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24. Calls for the 'aid-for-trade' programmes to be designed to promote gender equality and sustainable development, and to be financed through additional funds; stresses that 'aid-for-trade' funding should contribute to the build-up of the supply-side capacity needed to engage in trade, and must not be made conditional upon policies of receiving governments to liberalise agriculture, industry or services markets;
25. Points out the importance of gender budgeting in European trade policy as a strategy for contributing to gender equality; calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States urgently to implement gender budgeting as a standard tool in budgetary policies at all levels;
26. Stresses that economic participation is essential to building women's confidence and capability and improving their status in the community; also stresses that access to resources gives women the ability to build income and assets, which makes it possible to create an environment in which low-income and poor women may build businesses, improve living conditions, keep families well-fed and healthy, educate children, develop respect at home and in the community and become involved in politics; underlines the vast potential of 'micro-credits' as an invaluable tool in alleviating poverty, promoting self-sufficiency and stimulating economic activity in some of the world's most destitute and disadvantaged countries;
27. Calls on Member States to do their utmost to ensure that a gender perspective is taken into account in world trade negotiations; also calls on the Member States to encourage women to put themselves forward as candidates for positions in international organisations such as the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF and the ILO and to support women that do so;
28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and national and regional parliaments of the Member States and the accession countries, and to the Council of Europe.
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P6_TA(2006)0390**Improving the economic situation in the fishing industry****European Parliament resolution on improving the economic situation in the fishing industry (2006/2110(INI))***The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the revision of the common fisheries policy (CFP) in December 2002 and, in particular, its resolution of 17 January 2002 on the Commission Green Paper on the future of the common fisheries policy⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its position of 6 July 2005 on the proposal for a Council regulation on the European Fisheries Fund⁽²⁾,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1198/2006 of 27 July 2006 on the European Fisheries Fund⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the communication of 9 March 2006 from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on improving the economic situation in the fishing industry (COM(2006)0103),
- having regard to the public hearing held by the Committee on Fisheries on 3 May 2006 on the impact of increased fuel prices on the European fishing industry,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 271 E, 7.11.2002, p. 401.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 157 E, 6.7.2006, p. 324.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 223, 15.8.2006, p. 1.

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- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A6-0266/2006),
- A. whereas the fishing industry is of strategic importance for the socio-economic situation, the public supply of fish and the equilibrium of the food balance in various Member States and the European Union (EU) itself, and whereas it makes a considerable contribution to socio-economic wellbeing in coastal communities, local development, employment, the preservation/creation of economic activities and jobs upstream and downstream, the supply of fresh fish and the preservation of local cultural traditions,
- B. whereas there is a CFP, which should bear responsibility for financing its costs, in particular the decisions and measures adopted as part of that policy,
- C. whereas the financial ceilings under the financial framework for 2007-2013 must be respected, but it would nevertheless have been desirable for more adequate funding to have been set aside for the fishing industry,
- D. whereas the various fleets of EU Member States totalled around 90 000 vessels in 2004 and directly employed around 190 000 fishermen,
- E. whereas the CFP must take account of the marked differences between fleets, fleet segments, target species, fishing gear, productivity, consumption preferences and the fish consumed per capita in the various EU Member States, in addition to the special features of fishing activity stemming from their social structure and structural and natural imbalances between the various fishing regions,
- F. whereas the sustainability of fishery resources is fundamental in guaranteeing fishing activity and the viability of the fishing industry in the long term,
- G. whereas the activity of the fishing industry is concentrated above all in economically fragile regions — the majority of them Objective 1 regions — and the crisis situation in the industry is having a profound impact on the economic and social cohesion of these regions,
- H. whereas the CFP will need to support the sustainable development of the fishing industry,
- I. whereas, in some fisheries, there is a clear disparity in the income level of people living from fishing by comparison with other sections of the population, aggravated by the fact that they depend on the uncertainty of fishing, the uncertain value of fish and the cost of certain factors of production; whereas Community policies must therefore guarantee an equitable standard of living for people for whom fishing is their livelihood, particularly by improving the balance between the income and outgoings of enterprises,
- J. whereas the incomes and wages of people working in the fishing industry are insecure owing to the way in which fish is marketed, the way in which first-sale prices are set and the irregular characteristics of fishing, which means that certain forms of national and Community public assistance need to be maintained,
- K. whereas the rise in fuel prices is having direct and indirect repercussions on the incomes of crews, owing to the link between wages and income from the first sale of catches, leading to a fall of up to 25 %,
- L. whereas the economic situation of many fishing enterprises has deteriorated over the past few years, even leading to the disappearance of many enterprises, owing to the drop in output, with negative socio-economic repercussions,
- M. whereas the drop in output stems partly from restrictions on fishing activity (capacity reduction, total allowable catches, quotas, areas closed to fishing, recovery plans and the reduction in fishing days), and partly from the maintenance of low first-sale prices arising from the structure of the industry (low concentration of supply, growing concentration of demand, poor distribution of added value, progressive increase in imports of fish products, rise in aquaculture production),

