



The CFP External Dimension: Strong ocean diplomacy and secure import controls

The relevance of the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) extends beyond our waters. It underpins the Union's **role as a global leader in ocean governance**, trade diplomacy, and international sustainability standards.

The forthcoming EU strategy for external action offers a critical opportunity to strengthen Europe's leadership in promoting sustainable fisheries management, enforcing a level playing field, and protecting European operators from unfair competition. Robust import controls must ensure that seafood products entering the EU market are fully traceable to their catch origin and comply with the same high social, labour and environmental standards as required of EU fishers. By doing so, the EU will not only **safeguard its fisheries sector** but also **demonstrate leadership in ocean diplomacy and regional engagement**.

WWF key priorities:

- **Intensify EU role in ocean diplomacy:**
 - **Promote measures for implementation of international agreements** such as the BBNJ, Cape Town Agreement, Port State Measures Agreement through Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), and other relevant fora. The Commission must also continue to push for:
 - Stronger **scientific reference points** for fish stock biomass levels to ensure biomass levels remain above 50% of unexploited biomass (B_{max}) and spawning stock biomass (SSB) above 40%, aiming for 50%, especially under climate uncertainty;
 - **Ecosystem-based fisheries management**, including for non-target species and better bycatch and IUU controls.
 - **Improve transparency, data collection and inclusive participation** in Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPAs).
- **Ensure a level playing field between EU and foreign fishing operators:**
 - Implement the [World Trade Organisation \(WTO\) Agreement on Fisheries subsidies](#) that prohibits harmful fisheries subsidies which are the main driver for depleted fish stocks;
 - Introduce **mirror measures** in EU laws to prevent the import of products that do not respect our sustainability standards;

- **Improve and harmonise import controls and traceability requirements** across the EU to ensure that imported fishery and aquaculture products are not sourced from Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fisheries and that they comply with the same high environmental and social standards as in the EU;
- **Harmonise import control** with EU-wide standards for catch certification verification and inspections for non-EU fished catch.

To revise or not to revise

The EU has long led efforts for global fisheries sustainability. There is a significant risk that revising the CFP would lead to an undermining of its social, environmental and economic objectives, and:

- Undermine its influence in RFMOs and WTO subsidy talks;
- Damage its **credibility with partner countries**, including in Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs);
- Justify countries with a poor track record on overfishing, human rights and labour standards to undermine global progress on these issues.

The EU must stay the course. This means **implementing the CFP in full**, closing loopholes, and enforcing sustainability standards abroad and at home. This is important for fishers as fair competition supports local jobs, traceability builds consumer trust, and higher standards create market incentives. By doing so, the EU can protect both fishers and Europe's position as a credible force for global ocean governance.

For more information

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