less fuel, has not yet influenced the Bulgarian fishing fleet. The fishery in the Black Sea is realized in an interval of up to 24 hours supplying fresh and cooled fish for direct trade or for processing. The old fishing vessels should be replaced by multifunctional, new and more economic ships, which should be realized with funds under European programs. The Bulgarian fishing fleet has capacity, which is very small in “gross tonnage”, which is a prerequisite to insist at any cost to preserve the present capacity regarding the fishing effort, because it comprises mainly small boats, which may be replaced with financial aid from EU by small and medium, economical and multifunctional ships.

We share the statement, that the sustainability in ecological aspect is the main prerequisite for the economic and social future of the European fishing.

2.3 (4)¹ OVERCOMING THE FIVE STRUCTURAL DISADVANTAGES OF THE POLICY

(4.2)² Concentration on the objectives of the policy

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Taking into account the social and economic effect of the measures, envisaged in the CFP at this stage is a rather subjective issue, as pointed out in the proposal of the Commission. The problem, in particular reaches dangerous dimensions under the conditions of financial and energy crisis. For these reasons, planning any restrictive measures, a preliminary SWOT-analysis should be made of all impacts, effects and interactions. Indicators for assessment of the state at the moment should be formulated for the purpose and methods for risk analysis should be developed.

(4.3) Concentration of the framework for making decisions on key long term principles

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To solve the problem with the sustainable management of the stocks and to prevent the negative social and economic effects, the approach should start from decisions, concerning the short term development of the sector, towards development in longer period. Given a concept is adopted for introduction of multi-annual plans for the management of all stocks under serious pressure overexploitation, sufficient flexibility may be achieved in respect of determining the annual restrictions for the quantity of the catches and in the presence of clear proofs for their stable state or necessity of correction of TACs . Urgent measures have to be undertaken, to be implemented in

¹ The numbering in the brackets follows the numbering in the Green Paper

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correspondence with the state of the stocks at the given moment for corresponding maintenance in safe biological limits. This approach presumes the creation of the respective conditions for development and maintenance of the stocks in the safe biological limits during the time, partially satisfying the short term expectation in the sectors at the same time and creating conditions for general engagement of the participants in the achievement of higher levels of TAC for the following year.

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The common practice decisions to be taken by the Council at the highest political level practically leads to concentration on short term considerations at the expense of the long term sustainability of the European fishery in ecological, economic and social plan. The governments and the sector should be allowed to adapt the implementation of the policy to their needs and find the best solutions in technical and economic plan. Regarding the encouraging of the industry to bear more responsibilities for the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), we propose to work with bottom-up initiatives. Rights should be attributed to the organizations (the sector) for proportional allocation of the quotas on the basis of document evidence for the catches during previous period. Sanctions should be specified for persons, violating the rules.

(4.4) Encouraging the industry to take more responsibility in implementing the CFP

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The Bulgarian branch organizations in their entity, being direct participants in the entire process of the sector, have to participate at each stage of the decision making process on the conservation and management of the resources. The decisions proposed by them have to be in compliance with the policy on conservation of the resources- in each one of the possible and applied legislative restrictive measures.

They could submit adequate, current information about the market demands and trends. Taking into consideration the recent biological state of the stocks they could share their views concerning the quantities and regional allocations of the catches, which ensure their living.

The responsibilities and delegated power should be oriented in direction of financing different surveys for assessment of the stocks, studying the import/export fish markets, implementation of different practices connected with the origin traceability of the fish products.

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The representatives of the association propose the commercial fishing licensing regime to be established on the basis of certain references, issued to the candidate by acknowledged branch organizations, authorized with representative functions for a given sub-sector or region.

To improve the data collection systems in short- and long-term plan and to ensure coordinated information for the aims of the sanction system, it is necessary to take into consideration the experience in the traceability of the raw-materials and products according to the requirements in the regulations from the hygiene package (Regulation 853/2004). It is indispensable to have mandatory labeling of the trade packages in accordance with the existing requirements, containing the number of the approved producer, fisherman or retailer. Marking of the bigger size fish species should ensure identification possibility for the control bodies within the whole market chain.