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- N. whereas the economic and social crisis facing the fishing industry affects all fishing fleets, but in different degrees,
- O. whereas, in the past ten years alone, the fishing industry suffered a 35 % fall in the number of jobs, a 20 % fall in the number of vessels and a 28 % fall in catches, despite the attempts made during the 2002 revision of the CFP to reverse this trend,
- P. whereas, in order to ensure the economic viability of the fishing industry, its adaptation needs to be accompanied by socio-economic measures designed in particular to achieve the highest levels of safety by means of fleet modernisation, secure a high level of training for people working in the industry and improve working and living conditions for people living from the sea,
- Q. whereas there has been a steady increase in the balance of trade deficit for fish products with third countries in recent years and the EU already imports more than 40 % of the fish products it consumes,
- R. whereas the sales dynamic prevents fluctuations in cost factors from impacting on fish prices and average first-sale prices have stagnated or decreased since 2000 without this being reflected in a reduction in the price of fresh fish for the end consumer,
- S. whereas, in some cases, the current common organisation of the market (COM) for fish products has not succeeded in making a sufficient contribution to improving first-sale prices and the distribution of added value across the value chain in the industry,
- T. whereas promoting the indiscriminate scrapping of vessels, without taking account of the specific features of fleets, fishery resources and the needs as regards fish consumption in each country, has been the driving force for matching the size of the fleet to existing fishery resources, with enormous economic and social consequences,
- U. whereas fishing effort reduction has affected some Member States more than others, and there are some Member State fleets that have made global reductions above the Community average and others that have instead increased fishing effort,
- V. whereas the discontinuation of some fishing methods will automatically lead to the disappearance of several artisanal fisheries, with major social and economic repercussions,
- W. whereas increases in fuel prices in the past three years have had a particularly negative impact on the fishing industry, significantly aggravating the already existing crisis, its operating margins and its economic viability and leading to a very significant cut in fishermen's income,
- X. whereas fuel prices rose by almost 100 % between 2004 and 2006 and now account for approximately 50 % of total operating costs for fishing enterprises in some segments of the industry,
- Y. whereas there are studies pointing to the risk of the disappearance of thousands of fishing enterprises and the loss of thousands of jobs owing to the increase in fuel prices,
- Z. whereas various EU Member States have applied specific measures to compensate their fleets for the increase in fuel prices, particularly by creating guarantee funds and subsidised credit lines,
- AA. whereas the trend towards high fuel prices is structural in nature,
- AB. whereas, as regards exemptions from the notification of state aid, the Commission is proposing that the 'de minimis' rule for the fishing industry be raised to around EUR 30 000 per beneficiary over a three-year period, a lower sum than is applied to other sectors,

