



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES



13.04.09

Fisheries

Commission deeply concerned about Iceland's unilateral mackerel quota – 02/04/2009

The Commission expresses its concern following the recent action by Iceland to declare a unilateral mackerel quota of 112 000 tonnes for 2009. EU Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Joe Borg commented on the exaggerated level of quota and added that an Icelandic fishery of that dimension completely undermines the successful multilateral management of the stock by the EC, Norway and the Faroe Islands since 1999.

The Commission considers that the overall catch fixed by the Coastal States for 2009 is well within safe biological limits for the stock. However, should Iceland fish its unilateral quota, the level of which has no scientific or historical justification, it would result in a complete reversal of the improved trends in this stock and would nullify the conservation efforts of the Coastal States undertaken over the last ten years. For more info [click here](#)

Strides forward for responsible fishing in the Mediterranean – 02/04/2009

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) which met in Tunisia last week for its annual session adopted a number of recommendations towards sustainable fisheries management. Agreement was reached on the setting up of a GFCM fishing fleet register and on the use of at least 40 mm square mesh in trawl fisheries –to avoid small fish and other marine organisms from being accidentally caught in the nets. Moreover, the newly introduced obligation to equip all vessels measuring more than 15m overall length with a satellite-based monitoring system is an important step making it possible, on the



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

one hand, to follow fleet developments and monitor fishing activity, and on the other to provide reliable data for scientific evaluation. Eventually, a compromise solution was also found to improve protection in an area of the Gulf of Lions, where according to the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) special attention is needed to protect adult specimen of hake in the spawning phase.

The fishing effort of all demersal fishing activity in this area has been frozen pending the preparation of further scientific advice. For another highly problematic issue, the sardines of the Adriatic Sea, SAC was given a mandate to improve the scientific basis so as to better understand the state of small pelagic stocks and fisheries in this sea. All GFCM members are now required to submit catch statistics as well as biological and economic data on their fisheries and aquaculture activities; this will improve future scientific analysis and create a level-playing field in the provision of scientific advice. An overall reduction by at least 10% of the fishing effort all over the Mediterranean was agreed as well. With respect to the effective functioning of the organisation, a performance review system was introduced, as is customary in other regional fisheries management organisations, and a Finance and Administration Committee was created to secure the smooth functioning and optimal use of funds. The European Commission was the leading force behind most of the tabled proposals. For more info [click here](#)

[EU shows its full commitment to bluefin tuna conservation – 06/04/2009](#)

The Council adopted a Regulation to transpose into Community law the new multi-annual recovery plan for Eastern bluefin tuna adopted by the ICCAT. It is crucial that this plan is implemented by all ICCAT Contracting Parties this year for the main fishing season which will start on April 15. The Commission has announced a strict approach to implementation of the ICCAT recovery plan. European operators will not be allowed to work with vessels or farms from other ICCAT Contracting Parties which are not fully implementing the plan. In particular, joint fishing operations involving Europeans vessels and placing of bluefin tuna in European cages will not be allowed with respect to operations involving those Contracting Parties. The European Commission is also aiming towards cooperation Mediterranean States to ensure the success of the bluefin tuna recovery plan.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

On 1 April, the Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA) adopted its Joint Deployment Plan for the bluefin tuna fishery in the Mediterranean Sea and the Eastern Atlantic waters for 2009, thereby bringing the Specific Control and Inspection Programme into effect. For more info [click here](#)

[European Commission gives guarded reaction to outcome of Indian Ocean Tuna Commission meeting – 07/04/2009](#)

The Commission is disappointed that the significant steps taken in some areas by the 13th session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) in Bali (Indonesia) from 30 March to 3 April 2009 have been offset by a failure to make progress in others. The main sticking points included major modifications to EC proposals regarding catch limits on tropical tunas and swordfish, which prevented the IOTC from engaging in the genuine multilateral cooperation expected of it. The lack of agreement on the laudable proposals relating to shark-finning and data reporting on shark species was another setback.

On a more positive note, the IOTC made some developments including the improvement on the gathering of scientific data from all gears. EC initiatives formed the basis for a certain amount of progress with regard to a proper freeze on fishing capacity. The IOTC also recognised the gravity of piracy in the western Indian Ocean and called on the international community to give its full support to fighting piracy in the region. For more info [click here](#)

[Unlocking European aquaculture's full potential – 08/04/2009](#)

In the Communication it has presented last week (document currently not available in English) the Commission sets out to address this state of affairs and give fresh impetus to sustainable growth to the EU's aquaculture sector. In its Communication the Commission examines the root causes of the stagnation in EU aquaculture production and looks at ways to improve the sector's competitiveness, sustainability and governance.

- Firstly, the sector can become more competitive through ongoing strong support for research and technological development, improved planning of space in coastal areas and river basins to make it easier for the sector to compete for space and water, and inclusion of its specific needs in the EU's market policy for fisheries products.
- Secondly, it will remain sustainable if it continues to build on environmentally friendly production methods, maintains high animal



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

health and welfare standards and delivers a high level of consumer protection.

- Thirdly, the Commission's willingness to provide Member States and regional authorities with guidance to ensure that targeted measures at local, national and EU level help the sector make full use of its assets.

