REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY (CFP) AND ITS FUTURE

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KEY MESSAGES

1. Over the last decade, the Common Fisheries Policies (CFP) achieved some very encouraging results in the sustainable management of EU fish stocks. For its part, the whole sector deployed huge efforts to enhance sustainability of fishing and aquaculture activities in the EU sea basins. It is now time to rebalance the magnitude of EU action among the environmental, social and economic specific objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy to replicate the success achieved in the management of fish stocks in the improvement of economic viability and attractiveness of the seafood chain and speeding up the generational replacement of the sector. In this context, it is necessary that:
   a) CFP’s management models should fully integrate the climate, energy, and marine pollution threats and those that value fishing for human consumption should be given higher priority;
   b) the modernisation of fishing vessels, especially for fisheries under TACs and quotas, should no longer be bound to the criteria of fishing capacity;
   c) EU State Aid rules should allow a strong financial support to encourage young fishers and women entering the fishing and aquaculture sector;
   d) the EU is introducing compensatory measures for companies affected by possible restrictions on their operations in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), or other protected areas.

2. Fishers fully share EU ambitions in terms of sustainable development (SD) and energy transition. Despite that, in some cases, they are faced with legislative obligations that are very difficult to apply or that generate socio-economic impacts (e.g., implementation of the landing obligation). On the other hand, the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) doesn’t fully meet with all the needs of the sector (e.g., modernisation and/or the purchasing of new fishing vessels). In some cases, EMFAF’s measures cannot be applied or are linked to very complex and/or time-consuming control procedures (this is the case for instance of the current provisions for the decarbonisation of the fishing vessels). Furthermore, the 2021-2027 EMFAF budget is not up to the magnitude of the challenges related to the modernisation and greening of fishing fleets, port facilities and aquaculture infrastructures. Hence, the EU should modify EMFAF’s eligibility, reporting and control rules, make its provisions more adapted to the challenges affecting the sector and provide it with a more ambitious budget under the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework.

3. Outside of the European borders, the European Union should export the CFP’s principles to ensure more responsible and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture practices and to guarantee fair competition conditions (e.g., when it comes to environmental, sanitary and social criteria). It is crucial that the EU could engage in constructive, but firm and demanding, dialogue with third countries and carry on monitoring the effects of the implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. In parallel, the European Union should also increase the controls at its external borders to prevent access to the EU seafood market of products that do not comply with the CFP’s rules and principles.

4. Fisheries and Aquaculture are a strategic, economic and social asset for the European coastal communities. Due to their specific competences on fisheries management, spatial planning, territorial development and research and innovation, regional authorities play a key role in boosting the sustainable development of the EU seafood sector. For these reasons, to fully reach the CFP’s environmental, economic and social objectives it is an obligatory step to review the existing governance to allow regional authorities to actively participate in the design and implementation of the CFP.
As result of the meeting held in Agios Nikolaos (Crete) on 28 October 2022, the CPMR General Assembly:

**It is now time to rebalance the magnitude of the EU action among the environmental, social and economic specific objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy.**

A. **Considers** that the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is a fundamental EU policy which significantly contributes to both the sustainable management of marine living resources and food self-sufficiency as well as to the health of European citizens;

B. **Is concerned** by the extreme complexity and the proliferation of European legislative acts that focus on solely environmental objectives without taking into due account the impact on the economic and social dimensions that are both main policy pillars of the CFP. So far it is coastal fishing that has paid the highest price with a noticeable decrease in catches, which in turn has led to an increasingly limiting shortage of feedstock in the direct consumption and the local processing industry. In this context, management that values fishing for human consumption should be given higher priority than a maximal theoretical return in industrial fishing, where the catch is processed into fishmeal;

C. **Points out** that the CFP must look at fishers and all the economic operators of the seafood chain as the cornerstone of the European legislative framework. In this regard, it **calls upon** the European Commission to operate for the full implementation of the provisions of Art. 2.1 stating that the “CFP shall ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are... managed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits, and of contributing to the availability of food supplies”;

D. **Recalls** the impacts that climate change and maritime pollution have on the marine environment and its fish stocks. It **draws** the attention of EU co-legislators to the catastrophic socio-economic effects that a reduction of the total allowable catches and/or the current national quotas might generate on the EU seafood chain. In this regard, it **calls upon** the Council and the European Commission to open a participatory technical and political debate on how to better integrate socio-economic indicators within the calculation of Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) levels and to review current recovery timeframes that may not be attainable unless fishing activity is completely stopped (as in the Western Mediterranean). It **invites** the European Commission to work on a multi-annual management of stocks, including all potential management methods such as the methods for defining TACs - quotas, exemptions from the landing obligation or technical measures. This multi-annual management, in addition to giving visibility to companies in the sector, would contribute to an ecosystem approach that would take into account the impact of anthropogenic factors other than fishing (pollution and the consequences of climate change);