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- AC. whereas the Brussels European Council of 15 and 16 December 2005 cut the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) for the period 2007-2013 by comparison with the Commission proposal, reducing it from around EUR 4,9 billion to around EUR 3,8 billion, thereby further exacerbating the insufficiency of Community financial resources for the fishing industry,
- AD. whereas the political agreement on the EFF reached by the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in Luxembourg on 19 June 2006 does not take account of key aspects of Parliament's above-mentioned position of 6 July 2005 and includes Commission proposals set out in the above-mentioned Commission communication,

Commission communication

1. Regrets the delay in the Commission communication and the lack of ambition shown, given that the proposals put forward are insufficient and in some cases inappropriate when measured against the scale and severity of the crisis facing the sector, which the Commission itself notes and describes;
2. Deplores a policy which, taking advantage of the socio-economic deterioration in the industry owing to the steep rise in fuel prices, seeks to promote the scrapping of vessels and the permanent cessation of activities;
3. Regrets that the measures proposed do not have a genuine socio-economic dimension and that, instead, they are measures that take no account of the consequences of their implementation for vessel crews;
4. Draws attention to the fact that the Commission communication does not contain a coherent analysis of the current state of the fishing industry, particularly of fishing effort;
5. Stresses that many of the proposals put forward will at most have a medium and long-term impact on the economic situation in the fishing industry;

Immediate measures

6. Regrets that, as regards rescue and restructuring aid, the Commission continues to block the possibility of granting compensatory payments and operating aid, and therefore stresses the need to adopt immediate concrete measures to reduce the high instability of fuel prices for the industry, in particular by creating support measures related to their costs; requests, in this context, the creation of a guarantee fund with Community participation which will safeguard the stability of fuel prices and the granting of a transitional compensatory payment for fishing enterprises affected;
7. Considers it necessary to make use of all the possibilities and financial margins within the framework of the Community budget for 2006 in order to finance extraordinary support measures for the industry, enabling it to overcome the difficulties posed by the rise in fuel prices, for as long as no other type of measure is implemented;
8. Calls on the Commission, with a view to guaranteeing the competitiveness of the EU fleet operating outside Community waters, which must compete on the same markets with fleets from third countries, even though the costs of a Community vessel may be more than 300 % higher than those of other fleets, to study the industry's proposals to create a framework which could grant tax credits;
9. Urges the Commission to consider the current fuel price crisis as an unforeseeable circumstance covered by Article 16 of Council Regulation (EC) No 2792/1999 of 17 December 1999 laying down the detailed rules and arrangements regarding Community assistance in the fisheries sector⁽¹⁾, which governs the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG), so that the same short-term aid can be granted as in the event of temporary cessation of activities, without any capacity-reduction or biological criteria; recalls the commitments long given in this context;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 337, 30.12.1999, p. 10.

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10. Urges the Commission to increase the period for rescue aid to 12 months;
11. Stresses that public aid should also be targeted at safeguarding the interests of vessel crews, meeting their needs and resolving the problems affecting them;
12. Expresses its disappointment at the rules recently announced by the Commission, raising the 'de minimis' aid ceiling for the fishing industry to only EUR 30 000 over three years; recalls the insistent requests from the industry and the administrations of many Member States that the amount of such aid be increased to EUR 100 000, and compares this figure with the ceiling recently agreed for other productive sectors, which stands at up to EUR 200 000; underlines the commitments given as regards increasing the value of the 'de minimis' rule for the fishing industry and calls on the Commission to revise the recently adopted agreement upwards as a matter of urgency;
13. Urges the Commission to make it possible to advance aid under the FIFG and the EFF in order to set up financing lines to offset the rise in operating costs;

