



EU fishing sector welcomes European Commission urgent measures to secure fish operations

The sector calls on Member States to speed-up access to financial aid

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The European Commission recently published a legislative package for state aid measures and financial compensation under the new Fisheries Fund (EMFAF) to support the fishing sector following the aggression against Ukraine by Russia. The EU fishing industry has thanked Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, for the quick call for a second meeting to take stock on the measures adopted. At the meeting, the sector represented by Europêche and EAPO, agreed with the Commissioner on the need for speedy and flexible implementation of the provisions in the Member States as well as for the approval of some additional measures under the current Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

The EU fishing industry has appreciated the quick action from the Commission adopting emergency measures to try to mitigate the adverse effects of those who are being directly threatened by the energy crisis and to calm the tension in our fish markets.

Javier Garat, President of Europêche, declared: *“The sector certainly welcomes the European Commission’s rapid action to unlock funding so that Member States can provide as a matter of urgency financial aid to our fishermen. Given the fact that governments are reacting differently to the situation and adopting measures at a different pace and extent, it is now fundamental that the Commission pushes national authorities to quickly put in place these authorised measures and reduce red tape to guarantee a level playing field. Equally important is to produce as soon as possible a guidance document for Member States to better understand whether different aid schemes can be cumulated. Certainly our fishers need all the support they can get.”*

The sector recalled that the priority for fishers is to continue fishing, supplying seafood and maintain the employment. However, under these exceptional circumstances, even with the financial aid, some companies will not be able to fish. It is therefore important to help fishers who have to temporarily cease their activities, given the fact that in many cases aid will only arrive months later. The industry argued that this also reinforces the point that the ceiling for state aid per fishing vessel under the temporary framework should be raised, since this type of support can reach companies in a matter of weeks.

Esben Sverdrup-Jensen, President of EAPO, concluded: *“Fishing vessels have been in port for a long time and the fish seasons for certain species will be over soon, for instance blue whiting. To tackle the situation we need to provide fishers the option to carry over more than the existing 10% of their fishing quotas to next year. After all this is a key free-of-charge measure that was already put in place back in 2015 with the Russian invasion to Crimea. This will secure*

employment and income. We need to prepare for every future scenario.” He continued: “We welcome the Commission’s commitment to analyse the situation on a case-by-case basis based on quota consumption. We support the request of an ICES advice for the affected fish stocks to analyse the feasibility of quota banking. It is in everybody’s interest to secure the sustainability of the fish populations.”

The sector also appreciated Commissioner Sinkevicius’ announcement that his services are working on the amendment of the current EMFF (2014-2020) to fully utilize the fund and to unlock the remaining unused 1 billion Euros to help the sector.

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