E. **Considers** that, today more than ever, due to the geopolitical context in which we live, EU co-legislators should provide the CFP with a more ambitious budget to address the emerging climate, energy and environmental challenges that threaten the survival of the European fisheries and aquaculture sectors. In this regard, it **calls upon** Member States and the European Parliament to take better into consideration the potentialities and needs of Oceans, Seas and of the EU seafood chain in the forthcoming negotiations on the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF);

1 Regulation (EU) N° 1380/2013 of 11 December 2013
F. **Points out** that the CFP should seek constant improvement of the attractiveness of the fisheries and aquaculture sector by:

- Improving quality of life, working conditions and security on board fishing vessels. In this regard, it **considers** that the existing EU definition of fishing capacity should be reviewed and decoupled from elements linked to quality of life and working security on board (e.g., size/gross tonnage of vessels; power of the main engine, etc.);

- strengthening incentives to stimulate the entry of young people in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. In this regard, it **is very concerned** by the EC’s suppression of Art.18² in the new draft proposal of Block Exemption Regulation (FIBER)³ and **calls upon** the Council and the European Parliament to reintroduce the provision on “Aid to start-up support for young fishermen” in the proposal of FIBER post-2023;

- reviewing conditions to obtain EU financial support to purchase new fishing vessels. It specifically **calls upon** co-legislators to repeal Art. 13 c) and to amend Art 17 of the EMFAF, with the final aim to reduce the typology and number of restrictions;

**CFP’s obligations should be reviewed to reduce their socio-economic impacts and to simplify their implementation.**

G. **Points out** that simplification and reduction of administrative and reporting rules (including those relating to the implementation of the EMFAF) are key objectives to be strongly pursued in relation to each level and phase of the CFP’s policy implementation;

H. **Recalls** the crucial contribution that the fisheries and aquaculture sector could provide to boost energy transition and reduce greenhouse gas emissions across Europe. It **considers it imperative** that the EU ensures all the legislative and financial conditions to speed up the decarbonisation of fishing vessels. In this context, it **would like** to see a review of the tonnage and power criteria in order to dissociate them from the notion of fishing effort. Hence, it **calls upon** co-legislators to review provisions of the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund⁴ (EMFAF) and make eligible, without any restriction, the modernisation of fishing vessels to install a facility or equipment that improves energy efficiency and the fight against CO₂ emissions, as well as the building of new vessels with decarbonised propulsion. A specific reflection must also be opened to accompany the energy transition in unbalanced segments;

I. **Backs** the EU’s policy objective to accelerate the refurbishment and/or construction of green port infrastructures, which represent the preconditions for fisheries and aquaculture economic operators to comply with EU energy transition and climate neutrality objectives. Nevertheless, it **points out** that without significant financial support from the European Union and its Member States, neither the regional nor local governments will be able to meet the costs that such an acceleration would entail. The Ocean fund proposed by the European Parliament, if approved, should cover a part of the investments required;

J. **Draws** the attention of co-legislators to the huge challenges⁵ related to the implementation of the “landing obligation”⁶, in particular, on its inapplicability in the case of certain mixed fisheries. It **believes** that the EU should open a technical and constructive dialogue with regional authorities, Advisory Councils, representatives of fisheries sectors, scientists, and NGOs on how to amend Art. 14 and 15 of

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² Regulation (EU) N° 1388/2014, Art. N° 18 on “Aid to start-up support for young fishermen”
³ C(2021) 8980 final
⁴ Regulation (EU) 2021/1139 of 7 July 2021
⁵ Socio-economic impacts; worsening of working and safety conditions on board, etc.
⁶ Art.15 of Regulation (EU) N° 1380/2013 of 11 December 2013
the CFP’s basic regulation accordingly. It highlights that the European Union cannot achieve full traceability and documentation of all unwanted catches without the support of fishers;

K. Calls upon the European Commission to follow a new approach by improving selectivity. It believes that the most effective way to stop unwanted catches and discards, especially in mixed fisheries, is to better define the concept of selectivity and to apply it according to the sea basins. In this regard, it calls upon the European Commission to:
- review the landing obligation, which is currently inapplicable in multi-species fisheries;
- address the notion of selectivity with regard to the social and economic issues of the territories and the species fished in each maritime basin;
- increase the amount of EU investments in favour of Research and Innovation and aiming to promote and generalise the use of artificial intelligence in fishing practises;
- launch an EU flagship programme to disseminate information on already performing selective gears and processes to scale up, where it is possible, tools and technical solutions to boost selectivity in EU fisheries;

L. Recalls that the CFP must endeavour to maintain a balance between small-scale coastal fishing and trawler fishing, which supports the entire sector. It warns of the major risk at present, particularly in view of the aid that could reach 100% within the framework of the EMFAF, of seeing too great an increase in fishing pressure in coastal areas. Indeed, these areas, which are often restricted in terms of space, are strategic from a biological point of view for certain species (spawning grounds, etc.) and in their waters fishing pressure (concentration of activities) and conflicts of use are already significant;

