



Brussels, 10 April 2008

BACKGROUND¹
AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES COUNCIL
Luxembourg, 14 April 2008

The Council will be chaired by Mr Iztok JARC, Slovenian Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food.

The Council sessions will start on Monday 14 April at 11.00 dealing with Poland's cod fishing quotas. The Council will hold a policy debate on illegal unreported and unregulated fishing (IUUF) and will have an exchange of views on the recovery of cod stocks.

Commissioner Borg will then inform the Council on the state of play of the Common Fishery Policy (CFP) simplification, the Fisheries partnership agreement with Mauritania, Bluefin Tuna and, on behalf of Commissioner Fischer Boel, will report on WTO negotiations.

The Presidency will hold press conferences at the end of the meeting on Monday [+/- 18.00].

Proceedings open to the public can be followed via video streaming:
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/videostreaming>

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the sole responsibility of the Press Service.

FISHERIES

POLAND'S COD FISHING QUOTAS ([7580/08](#))

The Council intends to reach a *political agreement* on a regulation adapting the cod fishing quotas to be allocated to Poland in the Baltic Sea (Subdivisions 25-32, EC Waters) from 2008 to 2011.

The regulation provides for a “payback” over four years: Poland will pay back 10% of the exceeded quotas in 2008, and a further 30% in each of the years 2009, 2010 and 2011, in order to avoid severe socio-economic consequences.

Such provision is conditional on Poland taking adequate action to control fishing and to reduce fleet overcapacity, such as new quota monitoring provisions, the scrapping of the cod fleet and/or its transfer, even partially, to the fishing of pelagics. Progress towards these goals will be subject to annual review.

The regulation aims to implement the statements made when adopting the TACS and Quotas for the Baltic Sea¹.

ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHING

The Council will hold a **policy debate** on a proposal for a regulation establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUUF) (14236/07), presented by the Commission at the Fisheries Council meeting last November².

The Council is invited to provide political guidelines, focussing on three central questions:

- the **scope** of the regulation and in particular whether it should apply also to Community vessels, which are already subject to a comprehensive control regime, or only to third country vessels;
- the **administrative burden** the certification procedure would entail and possible alternative methods or measures to prevent imports of IUU products;
- the suitability of the **sanctions** proposed; there are, for example, fears the proposed harmonisation could encroach upon the legal prerogatives of the Member States.

The proposal aims at **halting importation of IUUF products** into the Community, **addressing the problem of fishing vessels flying flags of non-cooperating states** and **improving compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy** within Community waters. This is intended to be achieved by:

- establishing a **certification scheme** whereby **all imports of fishery products**, with the exception of products derived from inland fisheries and aquaculture, must be certified by the flag state concerned as having been legally caught;
- **better monitoring of landings of third country fishing vessels**;

¹ See press release 15333/07 and document 14639/07.

² See press release 15333/07.

- imposing sufficiently deterrent **sanctions** and harmonising within the Community the maximum levels of administrative sanctions for serious infringements;
- setting up "**blacklists**" of non-complying vessels and flag states.

The proposed regulation is part of a wider EU strategy for combating IUUF, outlined in a recent Commission communication ([14237/07](#)).

It builds upon the measures the EU has been taking in this field for more than ten years now, guided since 2002 by a Community action plan¹. But while the existing measures focus mainly on the control of activities at sea, the new regulation would extend the combat against IUUF in order to cover the **whole supply chain** (harvesting, transshipment, processing, landing, trade), "from the net to the plate", especially **targeting the marketing of IUUF products**.

The European Parliament is expected to give its opinion early in June 2008. The Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions have also been consulted.

RECOVERY OF COD STOCKS

The Council will hold an *exchange of views* on a regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 423/2004 as regards the recovery of cod stocks ([7676/08](#)).

The overall objective of Regulation (EC) No 423/2004 is to ensure the safe recovery of the cod stocks to the precautionary stock sizes advised by scientists. There are several aspects where the plan needs to be improved:

- the long term objectives of the recovery plan need to be revised in light of the effect of global warming on oceanic conditions;
- the effort management system foreseen in the annual TAC and Quotas regulation needs to be simplified and more efficient implementation;
- a modular approach is proposed where the adjustment of fishing opportunities is a function of the level of recovery already achieved for a given stock;
- the reduction of cod discards must be a significant element of the revised plan. Consequently, it is proposed to encourage fishermen to engage in cod-avoidance programmes;
- The Celtic Sea should be included in the scope of the recovery plan.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) has indicated that the reductions in cod catches have been far from ensuring the recovery of the four cod stocks covered by Regulation (EC) No 423/2004: the Kattegat, the North Sea, including the Skagerrak and the eastern Channel, to the west of Scotland and in the Irish Sea.

¹ Communication from the Commission: Community Action Plan for the eradication of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, doc. 9399/02, and Council conclusions of 7.6.2002, doc. 9528/02.

OTHER BUSINESS

(a) 2006-2008 Action Plan for simplifying and improving the Common Fisheries Policy - Information from the Commission

Commissioner Borg will provide an *update* to the Council on progress to date on the simplification initiatives for the Common Fishery Policy established in the 2006-2008 Action Plan (CFP) (7637/08).

(b) Fisheries Partnership Agreement with Mauritania - Information from the Commission

The Council will be informed by the Commission about the renegotiation of the protocol setting out the fishing opportunities and financial contribution provided for in the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

The European Community wanted to negotiate an adjustment of the terms of this protocol because Community vessels did not fully use the fishing opportunities it opened to them, with the consequence that its economic and financial advantages were put into question. On 13 March 2008, a new protocol was initialled by Mauritania and the European Community for the period from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2012.

The Council is expected to ask the Commission to submit a proposal for the necessary legal acts (a decision and a regulation) as soon as possible so that the procedures for their adoption can be initiated.

(c) Bluefin Tuna - Information from the Commission

The Council will take note of an intervention by Commissioner Joe Borg on the implementation of the bluefin tuna recovery plan for 2008 and especially of the corresponding control plans.

The recovery plan was set up by *Council Regulation (EC) n° 1559/2007 of 17 December 2007 establishing a multi-annual recovery plan for bluefin tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean*¹. It is designed to implement an international bluefin tuna recovery plan adopted one year earlier by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT). It stipulates a progressive reduction of the total catches of bluefin tuna and various technical measures (such as seasonal closures of the fishery and minimum landing sizes) as well as a new general reporting and control system to eradicate illegal fishing.

In 2007, the Community was not able to fully carry out the measures of the plan, with the result that the Community had to declare over-fishing to ICCAT. For the sake of conservation of bluefin tuna it is therefore urgent to take measures to prevent over-fishing and to ensure the strict respect of the ICCAT measures. To this end the Commission, in close cooperation with member states and the Community Fisheries Control Agency, has prepared and established a control plan for the period from 15 March to 31 December 2008, involving 50 inspection vessels, 16 surveillance aircraft and the national and community inspection services.

¹ OJ L 340, 22.12.2007.

(d) World Trade Organisation (WTO)-Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations

The Council will be updated by Commissioner Fischer-Boel on the latest state of play in negotiations on agriculture issues following several informal bilateral contacts taken with the main players during the past weeks.

(e) FAO High Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, 3-5 th of june 2008, Rome Italy - Information from the Presidency

For further information, please consult the following link <http://www.fao.org/foodclimate/>

(f) FAO 26th Regional Conference for Europe - Information from the Austrian delegation

Austria will host the FAO 26th Regional Conference for Europe from 23 to 27 June in Innsbruck.
