



The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP): Keep it strong, make it work

The CFP is not broken – it is under-implemented

The objectives of the CFP are sound: ensure long-term environmental sustainability, economically viable fisheries, and social equity. However, persistent gaps related to how the policy has been operationalised by Member States – i.e. in enforcement, data collection, quota-setting and control – have affected its effectiveness.

The evaluation of the CFP represents a good opportunity to push for better implementation of the existing legal framework, particularly on making sure the allocation of fishing quotas is done fairly and transparently (Article 17 of the CFP) and that the application of the landing obligation, where fishers must land all catches (even unwanted ones), properly accounts for their impact and encourages 'selectivity' (using fishing gears and methods that only target the targeted species).

Furthermore, it is important in the CFP's evaluation to make it clear that the environmental, social and economic objectives only work when considered together. WWF has long worked with low-impact fisheries to minimise the environmental impact of ocean activities. A properly implemented CFP should support and incentivise fishers in the [transition towards more sustainable practices](#), and create a level playing field between all fishing operators to secure [quality livelihoods and economic efficiency](#).

WWF key priorities:

- **Align catch limits with scientific advice.** Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) must be a **limit**, not a target. Ending overfishing improves long-term profitability and reduces stock volatility.
- **Support the Landing Obligation** and implement the EU Fisheries Control Regulation, without exemptions and with the necessary incentives to support struggling fishers.
- **Ensure fair access to quotas** by properly applying Article 17 – rewarding environmental and social performance – to recognise the value of **low-impact, small-scale fishers**.
- **End harmful subsidies** and use EMFAF funds to support innovation, compliance, and a [just transition for struggling fleets](#).
- **Ensure the traceability and sustainability of diverse seafood products** with wild capture fisheries that are seasonally-available with [a minimal impact on marine biodiversity](#) and whose populations are harvested within maximum sustainable yield.



Stronger implementation means more stable stocks, healthier ecosystems, fewer boom-bust cycles and preventing a vicious circle of stock collapses and fishery closures, which is good for long-term jobs, incomes, and market access.

To revise or not to revise

Some stakeholders are calling for a reopening of the CFP legislation. But the evidence is **clear: what is lacking is proper implementation**, which the Commission and Member States can address without a lengthy revision process.

There is a real risk that a revision would lead to a significant period of **regulatory uncertainty** over quota allocation, control systems, enforcement responsibilities and structural changes. This would **delay urgently needed action** on stock recovery in a period of unprecedented anthropogenic pressures and their impacts (pollution, ocean acidification, collapse of Baltic stocks and ecosystem, disrupted fish distribution). Finally, there is a real risk that reopening the agreed CFP rules could lead to undermining its central social, environmental and economic objectives.

For more information

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