



EP(14) 87

6<sup>th</sup> November 2014

***For immediate release***

***Europepeche - the essential role of our large scale fishing fleet***

Europepeche has released today a briefing statement declaring that the size of the fishing fleet is irrelevant when it comes to fish stocks and that to a high degree, small and large vessels are in fact interdependent.

President of Europepeche, Javier Garat stressed that the size of a fishing vessels is no guarantee that it is in fact sustainable, stating: *"Whether the vessel is large or small really does not matter since it is all about how the vessel conducts its activity. All EU fleets, both large and small, are under strict management systems. Fishing is not a free for all. Our Members always operate on the basis of strict fishing licences meaning stock levels for the targeted commercial species are in a healthy state. Many areas throughout the chain of production depend greatly on the large scale fleet. Port infrastructures would be unsustainable without these large vessels providing the continuity of landings and the thousands of jobs for highly skilled fishermen"*.

Only large scale vessels can accommodate freezing and storage facilities on board, allowing for the capture of distant stocks. The larger vessels also offer crew better health and working conditions in order to guarantee their safety on board over long distances. In addition, international safety conventions are mainly addressed to fishing vessels over 24m.

Garat also emphasized the important role that large scale vessels play in the fishing sector, adding; *"We could not feed the 7 billion world population on small scale alone. Big vessels are able to exploit stocks not accessible to small vessels. The larger vessels are also strictly controlled through satellite systems monitoring the location and landings which allows for the collection of more accurate data and helps in the fight against illegal, unreported, unregulated (IUU) fishing."*

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