Maximum sustainable yields (MSY). The mixed fisheries is facing the risk of taking on board non-targeted by-catches, especially in the cases of fishing ban for given species, because of quota exhaustion. The fishermen in the case have no other opportunity but to discard the catches into the sea. We support the idea about discard ban in the reformed CFP.

We also share the idea, that in the future CFP a switch over from plans for management of the fish stocks to plans for management of the different targeted species fishery /turbot, sprat, rapana/, should be required.

(4.5) Developing a culture of compliance

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Developing a culture of compliance:

- Participation of the branch organizations in the process of determining and implementing of measures, laid down in the program for data collection.
- Participation in stock assessment projects.
- Participation in projects for the implementation of different procedures for electronic catch data reporting.
- Application of contemporary practices for traceability of the fish products within the whole chain

(5.) FURTHER IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT OF EU FISHERIES

(5.3.) Relative stability and access to coastal fisheries

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With regard to the question: „Should access to the 12 nm zone be reserved for small-scale fishing vessels?, the explicit answer is that it should be reserved for the coastal fishing fleet. This will ensure the living of the fishing communities and will always supply fresh fish for the local market.

(5.4.) Trade and markets – from catch to consumer

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Fisheries and aquaculture income a small part of the paid by the consumers price for the fish products. That is one of the main reasons to pay more attention to the origin of the fish products, including improved certification schemes, labeling and traceability. It is compulsory to turn the quality of the products into one of our main priorities in the future CFP.

There is also a possibility each organization to have its own specific marks or labels for its members. To obtain its labeling or mark, the interested parties should prove that they are acting in compliance with the existing rules in the legislation and that they fulfill all of the internal requirements of the organization, such as certified fishing activities, monitoring of the waters in the aquaculture, certificate for proper maintenance of vessels and certificate of landing.

(5.5.) Integrating the Common Fisheries Policy in the broader maritime policy context

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The fishing industry has a key role for supplying with food the EU citizens and ensures living for the European coastal communities. Therefore its future viability and sustainable development should remain an important political aim of the EU. The problems of fisheries sector should not be treated separately from the problems of the other maritime policies. Fisheries is strongly dependant on the access to marine space and healthy ecosystems. The urbanization of the coastal regions continues turning them into resorts, which has a negative reflection on the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture.

The association of fish products producers BG FISH supports the development of projects and creation of opportunities for alternative jobs in the coastal regions /submarine fishing, archeology, tourism/

(5.6.) The knowledge base for the policy

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Scientific knowledge and creation of data base are of great importance for the reformed CFP, because they serve as a basis for the decisions concerning the sustainable level of exploitation of the fish stocks, the impact assessment of fisheries on the marine ecosystems and the consequences from other changes such as the climate changes. One of the shortcomings in the process of defining our policy and the measures for the conservation and management of the resources is the lack of transparency of the scientific advice. It is necessary to establish a mechanism for transparency and discussion of the scientific data and advice on an earlier stage before taking the final decision on the management of a certain stock. We should develop regional long-term scientific research programmes with the participation of international scientists. The cooperation with the branch organizations the use of their available capacity such as equipment, well trained crew and know-how is of great importance for the successful and productive accomplishment of the research activities.

(5.7) Structural policy and public financial assistance

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The structural policy and in particular and absorption of funds from the EU European Fisheries Fund for the programming period 2007 – 2013 reflect over the new principles for the development of EU “Fisheries and Maritime affairs” policy. The European legislation in the fields of structural measures, the priority axes, measures and mechanisms for allocating the funds as laid down in Council Regulation № 1198/2006, as well as the programming documents are a transitional instrument and means of creating long-term sustainability in the development of fisheries sector in order to overcome the problem with the discrepancy between the available fish resources on one side and the capacity /possibilities for fishing/ of the fishing fleet on the other side.