M. Believes that the CFP must acknowledge the existence of coastal fishing as a distinct fishing category in order to support and to regulate it according to its particular needs;

N. Is concerned about the current energy crisis, the duration of which is difficult to estimate. It calls upon the Heads of State and Government and the European Union to maintain emergency measures in order to limit the social and economic impacts that the energy crisis is having on the entire fishing industry. However, it believes that this support should not come at the expense of accelerating the energy transition;

O. Calls upon the European Institutions to increase their efforts to export the CFP beyond EU boundaries with the final aim that, in the near future, all States, economic operators, at global level, could operate in full compliance with its main economic, social and environmental objectives. In this respect, it fully supports the European Commission in advocating more controls and harsher penalties at international level to eradicate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities. It calls upon the European Union to increase the controls at its external borders to prevent access to the EU seafood market of products that do not comply with the CFP’s rules and principles;

P. Believes it is crucial that the EU continues to pursue its dialogue with third countries to avoid taking steps backwards in the sustainable exploitation of EU fish stocks and have a more active participation in Regional Fisheries Organisations;

Q. Calls upon the Member States concerned to use their Brexit adjustment reserve allocation to meet the needs of their fisheries and aquaculture sector;

It is crucial that the EU could engage in constructive, but firm and demanding, dialogue with third countries and carry on monitoring the effects of the implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.
R. Welcomes initiatives laid down by the European Parliament (PECH Committee) to forecast potential scenarios on socio-economic impacts related to the post-2026 implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and involve local and regional authorities in discussions with the UK; 

It is an obligatory step to review the existing governance to allow regional authorities to actively participate in the design and the implementation of the CFP.

S. Welcomes the positive results achieved by the CFP on the management of EU commercial fish stocks and the sustainable production of seafood. Nevertheless, it highlights that such positive results would not have been possible without the strong commitment and key contribution delivered by fisheries and aquaculture operators, scientists and regional and local authorities;

T. Believes that additional efforts are needed to provide the CFP with a more inclusive governance, co-management models and technical measures that can be fully endorsed by the fisheries sector on the ground. It recalls that, over the last years, very good practices have been identified in many EU coastal regions. It calls upon co-legislators to capitalise on these good practices to modernise the CFP and to develop a general EU framework for fisheries co-management. In this context, it believes it imperative that regional authorities and professionals are involved in the development of fisheries and marine area management plans;

U. Calls upon the European Commission for a CFP for the Mediterranean agreed with all the countries of this semi-enclosed Sea and where the effects of climate change and pollution can be more apparent;

V. Draws the attention of EU co-legislators to the crucial role regional authorities play to support the sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Hence, it points out that the CFP’s governance must ensure a more active participation and contribution of these key stakeholders, especially in the activities of the EU Advisory Councils and in the national programmes delivering on the EU Data Collection Framework;

W. Calls upon the European Commission to deliver legislative conditions and a specific flagship programme to encourage cooperation among regional authorities (even belonging to different EU countries) with strong environmental and socio-economic interests over the same Geographical Sub-Areas (GSA);

X. Believes that more effective synergies should be ensured among the Marine Strategy Framework (MSFD) and the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directives, the CFP and the overall Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP). It calls upon EU co-legislators to proactively involve regional authorities in the political reflection on how to tackle restoration and preservation challenges through a comprehensive and holistic approach under the MSFD, MSP, IMP and the CFP;

Y. Warns the EU institutions of the dangerous spread of an anti-European sentiment that could take root irreversibly among the majority of actors of the fisheries sector, who see themselves increasingly abandoned and, in some cases even damaged, by the current CFP;

Z. Underlines its full readiness to cooperate with the European Commission (DG MARE services) to spark the technical and political debate on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy.

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7 Regional authorities: co-fund infrastructures, services, training and data collection programmes on the biological status of fish stocks; support both basic and applied research in favour of selectivity, lead the political reflection on the digital and greening transition of fishing ports.
The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) represents more than 150 regional authorities from 24 countries across Europe and beyond. Organised in Geographical Commissions, the CPMR works to ensure that a balanced territorial development is at the heart of the European Union and its policies.

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BACKGROUND

As required by Article 49 of the basic Regulation on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the European Commission must report to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy by the end of this year.

Today more than ever, the CFP represents a very important asset to contribute to EU food security and to ensure the sustainable production of seafood.

The current political phase is crucial to learn from the results of almost 10 years of policy implementation and to debate on how to improve the CFP to tackle the new climate, energy and socio-economic challenges.

The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions calls upon the Council, the European Parliament, and the European Commission to consider the observations and policy recommendations listed in this document, which was approved by the CPMR General Assembly in Crete on 28 October 2022.