



EU fishing sector calls for emergency measures to avoid the stoppage of the fleet

The European fisheries sector met this morning with Commissioner Sinkevičius in view of the sharp rise in energy and logistics prices due to the invasion of Ukraine

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The European fisheries sector has thanked Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, for the quick call for a meeting gathering all the stakeholders in the fisheries value chain affected by the situation. At the meeting, the sector, represented by Europêche and by the European Association of Fisheries Producer Organizations (EAPO), has reiterated to the Commissioner the need to adopt urgent measures in view of the turn of events, following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the impact that the war is already having on the activity of the European fishing fleets.

The President of Europêche, Mr Javier Garat, declared during the meeting that: *“For months the sector has been facing a difficult economic situation enduring a steep increase in gas and electricity prices and logistic costs. Now, fuel prices are reaching an all-time high, exceeding €1/litre in many EU countries. 60 cents per litre, was already the price limit for our vessels to remain profitable. The situation is even worse than the fuel crises of 2008”*. He continued: *“For many vessels it is impossible to go to sea. Fishing vessels in all the Member States are tying up as a consequence of the sharp increase of energy costs. If the stoppage of the activity becomes a generalised problem, there could be problems with the supply of fishery products in a matter of weeks, even more so if sanctions are imposed on those of Russian origin”*.

The sector has expressed to the Commissioner the need for an urgent reaction from the EU, similar to that adopted to face the consequences of Brexit and COVID. The fishing industry proposed action on five priority axes: use the EU Fisheries Fund to compensate operators for the additional costs, help fishers who have to temporarily cease their activities and support producer organizations for the temporary storage of fishery products. Likewise, it was requested to increase the aid within the state aid framework up to 300,000-500,000 € per vessel, and to increase the year-to-year quota flexibility from 10% to 25%.

The sector has also pointed out the need for additional measures in coordination with the EU Member States, such as the reduction of social security contributions, the suspension of fish auction taxes, an extension period for COVID loans or a suspension/reduction of VAT on fish and shellfish aimed at alleviating the situation.

Sinkevičius emphasised that the Commission is taking the situation very seriously and working around the clock on solutions. He committed to study the measures urged by the sector and proposed to hold another meeting once the package of measures is more clearly defined.

Esben Sverdrup-Jensen, President of EAPO, concluded: *“All efforts should be focused, where possible, on the continuation of the fishing activities to secure seafood supply as well as on providing financial assistance to those fleets forced to stop operations. Financial aid is critical, but flexible fisheries management is equally important. For instance, providing fishers the option to carry over more than the existing 10% of their fishing quotas to next year is a key free-of-charge measure”.*

The sector firmly believes that the EU should focus on how to strengthen the seafood supply produced by EU companies, and not seeking for additional imports from anywhere in the world to fill the fish market gap. The second option cannot be a solution for an EU that wants to become more independent from 3rd country's resources.

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