The Operational Program for the Development of the Fisheries Sector of the Republic of Bulgaria largely reflect the objectives outlined in the Green Paper on the reform of the Community laid down in the Common Fisheries Policy of the EU in its priority measures.

In this sense, the implementation of the strategy and priorities in the Operational Program will ensure success in implementing the new fisheries policies. The Operational Program has three main objectives:

Objective 1: To ensure competitiveness and sustainability of the fisheries sector, including management of the resource;

Objective 2: To develop a market of fishery products and aquaculture production;

Objective 3: To support the sustainable development of fisheries areas and to improve the quality of life in them. Achieving these goals will ensure the transition to new dimensions provided by reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, the integration of fisheries with other EU policies, while allowing the provision of sustainable development of fisheries sector.

The Operational Program for Development of the Fisheries Sector is the main instrument to achieve these strategic objectives together with other financial instruments /other than the European Fisheries Fund/ which will be used by the Bulgarian authorities. Achieving the strategic vision for developing «Fisheries» sector will be implemented through projects financed by other national and European funds in accordance with the principle of complementarity.

The following principles are taken into account in EU structural policy applied also in MS and in particular in the Republic of Bulgaria:

- (a) consistency with the principles of the EU Common Fisheries Policy in order to achieve in particular a stable and durable balance between the fishing capacity and the fishing opportunities to fish stocks;
- (b) strengthening the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of economic activities, employment and human resources, and protecting and improving the environment;
- (c) an appropriate allocation of financial resources is achieved in accordance with these guidance principle, but is also found the need that these resources have to be allocated to the requirements of each objective of the strategy.

One of the main challenges in the implementation of EU structural policy in the field of fisheries is associated with successful implementation of a “bottom-up approach” and the opportunity provided for the decentralization of the process of management of funds from the European Fisheries Fund through the implementation of measures of priority axis № 4 "Sustainable development of fisheries areas" from the EFF Operational Program. The principle of local associations of municipalities and stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process and to implement local development strategies is actually the first step in the mentioned changes in the fisheries management at Community level. A key element in the implementation of a “bottom-up approach” is the inclusion of regional authorities and local organizations, as well as individuals, interested in implementing the policy.

Regarding the question of the advisory functions of stakeholders in the decision-making process, regarding the implementation of structural policy in fisheries, it could be noted again that the programming documents (the National Strategic Plan and the Operational Program) for the absorption of funds from the EU European Fisheries Fund are prepared in accordance with one of the fundamental Community principles - the principle of partnership and close cooperation with the regional administration, local economic and social partners, i.e. all the stakeholders in the sector.

In addition, the organizations in the fisheries sector are involved as an advisory capacity in the work of the Monitoring committee – the principal for decision-making regarding the implementation of the Operational Program for Development of the Fisheries Sector

Public aid from the EU European Fisheries Fund through the Operational Program is granted for the following priority axes/measures, related directly to the implementation of the foreseen reform of the Common Fisheries Policy activities, as follows:

- Adaptation the effort of the Bulgarian fishing fleet in accordance with existing and available resources - vessel scraping, shifting vessels to activities outside fishing, the adoption by the Bulgarian administration of a Fishing effort adjustment plan, connected with the conservation measures will allow the granting of premiums for vessels leaving the fleet. The Operational Program for Development of the Fisheries Sector provides means for increasing the selectivity of fishing gear and provide sufficient financial resources for sustainable development and modernization of small-scale fishing, in which the intensity of public aid is higher than in vessels over 12 meters;
- Investment in aquaculture production with good market prospects – a measure of the OP which is provided with the largest financial resources as it is a major economic activity in the fisheries sector in the long term and is likely to be a major pillar in the reformed CFP;
- Establishment of producer organizations and other organizations in the sector and promoting the exchange of experiences and best practices and other measures of a common interest such as training, investments aimed at improving the quality and traceability of fish products, certification of production and implementing surveys, and encourage cooperation between scientists and fishermen;
- Establishment of Fisheries groups and identified potential areas for the implementation of local development strategies. By applying this approach to the decentralized management of funds the following results could be achieved at regional level: improving quality of life in fisheries areas, better use of fish resources in these areas, economic development of fisheries areas and increasing the added value of local level, diversifying the economic activities in these areas.

