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Press release

The EU pelagic fishing industry welcomes European Parliament vote on a sanction measure against countries practising unsustainable fisheries

The EU pelagic fishing industry very much welcomes the support of the European Parliament by an overwhelming majority vote on 12 September in Strasbourg on a trade sanction measure against countries that refuse to co-operate in the management of fish stocks that are shared with other countries. By this vote the European Parliament gives a very clear signal to those countries that behave outside internationally agreed sustainable limits and in particular to Iceland and the Faroe Islands who continue to attack autonomously one of the most valuable stocks in the North East Atlantic: mackerel.

The timing of the vote is important. Right after the high level talks between the Coastal States in London on 3 September where Commissioner Damanaki has personally experienced that both Iceland and Faroe Islands are not really engaged in achieving a much needed shared management of the mackerel stock. And less than 6 weeks before the next round of Coastal States negotiations on this stock.

Speaking on behalf of the European pelagic industry Gerard van Balsfoort said that “this vote hopefully lands in Iceland and the Faroe Islands signalling that the EU will retaliate against the irresponsible behaviour by these two countries in their mackerel fisheries by import restrictions that not only include mackerel related imports into the EU market place but all fish imports from these countries”.

The European pelagic industry continues to hope for a quick and fair sharing and management arrangement between the Coastal States on the N E Atlantic mackerel stock. The industry also expects that the strong political will expressed in this vote of the European Parliament will have an effect on the coastal states to come to the negotiation table with the positive attitude to solve the issue.

The agreement includes the following trade measures, which can be imposed on a country or territory fishing in an unsustainable manner:

1. Quantitative restrictions on the importations of fish into the EU including the stock of common interest and associated species;
2. The definition of associated species is broadly defined to cover a range of species not just mackerel and is based on FAO rules;
3. Further measures can be applied under the scope of the Regulation, if the initial measures prove to be ineffective;
4. Restrictions on the use of EU ports by vessels flying the flag of the country or territory deemed to be over fishing;

5. Restrictions on the use of EU ports by vessels transporting fish and fishery products from the stock of common interest and associated species;
6. Ban on the sale of fishing vessels, fishing equipment and supplies to the country or territory deemed to be overfishing;
7. Ban on reflagging of fishing vessels from an EU Member State to a country or territory deemed to be overfishing.

Contact:

Gerard van Balsfoort : tel: +31 651 411 431 / e-mail: gbalsfoort@pelagicfish.eu