

Reforming the CFP: a time to replace TACs with TAEs (capacity and effort controls).

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Readers interested in arguments in favour of having effort controls at the heart of a revised CFP are requested to refer to the full published article.

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"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." Albert Einstein

Summary

The total allowable catch (TAC) fishery management system which forms part of the European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is complicated, inaccurate, and ineffective. Total allowable effort (TAE), i.e. limits on fishing capacity and days-at-sea, provides a simpler, readily enforceable way to protect all species affected by a fishery with a
20 single control. Fishing capacity of vessels in each region-gear fleet could be capped through limits on engine power, gear, crew, and fittings, and/or reducing allowances of days-at-sea for large, powerful vessels. The majority of fishers would benefit from a fairer contest for fish and lower capital costs brought about by capacity controls. Total catch of all species might form a serviceable indicator of ecological harm for comparing capacities of different types of fishing vessels. It would give an advantage to clean fisheries, i.e. those discarding little or no catch at sea. Technical measures

controlling mesh sizes, closed areas, etc. would continue to be necessary in an effort-based management system.

Two basic sets of fishery-dependent indicators are proposed to assess sustainability of a fishery dependably even in the absence of fishery-independent data. One is socio-economic based on catch value, time-at-sea x crew number, and percentage uptake of the TAE. The intention is to gauge the benefit in terms of money and jobs to the community dependent on the fishery, as well as to judge the economic impact of existing TAEs. This indicator could be derived from EC logbooks in the absence of
10 more explicit local business information. The other simple indicator is ecological. It is based on commercial CPUE of large individuals for each of a suite of relevant species, as is consistent with potential indicators listed by the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Its role is to ensure that these species have a minimal reservoir of large individuals for breeding, maintaining ecological trophic structure, and for buffering the fishery during years of poor recruitment.

Fishery working groups within each marine region would have the tasks of (1) finding the species or processes most critically affected, directly or indirectly, by fishing and (2) recommending a TAE or technical measures to protect them whilst having regard
20 for maintenance of the fishery and the ensuing socio-economic benefits. Regional working groups would supervise a consistent approach across the different fisheries in their region paying close attention to relevant EU policies. A pan-European group would set policy, implement external agreements, set rules for trading TAE if necessary, and harmonise fishing opportunities across regions. To ease negotiations on TAEs with the fishing industry when an ecosystem needs to recover, compensation for

not fishing should be paid, funded by re-direction of existing CFP subsidies that promote fishing.

Re-negotiation of the Principle of Relative Stability in terms of effort rather than catch might be expedited by dividing existing effort firstly among regions, and fisheries. Preliminary negotiations on the national division of fishing effort could then take place within each regional fishery working group with the benefit of the high level of specialised expertise in those fora. This would be consistent with the EU principle of subsidiarity, i.e. delegation of decisions to the lowest possible level.

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