

**Opinion on the proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) amending Regulation (EC) No 3699/93 laying down the criteria and arrangements regarding Community structural assistance in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and the processing and marketing of its products**

(95/C 236/19)

On 5 April 1995 the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Articles 43 and 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the abovementioned proposal.

The Economic and Social Committee decided to appoint Mrs Santiago as Rapporteur-General for its Opinion.

At its 326th Plenary Session held on 31 May and 1 June (meeting of 31 May 1995), the Economic and Social Committee unanimously adopted the following Opinion.

## 1. Introduction

1.1. The Commission proposal lays down socio-economic measures to accompany restructuring measures in the fisheries sector.

1.2. The Committee deems these measures vital, even though they do not go far enough, as they will fill the legislative gaps in the criteria and arrangements for Community structural assistance in the fisheries sector.

1.3. Fishing is an important EU activity, and it makes a vital contribution to certain coastal communities by generating employment and income both directly and in related sectors such as the shipbuilding and fish processing industries.

1.4. There are an estimated 300,000 fishermen in the EU, and each job at sea is known to generate four or five on land.

1.5. The purpose of structural policies is to create a modern, competitive fleet and eliminate excess capacity. They seek to steer the sector towards activities which are compatible with the EU's long-term conservation strategy, and to boost the socio-economic development of coastal areas which rely heavily on fishing.

1.6. Measures to eliminate overcapacity are the key to solving the crisis on the fishery product markets. However these measures have a heavy social cost in an often adverse economic environment where alternative jobs are scarce.

1.7. The Committee considers that the introduction of the proposed socio-economic measures fully accords with the thinking of the Treaties. As occurred with the measures put forward for the ECSC, the EU has developed Community initiative programmes under the EAGGF-Guarantee Fund, measures to accompany the

reform of the CAP, an early retirement scheme for farmers<sup>(1)</sup>, and measures to help customs officials.

## 2. General comments

2.1. The crisis besetting the fisheries sector, caused by the imbalance between resources and capacity, has worsened considerably because of the continuation of other factors such as:

- world market recession;
- wider currency fluctuations;
- liberalization of trade and globalization of the market;
- weakness of import regimes;
- shortcomings in the common market organization;
- the Community's EEA agreements;
- enlargement of the EU;
- impact of pollution and ecological disasters on the depletion of resources.

2.2. These circumstances, combined with the structural weakness of the sector, have reduced the profitability of an activity common to many coastal areas whose socio-economic development relies heavily on fishing.

2.3. In order to ensure the continuity of fisheries, the Council decided in April 1992 that future policy should aim to re-establish the balance between resources and fishing effort, including capacity, and to maintain a balanced and rational management of resources<sup>(2)</sup>.

2.4. To this end, a set of multiannual guidance programmes was established. The Committee viewed

<sup>(1)</sup> Regulation (EEC) No 2079/92.

<sup>(2)</sup> Regulation (EEC) No 3946/92 in OJ No L 401, 31. 12. 1992.

these as an essential means of matching fishing capacity to exploitable resources, and argued that reductions in the Community's fleet should be made on a differentiated basis (Plenary Session of 27 May 1992) <sup>(1)</sup>.

2.5. Given the worrying state of the resources accessible to EU vessels, the Council agreed that it was necessary to ensure a limitation of fishing effort of the various segments of the Community fleets by a concerted programme of action, fairly balanced between the various Member States <sup>(2)</sup>.

2.6. The criteria and arrangements governing Community structural assistance in the fisheries sector were laid down by Regulation (EC) No 3699/93. This provides a legislative framework for support in the form of guidelines aimed at:

- adjustment of fishing effort;
- re-orientation of fishing activities;
- fleet renewal and modernization of fishing vessels;
- investment aid in the fields of aquaculture, the development of coastal waters, fishing port facilities and processing and marketing.

2.7. These measures are calculated to bring significant benefits over the medium to long term. However, the reduction of fishing effort inevitably has adverse short-term effects on employment and on the socio-economic fabric of many coastal regions which are heavily dependent on fishing.

2.8. The Common Fisheries Policy comes entirely under EU competence, and the EU Community must take responsibility for the consequences of the policy it defines.

2.9. The Maastricht Treaty specifically assigned the EU a role in promoting the economic and social wellbeing of its citizens.

2.10. The Committee considers that the introduction of the proposed socio-economic measures fully accords with the thinking of the Treaties.

2.11. It has frequently been noted that, without accompanying socio-economic measures, it is virtually

impossible for the support schemes listed above to absorb the excess human capacity in the sector <sup>(3)</sup>.