Measures with a medium and long-term impact

Fleet renewal and modernisation

14. Notes the Commission's proposal to take account, in relation to future restructuring plans, of investment linked to changes in fishing gear, the purchase of equipment and replacement of engines, with the aim of contributing to conversion, efficiency and energy saving;
15. Takes the view that restructuring plans in individual EU Member States should form a fundamental part of the restructuring of the fishing industry;
16. Considers that the Commission and the Member States should adopt a comprehensive plan to reduce the energy consumption of the fleet, including development of less energy-intensive fishing gears, cleaner engines and, in the long term, a reduction in dependence upon fossil fuels;
17. Regrets the lack of vision in the new EFF's approach to aid for engine replacement; takes the view that measures such as linking aid for engine replacement for vessels longer than 12 metres to a 20 % reduction in power will make some fishing practices virtually unviable and may affect safety, whilst they may also encourage increased fraud in the form of underdeclaring of engine power;
18. Stresses the need for the EFF to continue to grant aid for the renewal and modernisation of the fishing fleet — in particular for the replacement of engines, for reasons of safety, environmental protection or fuel efficiency — above all for small-scale inshore and artisanal fishing, and for the replacement of vessels over 20 years old, which are no longer operating safely;

Inshore fishing

19. Asks the Commission to recognise the specific nature of small-scale inshore fishing and artisanal fishing in the CFP and to analyse the extent to which the current instruments are suitable for responding to the sector's needs, adapting them accordingly;
20. Asks the Commission to submit a proposal for the creation of a Community support programme for small-scale inshore fishing and artisanal fishing, which would help to coordinate actions and channel funding from other existing instruments to deal with the specific problems facing this segment of the industry;

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Marketing

21. Welcomes the fact that the Commission intends to launch a comprehensive evaluation of the present COM for fish products; stresses the need for an ambitious review of this COM in order to improve the marketing of fish and fish products and boost their added value;
22. Considers it essential for fishermen to be more directly involved in processing and marketing so as to strengthen their profit base and improve their living standards; calls on the Commission to submit proposals for a revision of the COM for fishery products to this end, specifically by introducing mechanisms to improve first-sale prices and promote the fair and appropriate distribution of added value across the value chain;
23. Expresses its disappointment because in many cases the possibilities for improving competitiveness provided under the current COM have not been sufficiently used by the industry and calls on the Commission, in cooperation with national administrations and the various organisations representing producers, to give maximum publicity to these possibilities and to the new possibilities which may figure in a future revision of the COM;
24. Considers it important to consider introducing other forms of intervention similar to guarantee prices or maximum profit rates as a means of improving the distribution of added value, reducing intermediation margins;
25. Stresses the need for the Structural Funds to contribute to the modernisation and creation of marketing infrastructures for the fishing industry;
26. Supports the initiative to introduce a code of conduct on the trade in Community fish products;
27. Endorses the view that eco-labelling might promote product differentiation and provide an incentive for a sustainable fishing trade;
28. Urges the Commission to study mechanisms — such as aid for consumption — to promote the marketing of processed fish products with a greater added value, in particular canned fish, in the same way as certain agricultural products;
29. Urges the Commission to ensure the external promotion of Community fish products, such as canned fish, in particular by funding their presentation at international competitions and fairs;
30. Considers it important for the Commission to submit a study on the impact of Community and imported aquaculture production on fish prices, in particular first-sale prices;
31. Urges the Commission to adopt measures to ensure that the same requirements are applied to imported fish products marketed on the internal market as are applied to Community fish products;
32. Takes the view that investment in improving the handling of fish on board, particularly support for investment in refrigeration systems, could help improve first-sale prices;

Financial issues

33. Expresses concern at the scant financial resources made available for the fishing industry in the financial framework 2007-2013, in particular for the EFF, and considers that these resources should be increased to respond to the crisis affecting the industry;

Sustainability of resources

34. Reiterates its request to the Commission that it should take a more wide-ranging view of measures to protect the marine environment and rebuild depleted fish stocks, in particular by considering and studying other factors which have a considerable impact on the marine environment and the state of fishery resources, such as coastal and offshore pollution, industrial and agricultural effluents, deep-sea dredging and maritime transport, to complement current management methods; asks the Commission for a Community initiative in this area;