The Commission believes that a strong, reinvigorated aquaculture industry would serve as a catalyst for growth in related sectors and further contribute to the development of rural and coastal areas. Moreover, consumers would benefit in the form of healthy, high-quality food products produced in an environmentally friendly way. These are just some of the crucial benefits that would accrue from concerted European action at all levels to unlock the aquaculture sector's full potential. For more info [click here](#)

The Future Multilateral Cooperation in the North-East Atlantic Fisheries

COM (2009) 151 Proposal for a COUNCIL REGULATION laying down a Scheme of control and enforcement applicable in the area covered by the Convention on future multilateral cooperation in the North-East Atlantic fisheries

The Convention on Future Multilateral co-operation in North East Atlantic Fisheries to which European Community is a Contracting Party aims to ensure the long term conservation and optimum utilisation of the fishery resources of the North East Atlantic area, providing sustainable, environmental and social benefits.

For the purpose of ensuring the application of this Convention and recommendations adopted by the North East Atlantic Commission (NEAFC), measures concerning control and enforcement relating to fisheries concerned may be adopted. The Scheme of control and enforcement applies to all vessels used or intended for use for fishing activities conducted on fishery resources in areas defined in the Convention.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

NEAFC adopted during its 25th annual meeting in 2006 a new Scheme to improve the control and enforcement of its recommendations'. The main change is the merge of the former Scheme and the Program to promote compliance by non contracting Party vessels. The other change is the inclusion of a new Port State Control system which effectively closes European ports to landings of frozen fish, which have not been verified to be legal by the flag State of the foreign vessel. It provides new measures considering control of vessels engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fisheries. The new Port State Control Measures were last amended by a recommendation adopted by NEAFC at the 26th annual meeting.

These Recommendations came into force in May 2007, February 2008 and January 2009. They are binding on the Contracting Parties under the terms of the NEAFC Convention. The Community, as a Contracting Party, should consequently apply them.

Agriculture and Rural Development

Climate Change

COM (2009) 147 WHITE PAPER Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action

Addressing climate change requires two types of response. Firstly, and importantly, we must reduce our greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) (i.e. take mitigation action) and secondly we must take adaptation action to deal with the unavoidable impacts. The White Paper presents a framework within which the European Union and its Member States can prepare for the impacts of climate change. A first phase of the strategy will run until 2012 and will lay the groundwork for preparing a comprehensive EU adaptation strategy from 2013 and beyond. It will focus on increasing our understanding of climate change and possible adaptation measures and how adaptation can be embedded in key EU policies. Decisions on how best to adapt must be based on solid scientific and economic analysis, yet information content and availability differs widely across regions.

The Commission delineated several fields of action to be addressed on an EU level as well as Member State level. Amongst others, the Commission is proposing to improve knowledge management by establishing a Clearing



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

House Mechanism as an IT tool and database on climate change impact, vulnerability and best practices on adaptation. In addition, coordination should be enhanced where Member States spearhead important adaptation research. The paper outlines the need for a Clearing House Mechanism in which to exchange information on climate change risks, impacts and best practices.

Climate change will impact a number of sectors including the agriculture sector, fisheries and aquaculture sectors, coasts and marine ecosystems, animal and plant health. It will also affect the quality and availability of water resources (whereas more than 80% of agricultural land is rain-fed) and it will increasingly drive ecosystem including marine ecosystems and biodiversity loss.

Adaptation also needs to be mainstreamed into EU policies. The effects of climate change and how to adapt to it with regards to various sectors (such as agriculture and forests, biodiversity, ecosystems, water and coastal and marine areas) are all outlined in this communication. The Commission announces that it will regularly review progress in implementing the first phase of the framework for action identified in this White Paper with a view to developing a comprehensive adaptation strategy from 2013.

The coexistence of genetically modified crops with conventional and organic farming

COM (2009) 153 REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT on the coexistence of genetically modified crops with conventional and organic farming

Since 2006, Member States have made significant progress in developing coexistence legislation. This development of the legislative framework went hand in hand with a moderate expansion of the cultivation surface involving GM crops. However, GM crop production is still a niche production in the EU, with currently only a single GM product being in commercial use and with cultivation on a very limited scale. The coexistence approaches applied in different member states differ with respect to the administrative procedures and technical segregation measures.

The Commission sees the need to undertake the actions found hereunder in relation to coexistence:



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

- The Commission will, at the earliest possibility, conclude an economic impact assessment concerning the establishment of potential future seeds thresholds. The Commission will propose appropriate legislative follow-up on the basis of that assessment.
- The Commission will continue the activity of COEX-NET to foster an exchange of information on coexistence with Member States as regards practical experience, research and monitoring results.
- Jointly with the Member States, and following consultations of relevant stakeholder groups, the Commission will develop technical guidance on crop-specific coexistence measures through the European Coexistence Bureau.
- Under the Framework Programme for Community Research, the Commission will support further research based upon clearly established needs identified within ongoing or future initiatives.
- In 2012, the Commission will report on the coexistence situation in Member States, based on information provided by the Member States.

Four agricultural product names registered – 07/04/2009

The European Commission has added four names of agricultural products and foodstuffs to the Register of Protected Designations of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indications (PGI): Spanish Fish "Melva de Andalucía" (PGI) and "Caballa de Andalucía" (PGI), Portuguese biscuits "Ovos Molos de Aveiro" (PGI) and Italian chestnuts "Castagna di Vallerano" (PDO). These four names are added to the list of about 820 product names already protected under the legislation on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin and traditional speciality. For more info [click here](#)