



Dear Member of the Committee on International Trade,

The environmental organisations Birdlife, BLOOM, ClientEarth, Seas At Risk and WWF wish to alert you to particularly worrying developments in the current negotiations on the future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (the post-2020 EMFF). While all Contracting parties to the World Trade Organization (WTO) are currently seeking to agree on a multilateral prohibition of harmful fisheries subsidies that encourage fleet overcapacity and overfishing, the European Union (EU) is on its way to reintroducing such subsidies. This would severely undermine the EU's international credibility and jeopardise the negotiations at WTO level, as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development of the United Nations.

It is now beyond any reasonable doubt that our human activities, including unsustainable fishing and fish farming, are causing a collapse of biodiversity and an impoverishment on a scale not seen for 65 million years. The recent UN global assessment on the state of biodiversity pins harmful subsidies as one of the main driver of the ecological collapse of fish stocks and the mismanagement of fisheries.

We respectfully urge you to raise these concerns to the new Fisheries Committee (PECH) of the European Parliament and amend the former Parliament's position, eliminating harmful subsidies and ensuring the protection and restoration of the marine environment

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2021-2027

As highlighted by the Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström,¹ fisheries management is a perfect example of the crucial role trade policies can have on environmental protection and economic development. Within this frame, the post-2020 EMFF will determine the allocation of more than 6 billion euros of public funding to tackle challenges at sea, including supporting the management of fisheries and aquaculture sectors as well as to the protection of the marine environment for the period 2021-2027. It constitutes a key tool for implementing our EU and international commitments, in particular to prohibit harmful fisheries subsidies that encourage overcapacity and overfishing by 2020 as mandated by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14.6.²

While 69% of the European fish stocks are subject to ongoing overfishing,³ the next EMFF has the power to end the "*vicious circle in which Europe's fisheries have been trapped in recent decades*".⁴ However, the former European Parliament (EP) adopted a disastrous

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/malmstrom/blog/protecting-global-fisheries-through-wto_en

² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/>

³ Froese et al. (2018) Status and rebuilding of European fisheries. *Marine Policy*, 93: 159-170

⁴ European Commission (2009) Green Paper. Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. Brussels. Available here: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0163:FIN:en:PDF>

position which introduced harmful subsidies for the construction of new fishing vessels, which will inevitably increase fishing effort and cause overfishing.

The new European Parliament holds the key to a transformative approach

The international scientific and economic community keeps ringing the alarm bell on this important topic: *“Europe must avoid providing subsidies that take fish from future generations and that set a bad example for the rest of the world at this crucial stage in World Trade Organization negotiations”*.⁵ Indeed, the European position will be scrutinised by our international partners and will partly determine the outcome of a multilateral agreement at the core of WTO’s working agenda.

It is now up to the newly elected EP to decide on the follow-up of its own position before entering Trilogue negotiations with the Council. The newly elected MEPs are not bound by the former EP position and have the opportunity to define their own position for this critical regulation.

We respectfully call on you to take a strong position within the new INTA Committee at upcoming meetings to alert the new PECH Committee on the need to amend the former EP position.

Yours faithfully,

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⁵ https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02054-0.epdf?author_access_token=Axm-kYoeAuAA4rDNZyZbtRgN0jAjWel9jnR3ZoTv0PZdiOb8_Pi1GMhx7dxssCq4JiuEJC0s0BF-0VUQ0eXhLFeh55vfclZsQ28kBJ8aapKK4ZC-bHR96VMk1TAVOgINu0DsJb9mWXq5RBt1iSdw%3D%3D