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COMMISSIONER
Virginijus Sinkevičius
European Commission
Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

EAPO 20-15 / EP(20)-27

Oostende/Brussels, 3 April 2020

Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius,

Re.: EU support to fisheries sector in the COVID-19 crisis

The European fishing sector is grateful for your and DG MARE's efforts to finalize the proposal for a new set of measures under the European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF). We also appreciate your and your services responses to the communication from the fisheries organisations and we look forward to the weekly follow-up with your cabinet as agreed during our teleconference on Wednesday 1 April.

EAPO and Europepêche, while recognising the proposed measures are a positive step forward in dealing with COVID 19 crisis, are very concerned that they will not have the desired effect in the fishing industry unless they are accompanied by additional EU funding. The operational programmes of the Member States are substantially evolved in their last year and the majority of the Member States lack the financial means to optimise the potential of these measures. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to **revisit the possibilities to inject additional funding** to address the current crisis and to ensure the EU retains a vital, sustainable fishing industry supplying healthy food product to EU consumers now and in the future. EAPO and Europepêche are calling that this be addressed as a matter of urgency. The inclusion of a more flexible reallocation of financial resources within the operational programmes and a simplified procedure for amending operational programmes with respect to the introduction of the new measures are welcome but do not address the key issue of additional funding.

In Annex 1 to this letter you will find an overview of the actual situation of fisheries in several member states. The fishing industry is focussing on the continuity of the activities to secure seafood supply whilst experiencing in many cases the socio-economic effects of the crisis impacted market situation. Therefore EAPO and Europêche kindly request to **re-evaluate the possibility to provide a certain level of income support** through the EMFF or other funds to compensate the loss of income faced by our companies due to the huge reduction of up to 50% of fish prices threatening their financial viability.

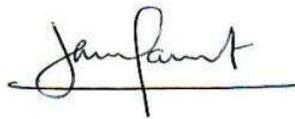
Finally, we would also appreciate to review with you and DG MARE the **listing of Europêche-EAPO proposals and specific considerations** in Annex 2 (copied and updated from our communication of 17 March), with the objective to identify useful additional initiatives from all parties. In this regard we would like to highlight the option to carry over more than the existing 10% of their fishing quotas to next year – as defined under the Flexibility Regulation or art 15(9) of the Basic Regulation. This measure has been implemented in 2014 and 2015 for pelagic species to tackle the very serious market disruptions at the time due to the Russian trade sanctions in combination with the crisis in the Nigerian market. The wider application of such ‘augmented flex’ for banking up to 25% of the quota applicable to all commercial fish species would be extremely important.

Looking forward to an affirmative response to jointly revisit the above-mentioned aspects, we remain available should you have any additional question.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Visser', with the name 'P. VISSEER' printed in small letters below it.

Pim Visser
President of the European Association
of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Javier Garat', written in a cursive style.

Javier Garat
President of the Association of National
Organisations of Fishing Enterprises in the EU

CC: Acting Director General Bernhard Friess, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

MEP Pierre Karleskind, Chair of PECH