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35. Points out that it is essential to achieve a balance between the socio-economic situation and environmental sustainability, whilst at the same time underlining the need to implement a mechanism for subsidising or compensating fishermen who are affected by the economic and social effects of stock recovery plans or other measures to provide increased protection for ecosystems, especially in less favoured regions;
36. Points to the need for a regulatory framework for action to adjust fishing effort to available resources, with particular reference to the problem of large vessels with large gear fishing in small bodies of water;
37. Stresses that the reduction of fishing effort and capacity must be undertaken with a view to the long-term preservation of the industry;
38. Is convinced that the social and economic problems faced by the European fishing industry cannot be resolved without better management of fishing activities leading to the recovery of fish stocks, since with no fish there can be no fishing;
39. Stresses that matching national fleets to existing resources must take account of the reduction in fishing effort already brought about;
40. Recalls the need for all stock recovery measures to be taken with the involvement of fishermen and based on scientific fisheries research;
41. Calls on the Commission to make a distinction between fishing methods and the way in which they are applied; stresses that some fishing methods that are deemed harmful when used on an industrial scale can be in keeping with a sustainable approach when used on an artisanal scale, and can thus enable fishing communities currently in terminal decline to survive;
42. Calls on the Commission to take account of the fact that fishing activities are not self-contained but form part of broader fishing systems at regional level; stresses that restrictive measures (bans or limits) placed on one type of activity create an imbalance and result in fishing effort being transferred to other species, with serious social and economic repercussions for fishing communities and overfishing of species that were already being fully fished;

Illegal fishing

43. Considers it vital that measures be taken to strengthen the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; urges the Member States to strengthen their control mechanisms; considers that improved controls at the EU borders are necessary in order to prevent the entry into the EU of fish that has been caught illegally;
44. Calls on the Commission to review the current common fisheries policy provisions on illegal, unreported and unregulated catches; considers that there is a particularly pressing need for regulations to prevent a significant percentage of catches from being discarded;

Research

45. Stresses the need to promote investment, through the EFF and the Seventh Community Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities, which will help to reduce energy intensity in the fishing industry and increase energy efficiency;
46. Considers it important to assess the possibilities for changing fuel types and the synergies which might be found with the farming industry in the field of energy;
47. Stresses the importance of ensuring that in the Community's Seventh Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities, clear priority is given to marine and fisheries resources and adequate funding is made available;

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Management of the CFP

48. Notes the Commission's proposals on the economic management of fisheries, but recalls that the distribution of quotas and fishing rights is an exclusive competence of the Member States;

Participation in the management of the CFP

49. Points out that Regional Advisory Councils may play an important role for the involvement of fishermen in the CFP decision-making process; stresses the importance of receiving Community aid for their operation which should be re-evaluated in five years' time;

50. Stresses the need to support fishermen's groups and professional organisations which are willing to share responsibility for the application of the CFP (co-management);

51. Urges greater decentralisation of the CFP as a means of guaranteeing greater involvement of fishermen, their representative organisations and fishing communities in the CFP and in improving fisheries management;

52. Notes the need for proper organisation of fisheries markets, involving an effective control system, an eco-labelling system and the introduction of a legal code for the fishing industry;

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53. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

P6_TA(2006)0391

Removal of sharks' fins on board vessels

European Parliament resolution on the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1185/2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels (2006/2054(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002 of 20 December 2002 on the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources under the Common Fisheries Policy⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1185/2003 of 26 June 2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels⁽²⁾,
- having regard to its position of 27 March 2003 on the proposal for a Council regulation on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the operation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1185/2003 on the removal of fins of sharks on board vessels (COM(2005)0700),
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Fisheries (A6-0263/2006),

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 358, 31.12.2002, p. 59.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 167, 4.7.2003, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 62 E, 11.3.2004, p. 156.