



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 20. 2. 2013
C(2013) 674 final

Mr Gianfranco FINI
President of the
Camera dei Deputati
Piazza Montecitorio
IT – 00100 ROMA

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera dei Deputati for its Opinion on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy {COM(2011) 416_417_418_424_425_804 final} and apologizes for the delay in replying.

The Commission underlines that this reform is intended to deliver sustainable fisheries that respect the ecosystem, and provide high-quality, healthy fish products for European citizens, thriving coastal communities, profitable industries producing and processing fish, and attractive and safer jobs. The Commission is aware of the needs and peculiarities of the fisheries in the Mediterranean in general and Italy in particular, and would note that the reform proposals are aimed at responding to the different challenges being experienced throughout Europe.

The Commission takes note of the observations of the Camera dei Deputati and would like to offer the following comments on the issues raised:

Discard ban

On the discard ban, the Commission would like to point out that it would be introduced gradually with application in the Mediterranean during the final stages of this process. This would allow for a number of actions to be developed before the ban enters into force, such as increased selectivity to ensure that unwanted catches are avoided as much as possible in the first place. The Mediterranean Regulation¹ has already introduced a strong driving force in that direction by establishing minimum catch sizes for several species, that have to be respected at the time of capture and not only at the landing. The sector and Mediterranean Member States are expected to have already adjusted, through bottom-up approaches, the selectivity of their fishing gears accordingly. This would limit the potential physical problems of keeping unwanted catches on board. The Commission is also looking into the possibility suggested by Council on *de minimis* exemptions for specific fisheries, as mentioned in the C

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 of 21 December 2006 as amended by Regulation (EU) No 1343/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011

Camera's observations. As for the handling of residual unwanted catches, the Commission believes that it has found a balanced solution by limiting the sales of such unwanted catches to certain market channels only, and as such avoiding the creation of an attractive outlet for these unwanted catches. The Commission agrees with the Chamber that pilot projects and other actions that contribute to effective implementation of the landing obligation should be encouraged.

Transferable fishing concessions

With regard to transferable fishing concessions, the Commission is of the view that they should not apply to small-scale vessels under 12 metres with passive gears. The proposal leaves flexibility to the Member States in setting up the system. Member States would be allowed to introduce safeguards that are compatible with national and European law and that cater for the specific needs of the national or fleet situation, in particular to avoid excessive concentration of these concessions.

Small-scale fishing

The Commission takes note of the comments of the Chamber on the definition of small-scale fishing. While the Commission has shown openness to alternative definitions, it should be clear that any definition should be simple, workable and controllable.

Regionalization

The Commission welcomes the support of the Camera dei Deputati on regionalization. Regionalization would allow that regional, local and fleet specificities can be taken into account better. It should relieve the co-legislators from political decisions on detailed management measures. It would also contribute to a larger buy-in of the fishing fleets into the policy, by bringing decisions closer to the regions and the fishermen.

Aquaculture

The Commission welcomes the support expressed by the Italian Chamber of Deputies for the promotion of European aquaculture. High animal health and consumer protection standards in the EU together with traceability, labeling and certification schemes can contribute to ensure a level playing field. As part of the reform of the CFP, it is proposed to create an Advisory Council for aquaculture to bring all stakeholders together to formulate suggestions and give advice to the Commission and to the Member States. The Commission shares the Chamber's concerns on the need to reduce administrative barriers and facilitate access to financing for businesses. Achieving these objectives will require coordinated action at EU, national and regional level. It is proposed to promote aquaculture through an EU coordinated approach based on non-binding strategic guidelines, common priorities and exchange of best practice. Furthermore the impetus to EU aquaculture is also reflected in its proposal for a European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and the Commission supports aquaculture research through the EU's research and innovation policy. The Commission takes note of the observation on the performance of the 2002 Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Aquaculture.

Financing

The Commission informs the Chamber that the EMFF proposal already covers investments for health and safety on board for all type of vessels as well as other types of vessel modernisation to increase energy efficiency, product quality and the use of unwanted catches. The Commission takes note of the Italian Chamber of Deputies' position on scrapping aid, but shares the view of the Court of Auditors that the public money spent on this measure over many years has not solved the problem of overcapacity.

Integrating all IMP and nearly all CFP financing instruments into a single fund implies a considerable simplification, pooling funds in order to enhance budgetary efficiency and to reduce administrative burden. In particular, seven market intervention instruments have been replaced by one. All forms of support to Producer Organisations (PO) have been integrated in the market measures chapter of the EMFF.

The Commission would like to inform the Camera that the Integrated Maritime Policy is not financed from the fisheries envelope. We have proposed an envelope that covers both policies, calculated after a consistent impact-assessed analysis.

External dimension

The Commission agrees with the Chamber's Opinion that the European Union has to play an enhanced role on the international stage with a view to guaranteeing adequate supply to the Union market while improving international fisheries governance for sustainable exploitation of resources and conservation of marine ecosystems.

Sustainable Fisheries Agreements (SFAs) would be oriented towards better governance and more efficient support to the sustainable development of local fisheries, in line with broader development objectives. In particular, the European fleet would only have access to resources that the partner country cannot or does not wish to fish itself. The SFAs would also focus more on science, monitoring, control and surveillance. In the new agreements, governance would also be improved with the ship-owners share of payments which would be increased and a reference to the respect of human rights would be included systematically.

The Adriatic is one of the most productive areas in the Mediterranean and it deserves close attention. The Union enlargement to the Western Balkan countries will certainly improve its governance and sustainable exploitation. Nonetheless, other Mediterranean sub-regions also have fisheries relevance and the Commission will tackle this matter having in mind the overall interests in the various sub-regions.

Management for sustainable fisheries shall make use of all available tools, from the catch and fishing effort limits to the technical measures, and temporary fishing cessations (biological rest) are a tool among others within this toolbox. The fragile status of several Mediterranean resources, also in the Adriatic, indicates that more than the simple biological rest has to be done to address the current situation.

Delegated acts

The Commission takes note of the Chamber's views on the delegation of powers to the Commission under delegated acts. The legislative proposals with respect to the delegation of powers were developed consistent with the relevant Articles of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU.

The Commission proposals for the reform are now with the European Parliament and the Council. Both institutions have started examination of the proposals. The Commission is actively engaged in this process.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Italian Chamber of Deputies and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*