Strategy and priorities according to the programming documents of the Republic of Bulgaria in the implementation of structural measures in the fisheries for the programming period 2007 - 2013 are fully subject to and reflect the activities envisaged in the reform of the EU Common Fisheries Policy. Their implementation will ensure the success of policy at Community level and at national level. The structural policy in the EU fisheries for the period 2007 - 2013 was developed in accordance and in line with the regional policy, the employment policy and the policy for environmental protection, and care being taken to strengthen the harmonious, balanced and sustainable economic activities, employment and human resources, and protecting and improving the environment.

In conclusion, the structural policy of EU fisheries during this programming period most closely reflects the future direction of the CFP and the integration of the Common Fisheries Policy with other Community policies and development priorities.

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Structural policy will support the implementation of changes that «Fisheries» sector can not perform without public financial assistance, as part of them are: replacement of outdated fishing fleet, creating and building the capacity of fisheries groups to carry out local strategies for development of the fisheries areas, and as the introduction of innovative technologies in aquaculture and innovations in methods and techniques of fishery.

5.9 AQUACULTURE

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The guidelines of development have to be related to the increasing of the aquaculture production share in the total volume of the fish products produced, at the expense of the marine fishing products. The utilization of the European Fishery Fund sources shall create precondition for setting up, widening, equipping and modernization of the production and processing facilities as well as a potential for producing of a quality fish products. The investments will be directed to the fish products marketing, improvement of the hygiene and the conditions of work in the aquaculture farms, also to increasing the quality of the final fish product through the implementation of new species, as well as the using of the production and processing innovations and productions methods which decrease the negative consequences for the environment.

The financial support for aquaculture shall aim at achieving the following results:

Improving aquaculture fish products quality; market supply with fish species for which there is big demand; increasing the share of the marine aquaculture products; adaptation of the sector to the market demand; species, prices, quality control and products traceability.

The firms, associations and organizations in the sector should use the scientific, expert and technological potential of the science institutes in the field of the aquaculture in order to optimize the activities, the methods and the technologies for fish and water organisms breeding and their processing, for increasing the products quality and the economic efficiency. The aquaculture production should be developed in the following directions:

- Defining the aquaculture production as a tool for livelihood of the population that leads to decreasing the pressure on the fish stocks, and, at the same time, as a tool for conservation and reproduction of the endangered species and recreation of the natural resources (through fish-stocking of the relevant eco-systems);
- Increasing the competitiveness in the sector;
- Setting up a new Strategy for aquaculture development, applicable in all member-states;
- Promotion of fish and fish products as most nourishing, healthy, dietetic and healing food as well as stimulating their consumption;
- Setting up conditions for fast, priority and sustainable increasing of aquaculture products volume, fast increasing of the volume of high quality fish-stocking material and refining of fish-market infrastructure;

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The production of aquaculture has to be integral part of the future agreements for cooperation and exchange of good practices. It shall be also integrated in the Common Fishery Policy with special objectives and tools. Given to be developed on a national level, the production of aquaculture shall be limited in the view of life of the local population`s understanding for the fishery and it shall be covered up with restrictive national legislation.

STANDPOINT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE FISH PRODUCERS

We consider that the role of the production of aquaculture in the CFP has to be defined by each member state individually so as to provide development on a national basis. The instruments for the integration of the aquaculture with CFP have to be implemented on a national level in close cooperation with the producers of aquaculture, while the European Commission will monitor the proper execution. The motivation is based on the great variety of breeding traditions, geographic, climatic and socio-economic conditions.

