

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 6.2.2014
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Dear Lord Boswell,

The Commission would like to thank the House of Lords for its Opinion concerning the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and for its active involvement throughout the reform process and apologises for the delay in replying.

The outcome of negotiations on the reform is indeed a historic milestone. We need to live up to the challenges of achieving sustainability in the exploitation of fish stocks and the European marine ecosystems, and of doing away with wasteful practices that have undermined the sustainability and good reputation of our fishermen. This reform opens the avenue to a change in governance, and gives the opportunity to bring the decisions on the implementation of the policy closer to the reality of the sea basins and of the fishing grounds of the EU.

Implementing the landing obligation must of course be effective and practical for the industry.

As regards regionalisation, the reformed CFP encourages the regionalised approach in this context, starting from the definition of the details for the implementation of the landing obligation through multiannual plans or discard plans. The Member States and the Advisory Councils will have a crucial role to play in this respect. The Commission takes note of the House of Lords' suggestion of making funds available for the regionalization process. It has indeed proposed funding possibilities in support of regionalized initiatives in its proposal for the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), which is still being negotiated by the Parliament and the Council. The Commission also foresees continued financial assistance to the Advisory Councils to ensure their continued involvement in developing the CFP, including under the future regionalized approach.

To facilitate the implementation of the landing obligation, the Commission has tabled, in December 2013, a proposal {COM(2013) 0889 final - 2013/0436 (COD)} amending the technical conservation measures and control measures to remove all the rules which are incompatible with the landing obligation. The Commission is confident that the Parliament and the Council will proceed to a swift adoption of this proposal before the first stages of the landing obligation become effective in 2015.

*Lord BOSWELL
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The issue of effort restrictions is already under review in the context of developing new or amended multiannual plans, and the future landing obligation will be taken into account in this review.

The Commission has already requested scientific advice on the determination of species with high survival chances. The first preliminary outcome of this work should become available shortly.

Financial support is available for scientific research purposes through the Commission's research framework programmes including the Horizon 2020 programme for the period 2014-2020. While Horizon 2020 can support longer-term applied research, EU financial support for more short-term innovative projects to develop and test new techniques, procedures etc. in the fisheries sector can take place through both the current European Fisheries Fund and the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (2014-2020). Through this support, pilot projects for the experimental testing of more selective fishing techniques and gears can be developed both by fishermen or groups of fishermen in partnership with a scientific or technical body. These results have to be made available to the public. The Commission's proposal for the new EMFF gives even more support than in the past to actions aiming towards more selective fishing by using new fishing techniques and methods to avoid unwanted catches in the first place.

With regard to transfer of knowledge, major progress has taken place in recent years, and many initiatives are underway not only in terms of data exchanges between science and industry, but also through exchanges of best practice and sharing of innovations. This increased transparency in the scientific work in support of fisheries management is noteworthy, as it allows fishermen to be more closely involved in the work of the experts of the International Council on the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee on Fisheries (STECF). This is an encouraging development, as the successful implementation of the landing obligation requires behavioural changes in fishing.

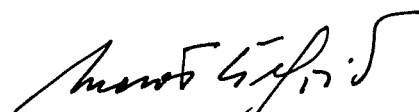
The Commission is aware of the challenges ahead with regard to enforcement and control of the landing obligation. The Commission is in the process of reviewing and identifying effective and efficient enforcement and control mechanisms to ensure compliance with the landing obligation. Modern technologies and methodologies, including the risk-based approach to control, offer interesting perspectives that are worth exploring.

The House of Lords rightly points to the importance of the involvement of retailers in the success of the reformed CFP, as a key contributor to behavioural changes in consumption. This is indeed a high degree work to be developed in the Member States. The first experiences in a number of Member States are encouraging in this respect and should be further built on.

As regards the scope of the landing obligation, this applies to species subject to catch limits (with a specific definition in relation to Mediterranean fisheries). Where relevant, scientists will be asked to report on the levels of unwanted catches and discarding of species that are not covered by the landing obligation.

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

Yours sincerely,



*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*