

CFP reform: Simplifying technical measures important - but fisheries activities must be safeguarded

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Opinion

Simplifying technical measures in line with CFP reform is an important aim, but it mustn't be to the detriment of fisheries activities, argues Gabriel Mato.



Gabriel Mato | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

This is the third attempt to modify the rules on technical measures following two failures in recent years. However, this time there is no margin for error.

We must align the technical measures with the last common fisheries policy, mainly regarding the decisions on the ban on discards and the maximum sustainable yield.

Aimed at limiting unwanted catches, notably of juvenile fish, and at reducing the impacts of fishing

activities on natural resources, the current legislation has developed over time into a very complex set of prescriptive measures, disseminated in a range of different pieces of legislation, which are not flexible enough to adapt to technical evolution and do not meet the particular needs of each fishery.

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I share the general bottom-up approach adopted by the Commission proposal to achieve a more realistic regulation, as long as there is a common line to all fisheries that would guarantee a level playing field for fishermen and avoid a re-nationalisation of this policy.

The regionalisation of the technical measures should lead to better legislation in order to meet operators' expectations and would allow the sector to get actively involved in the decision making process. We all expect that this new approach would dissuade some fishermen from circumventing the legislation and encourage their participation in the conservation of stocks.

Still, some of the ideas included in the Commission's proposal would make fisheries activities impracticable. I refer more specifically to the limitation of the amount of catches below the minimum size to the unrealistic figure of five per cent, or to setting up vague targets linked to the application of environmental directives, which are not directly transposed to national legislation, and would create legal uncertainty among fishermen.

I also think the European Commission partially takes into account the objectives enshrined in the CFP, ignoring the socioeconomic ones, which are, in my opinion, crucial while we deal with the fisheries legislation having an impact on the living conditions of coastal populations.

Furthermore, the Commission conceives the exercise of simplification by establishing a common baseline to all seas with the elimination of numerous existing derogations and, thus, rendering a considerable number of activities inconsistent from one day to another.

This would create an important and unbearable strain for fishermen at least in the period between the entering into force of the new regulation and the adoption of the regionalised acts, in which the technical measures should be better adapted to the reality of the different fisheries.

I am compelled to reach a balance between, simplification of the legislation and conservation of the specificities of the different seas and gears, as well as between regionalisation and the necessity to keep fundamental baselines under co-decision by the European Parliament and the Council.

About the author

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