2.12. The Committee points out that it was the first Community body to raise this issue. It regrets that its Opinion was not heeded more promptly, and that the present Commission proposal does not even mention the earlier Opinion <sup>(4)</sup>.

2.13. The Committee considers that although the proposed accompanying measures are modest, they represent a first step towards filling a serious gap in existing legislation.

2.14. The Committee regrets the belated nature of the measures, which logically should also extend to fishermen whose vessels have already been scrapped without receipt of Community aid.

2.15. The Committee urges the Commission to promote the setting-up of an inter-trade and inter-institutional forum, based at the ESC, to consider the socio-economic impact of the restructuring of the fisheries sector in the EU.

2.16. The Committee approves and supports the Commission proposal which, although modest, can help to alleviate the adverse social effects of the present restructuring process.

### 3. Specific comments

3.1. Existing Structural Fund measures have proved insufficient to meet the special needs of older fishermen

<sup>(3)</sup> Advisory Committee on Fisheries; Joint Committee for Social Problems in the Maritime Fisheries Sector; Association of National Organizations of Fishing Enterprises in the EC (Europeche-Cogeca); Committee of Transport Workers' Unions of the European Community (CTWUEC). Resolution adopted by Parliament on 5. 5. 1994 on the future of Community initiatives (Pesca), Explanatory Statement, point 4 (ref. A3-0256/94).

Legislative resolution adopted by Parliament on 29. 9. 1994 on the proposal for a Council Regulation amending for the sixteenth time Regulation (EEC) No 3094/86 laying down certain technical measures for the conservation of fishery resources — amendment No 36 ('Fraga report', ref. A4.-0009/94).

Advisory Committee on Fisheries' opinion on the implementation of the new structural policy in the fisheries and aquaculture sector (document XIV/360/94), plenary meeting of 8. 7. 1994.

Opinion of Europeche-Cogeca on the implementation of the new structural policy in the fisheries and aquaculture sector (ref. CS/P(94) 18 final, EP (94) 19 final, 7. 7. 1994).

<sup>(4)</sup> Own-initiative Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the social aspects of sea fishing, OJ No C 237, 12. 9. 1998.

<sup>(1)</sup> Opinion on the 1991 Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the Common Fisheries Policy, OJ No C 223, 31. 8. 1992.

<sup>(2)</sup> Council Decision 94/15/EC in OJ No L 10, 14. 1. 1994.

who find it particularly difficult to switch to other types of work.

3.2. The measures now being proposed will go some way towards rectifying the existing shortcomings.

3.3. However, the Committee thinks that the scope of the support is rather narrow.

3.3.1. An early retirement system open to all fishermen, whether or not their vessels are withdrawn, would enable working vessels to replace older crew with young

people whom it is important to keep in the sector as they can inject new dynamism and skills.

3.3.2. The schemes mentioned in Article 14a (2b) should be open to all fishermen, whether or not their vessels are withdrawn.

3.3.3. The provisions of Article 14a (2a and 2b) should also be open to workers on shore.

3.4. The Committee fears that the planned funding is insufficient and that the desired objectives will not be achieved unless FIG allocations are increased.

Done at Brussels, 31 May 1995.

*The President*  
*of the Economic and Social Committee*  
Carlos FERRER

**Opinion on the proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) amending Council Regulation (EC) No 603/95 on the common organization of the market in dried fodder<sup>(1)</sup>**

(95/C 236/20)

On 10 April 1995, the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Articles 43 and 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the abovementioned proposal.

The Section for Agriculture and Fisheries, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its Opinion on 4 May 1995. The Rapporteur was Mr Strasser.

At its 326th Plenary Session (meeting of 31 May), the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following Opinion unanimously.

1. The purpose of the proposed Council Regulation is to establish national guaranteed quantities (NGQs) of dried fodder for Austria, Finland and Sweden in accordance with the same procedure as for the other Member States and to adjust accordingly the maximum guaranteed quantities (MGQs) for the Community as a whole.

The NGQs for the Union of the Twelve's members were established on the basis of the data available to the Commission in July 1994, by taking into account their average dried fodder production in the marketing years 1992/93 and 1993/94 for which aid was received under Article 5(2), first subparagraph of Regulation (EEC) No 1117/78.

Austria, Sweden and Finland also produce dried fodder, for which aid can be granted in accordance with the common organization of the market in dried fodder. However, this requires the establishment of NGQs. The Commission has based the NGQs for the new Member States on their average dried fodder production in the calendar years 1992 and 1993. The proposed quantities are as follows:

- Sweden: 11,000 tonnes
- Finland: 3,000 tonnes
- Austria: 4,400 tonnes.

2. The Committee essentially endorses the Commission proposal (for a Council Regulation). Neverthe-

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ No C 79, 31. 3. 1995, p. 7.