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JOINT PRESS RELEASE

New fisheries control rules must be proportionate, harmonised and workable

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Next Tuesday, 27 June, the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries will vote the political agreement reached three weeks ago with the Council of the EU. The fishing industry represented by EAPO and Europepêche reiterate their appreciation for the work invested over the past few years by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and the Member States to make the Commission's proposal on new control rules more flexible and closer to the fisheries reality. As it was the case with the previous regime, once adopted, the sector will aim to comply with the new control system and will cooperate to make it operational. However, the sector requests transparency and involvement on the process and methodology to implement the new control devices on the different fleets. Fishers' representatives remind that these new technological appliances will not solve the problems created by Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) elements such as the Landing Obligation for which several times a revision has been requested. Such revision should refocus on optimum selectivity and maximum avoidance of unwanted catches without enforcing the unworkable.

After five years of tough negotiations, new fisheries control rules are hot off the press and MEPs will have to decide next week whether or not to endorse the text. The sector represented by Europepêche and EAPO, finds positives in the text such as stronger provisions on traceability to ensure that imported and processed products have the same traceability requirements as EU produced seafood. Also, both organisations welcome the adoption of specific margins of tolerance for small-pelagic and tropical tuna species. These new rules will better account for the specificities of these fisheries when reporting their catches and will help to avoid unfair sanctions and penalty points they are receiving due to the impossibility of complying with previous generalist rules. The new text also strengthens the monitoring of recreational fisheries to better evaluate and control its impact on commercial fish stocks.

However, the regulation imposes burdensome and costly technological demands on fishers. The sector regrets that, rather than working to make the landing obligation workable, the common decision was to double down on enforcing and controlling an unapplicable piece of legislation. The mandatory roll-out of CCTV will not suddenly make the landing obligation regime workable nor will it

prevent unwanted catches from reaching the fishing nets. Same rationale applies to the mandatory introduction of engine power monitoring devices for certain vessels.

In this context, Europêche and EAPO request clarity on the methodology to be used at EU and national level to implement these new digital tools, particularly on how the risk-based approach will work in practice. Likewise, industry representatives demand their involvement in the policy implementation process to ensure a pragmatic and feasible approach.

The challenge to ensure equal and harmonized implementation of the new rules and requirements across EU Member states is not clearly addressed in the new proposed regulation, and neither is the interoperability of the data systems and technologies that EU countries can use under the new regime.

When the new regulation is implemented in the EU, Europêche and EAPO call for the extension of these rules and devices (including CCTV and engine monitoring devices) to the non-EU fleets operating in EU waters, in line with the Regulation on Sustainable Management of External Fishing Fleets¹, and to avoid any exemption to be granted under trade or fisheries agreements.

Similarly, in order to keep coherence between the internal and external dimension of the CFP, the EU should seek to implement these rules in international waters. For that purpose, the EU should use Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and fisheries agreements with third countries to try to level the playing field for all fleets.

The sector welcomes the harmonization of the enforcement regime but reminds the importance of having proportionality when it comes to sanctions to ensure that fishers do not pay the price twice.

Finally, EAPO and Europêche call for a level playing field when it comes to weighing plans, since the differences in implementation between Member States is detrimental to EU vessels landing in other member States.

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¹ See article 38.1 of Regulation (EU) 2017/2403