

President José Manuel Barroso
The European Commission
200 Rue de la Loi
1049 Brussels.

Brussels 11 October 2012

Dear President Barroso,

We write in relation to the forthcoming October Agricultural and Fisheries Council meeting where the ambition is to reach a general approach on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). We urge the Commission to ensure that the Council will support measures achieving the necessary structural reform that would make the fisheries sector environmentally and economically sustainable.

We are aware that a number of Member States are demanding that public money be allocated to support modernisation of the EU fleet, including aid for engine replacement, and to pay for temporary cessation of fishing activities. Some Member States are even calling for the reintroduction of funding for new vessels – a measure that was removed in the last CFP reform in 2002 because it was deemed to sustain fleet overcapacity.

Blind spending of EU taxpayers' money on modernising vessels without a proper assessment of the capacity of the fleet in relation to the available resources should stop. Vessel equipped with engines that consume less fuel and reduce the operating costs, will be able to spend more hours at sea at the same operating cost and therefore catch more fish. There are no safeguards with enough legal weight behind them to ensure that these investments will not increase a vessels' ability to catch fish. Moreover reality shows that technically, engine power has been extremely difficult to control, given its rampant under-declaration in the EU.

In times of global debt crisis, the perverse use of fisheries subsidies and the cost of overfishing are brought into sharp focus: the only real benefits lie in the recovery of fish populations. EMFF funds should support measures aimed at improving data collection and scientific knowledge of fish stocks, promoting the dissemination and adoption of selective fishing gears and ultimately improving the state of fish stocks and well-being of coastal communities.

We therefore urge you to stand firm on the fundamental proposals for fisheries reform that the College of Commissioners endorsed unanimously last year. We ask you to champion the use of aid to promote sustainable fishing practices rather than fuelling overcapacity while shaping the future of the EU's fisheries sector. Many of the demands by Member States clearly contradict the proposed rationale and substance of the reform. They are not in the public interest and will obstruct progress towards a smart and sustainable fishing sector.

Yours sincerely,



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