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Communication from the Commission on Fishing Opportunities

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Press conference

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Every year the European Commission sets out before the summer the so-called policy statement on fishing opportunities for the next year. Today we are setting out our ideas for 2012.

So, the same procedure as every year?

No!

This year will have two major differences. First we will have a simpler and clearer methodology linking decisions even closer to scientific advice. We are moving towards maximum sustainable yield quotas.

And second where there is no advice available we should be careful. So I call on Member States to collectively improve our data.

Why we need these changes?

First of all, we have to phase out overfishing. This means managing stocks so, that they can rebuild and provide the highest long-term average catches. This is the "maximum sustainable yield" objective. Member States already decided that it should be reached in 2015.

We have made some progress towards this objective. Mainly in Atlantic and Northern regions, less in Mediterranean. But progress is too slow. I really want to see us reach the objectives we have set.

The scientific institutions can give us clearer advice. I believe we should set the quotas accordingly. Where Member States have not provided the right information for scientists to do their work, we don't have a lot of choices:

- First, we should reduce the quotas until we know that catches are sustainable.
- Second, Member States have urgently to collect the necessary data and the scientists have to analyse it.
- Third, we have to look for management methods that can work even where only partial data are available, though I know that will not be easy.

What will be the impact of this effort for the people and the environment?

First, it will contribute to our effort to bring fishing fleets back into profitability. Around 30% to 40% of fishing fleets are not making enough money to keep going in the long term. Since there is no money, we cannot go on providing subsidies to support continued overfishing. Reducing fishing pressure means more fish in the sea.

Second, it will lower the impact on the marine environment, reduce the accidental by-catches of unwanted species and reduce CO₂ emissions.

Third, it will help reduce discards. While I am preparing other initiatives to reduce discarding, simply phasing out overfishing will be a big help in reducing discarding.

I am setting out these ideas for a wide consultation. We invite European citizens to give their opinions through Commission's website¹, or through other channels.

We will be consulting the industry and Fisheries Ministers of Member States at the Council on 28th June.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ (http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/partners/consultations/fishing_opportunities/index_en.htm)