



EU laws on the fishing industry

Summary: The EU has a policy for the management of fisheries which is intended to ensure the supply of fish to consumers and the long term security of the European fishing industry.

Background

First legislation on fisheries dates from 1970 when it was agreed that EU fishermen should have equal access to member states' waters up to 12 miles from the coast. A coastal band was reserved for local fishermen. A common market was set up for fish and measures were agreed for modernising fishing vessels and on shore installations.

In 1976 fishing rights were extended to 200 miles and the EU took over the management of all fishing grounds under their jurisdiction.

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) was agreed in 1983. Its objective was to ensure the sustainable development of fishing from an environmental, economic and social point of view. Decision making was to be more transparent and based on scientific advice and stakeholder participation. So as to guard against over fishing, measures included rules on total allowable catches, limitation of fishing effort, and rules on fishing gear, minimum landing sizes and the obligation to report catches and landings.

There were also rules on the elimination of discards and measures to stop destructive practices that endangered sensitive habitats.

The CFP was reformed in 2002 so as to take account of evidence of over fishing and the potentially detrimental impact on marine eco-system. The policy took a longer term approach to fisheries management having regard to the conservation of stocks.

Action to safeguard fish stocks

In May 2009 the EC announced a review of the CFP in the light of the fact that 80 per cent of EU stocks are over fished, compared with a global average of 28%. The review proposals, which are being consulted on, consist principally of changes in the total allowable catches so as to help stocks to recover.

For more information on the Common Fisheries Policy:

http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp_en.htm