Subject: Fishing of non-quota species in the North Sea

Can the Commission:

– provide a list of non-quota fish species in the North Sea, together with an analysis of their commercial value;

– outline the potential risk of quota species being caught as by-catch during non-quota species fishing in the North Sea; and

– confirm that it has assessed the impact on the ecosystem in the North Sea of increased fishing activities by Member States pursuing non-quota species from 2003 and that additional financial and human resources are available for control and monitoring to meet the challenges posed by free access?

Answer given by Mr Fischler on behalf of the Commission

(15 July 2002)

Many species of fish exist in the North Sea which are not subject to total allowable catch (TACs) and quotas. Very little is known about the abundance and status of these fish species. These include some species of flatfish (predominantly long rough dabs, solenettes, topknots) and roundfish (such as gurnards, catfish, weevors). Some invertebrates such as squids also occur in the North Sea.

However, it is debatable whether targeted exploitation of these species would be possible or economically viable. Squids could, in principle, be caught without incurring by-catch of species subject to quotas. Many of the other non-quota species live on or near the sea bed and exploitation of these species would almost certainly incur by-catches of species subject to quotas of which many are fully utilised or even overfished and some are in need of recovery measures.

The Commission has insufficient information to comprehensively establish the commercial value of non-quota species for each or all Member States. For similar reasons, there is no scientific assessment of the effect of the probable impact on the ecosystem of increased fishing activities by Member States pursuing non-quota species.

As regards control and monitoring the Commission would like to point out that this lies in the responsibility of the Member States. The Commission indicates in Section 3.4 of its recently-published Communication on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (Roadmap) that it will propose to setting up a Community joint inspection structure to coordinate national and Community inspection policies and activities.

Subject: Sustainable water use and golf courses

In its reply H-0444/02 of 11 June 2002, the Commission stated that, with specific reference to the Spanish National Hydrological Plan, diverted water not intended for irrigation goes to meet urban and economic demand, and some might be used to irrigate existing golf courses among other concurrent activities. In the same reply, the Commission also stated that Community legislation does not forbid the irrigation of golf courses as long as all the relevant Community legislation is observed.
With reference to the first of the above statements, the Commission does not mention the principle of the 'sustainable use of the resource', which is the basis of the Framework Directive on Water. In fact, as I pointed out in my earlier question E-0811/01 (1), water can only be diverted in order to satisfy demands arising from a water shortage, which implies that in the case of golf courses the demand is not consonant with the principle of sustainable use.

On the other hand, in its previous reply E-1334/02 (2), the Commission maintained that, with reference to the use of water under the National Hydrological Plan, it was its understanding that since diverted water could not be used to create new irrigated areas, this precluded the possibility of using the water to create new golf courses.

As I stated in my previous question E-1334/02, there are plans to construct 66 golf courses in eastern Spain using water diverted from the Ebro. In view of this, and taking as a reference the provisions on the sustainable use of water resources set out in the Framework Directive on Water:

- Does the Commission not feel that the statements made in replies H-0444/02 and E-1334/02 could be viewed as contradictory?

- Could the Commission take a firm decision as to whether it considers the possible use of diverted water to irrigate golf courses to be a sustainable use?

---


---

**Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission**

(9 September 2002)

The Honourable Member is correct to draw attention to the fact that when planning new golf courses it will also be necessary for the Member States to ensure that the provisions of the Water Framework Directive (3) are respected as well as the relevant Community legislation on Habitats and Environmental Impact Assessment. However, it should be borne in mind that the various deadlines for action established under the Water Framework Directive do not come into effect until December 2003.

The Commission understands that the wording of the Spanish national hydrological plan excludes the possibility of using water transferred under the plan for the purposes of creating new irrigated areas. This would exclude the use of such water for the purpose of irrigating new golf courses but would not exclude the use for irrigation of existing golf courses on condition that the volume of water use was not increased. This interpretation of the wording of the hydrological plan is based on the assumption that watering of golf courses is considered to be irrigation in the sense of the plan and not an economic activity. To avoid any misunderstanding the Commission will seek clarification of this point from the Spanish authorities.

The Commission is not in a position to state that any use of diverted water for the purpose of irrigating golf courses would be unsustainable. On condition that the provisions of the various Community directives are respected such a use may be compatible with sustainable development. In the particular case of the Water Framework Directive, if the relevant authorities foresee the use of water for golf courses while at the same time respecting the obligation under the directive, inter alia the achievement of good water quality (surface and groundwater), the maintenance of wetlands, a fair and transparent pricing system based on the principle of cost recovery and the development and implementation of river basin management plans based on full stakeholder participation, then there may be no contradiction.