The following results are to be expected in the forthcoming ten years:

Achieved balance of demand and supply on the market. As a result the retail and the wholesale prices are stabilized. There is a tendency of prevailing of fresh fish over frozen fish.. The fish farmers are in a position to carry out quantitative planning of their production. The sales are rhythmic throughout the year without considerable price fluctuations. The products on the market are at high quality with distinct information for the consumers. The control authorities find out fish from licensed producers, accompanied by the required set of documents. The transportation is done by adequate transport which will guarantee preservation of quality and health status of the consumer.

The statistical data clearly show an insignificant part of the unregulated sales and an increase of the reported sales. The fish is bread only on regulated food staff, medicines and other production means.

The aquaculture producers have a stable occupation for a long period. More than 80-90% are members of branch organizations and have experience over 10 – 15 years.

As a result of the stabilizes market the farmers have interest in reinvestment in improvement of the working conditions, of the infrastructure and in diminishing of the production risk. The higher consumers` demands lead to investments in the quality of the production rather than quantity.

The fish offered for fattening has to be supplied by licensed companies with a guaranteed quality. The quantities can be planned by the producers as well, due to the stable rates of the sales. The farms for breeding of fingerlings have a vast variety of genetic material with great possibilities for selection at reproduction with respect to flexibility to the demands of the market.

For achieving better results in implementation of the desired vision, the following measures are proposed:

1. Necessity of subsidies (financial aid) for a unit production purchased, in case the producer meets the following requirements:

- licensed producer and member of a branch organization;
- provide the due documents for the sale (certificate of origin, veterinary certificate, invoice or export documents);
- certify the forage and to supply certificates for its origin or documentation for it if it is his own production;
- certify the restocking material and to supply certificates for its origin or documentation for it if it is his own production;

- certify the number of employed workers and to witness completion of all due payments to the state.

The subsidies have to be differentiated for the fish species and for the seasonal reasons,

The expected results will be in decrease of the illegally purchased fish, better identification of the product and better traceability, more complete statistical data, reduction of the market pressure over the producers, improvement of the working conditions, better overall quality of the production and reliability of the consumers' interest.

The special subsidies for restocking material will enable the producers to invest in selection and in scientific approach to reproduction., keeping a vast variety of genetic material with great possibilities for selection at reproduction with respect to flexibility to the demands of the market.

2. Direct payment on a unit area of the used basins.

The fish farmers carry out amelioration activities, similar to the farmers in agriculture but do not receive due payment. There are difficulties to overcome measures related to terminating of the fish breeding activities and planting the area with agricultural plants. The criteria for such kind of direct payments might be the same as in item 1 above. They could be differentiated with respect to the type of the basins and the technology of breeding.

The results expected will comprise the improvement of the status of the water basins, purity of the water, facilitate the catches, decrease of the loss due to birds, better infrastructure of the aqua farms and finally the quality of the production. Last but not least, the number of the non-registered farms. The legalization of the farmers will contribute to the further stabilization of the market mechanisms and the trade.

3. Working conditions and professional facilities. The working conditions are not attractive, with great environmental impact. A number of employees are sometimes without a working contract. The training requires a long period. A lot of professional misacting often lead to serious losses.

The results expected are in boosting of the professional attitude to production in aquaculture, less short-time contracts, decrease of losses and lower relative costs of the production, increase of the quality.

4. Possible bonus-schemes for farmers using marking methods for fresh fish. This is a key element in the fight against illegal purchase and forgery of documents as well as enhancing traceability and identification of the production.

5. Promotion of a discussion on the effect of the implementation of the financial program 2007-2013 and its effect on the production and the market. The greatest producers in the sector have to take part. There is an alert tendency people without experience in the field to deal with investment initiatives while traditional fish farmers to abstain from applications for the EFF.