

sailing towards 2020



Brussels 2nd, 3rd March 2015



Territorial impacts of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy

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The new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which entered into force on the 1st January 2014, aims to ensure that fishing and aquaculture are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. The specific aims of this latest reform are to ensure a dynamic fishing industry, a fair standard of living for fishing communities, and new prosperity for the fisheries sector, ending the dependence on subsidies and creating new growth and employment opportunities in coastal areas.

Achieving sustainability implies the need for new management tools that prevent overfishing and set fishing quotas according to the best available scientific advice. In this regard, the CFP has reinforced the regional approach in order to improve governance and promote more diversified, tailored responses. Regionalisation means moving away from micromanagement at European level and ensuring that rules are adapted to the situation in each fisheries and maritime region. It requires new governance structures, designed through a bottom-up approach and based on meaningful stakeholder's engagement in fisheries management. In this sense, community-led local development fits perfectly with this new decentralised approach.

The reformed CFP has also introduced a number of other innovations that will contribute to achieving EU fisheries objectives for the period 2014-2020. The new package of measures presents a number of challenges for fisheries stakeholders at the local level, but it also opens up new opportunities for the development of local areas. In this new policy context, Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) can be instrumental in identifying and promoting awareness of these challenges and opportunities within fisheries communities and in facilitating the emergence of local responses.

This document examines the implications of the new CFP for fisheries areas and the added value of FLAGs in seizing related opportunities and developing innovative responses at local level². The key messages stemming from the related working group organised at the "Sailing

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² Further information about the contents of current CFP: http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/index_en.htm

towards 2020” conference have also been added. These insights can help FLAGs to enhance their strategies and partnership composition in order to respond to CFP challenges and benefit from related opportunities in the 2014-2020 period.

1. Landing obligation

One of the “hot topics” of the CFP reform is the “discard ban” or landing obligation, which is being gradually introduced from 2015 to 2019. This will require the avoidance or a reduction in bycatch through the use of more selective gear and more sustainable fishing management plans. Due to their experience and knowledge, local communities and the fisheries sector will play an essential role in this.

In some fisheries, a certain amount of bycatch will be unavoidable and new ideas will be needed to find uses of these unwanted fish. For species that can be sold for human consumption new markets will have to be found. A number of FLAGs have already supported projects to promote the consumption of these lesser known species (see the [smoked weever fish](#) project from Denmark or the [“à l’Ostendaise”](#) project from Belgium among others). With regard to other discard species, alternative ways to add value will need to be found.

During the **“Sailing towards 2020” conference**, the **“discard ban”** emerged as one of the main concerns for FLAGs and fisheries stakeholders. Participants highlighted the need **for more information** on the terms of the ban and further reflection on the role of FLAGs in this respect. Addressing the **implications of the discard ban for local communities** is a important area of work for FLAGs. A wide range of actions can be supported, including: the development and use of selective gear, training and studies on landing obligations, storage and transport of discarded fish and non-food chain discards, as well as other actions tailored to the local context. But the key contribution from FLAGs will come from their capacity to **bring together new and traditional actors in the search of innovative solutions adapted to local conditions**.

In addition, as the discard ban will have a wide ranging effect on many coastal communities, **pooling the efforts** of these communities could help to **overcome fragmentation along the coast or in the sector**. Dealing with the large amount of discards in each fishing port will require networking among fisheries related businesses, as well as among FLAGs and fishing associations in the same region or country.

2. Conservation measures

The CFP underlines ecological sustainability as a sine qua non condition for the economic and social sustainability of EU fisheries. In this context, the environmental impacts of fishing activities should be limited and controlled.

The EMFF includes a package of conservation measures to support compliance with this obligation, including support for: improving the size selectivity or species selectivity of fishing gear; new technical and organisational knowledge for reducing the impact of fishing activities on the environment; and pilot projects on alternative fishing management techniques and gear. Other activities laid down in the EMFF regulation with a particular relevance to local communities include: networks of marine protected areas; activities to reduce marine litter or

gather ghost nets; facilities to protect biodiversity; environmental awareness among fishermen; studies, management and monitoring of Natura 2000 sites and special protected areas; and participation in other actions related to ecosystem services, such as the restoration of marine and coastal habitats to support sustainable fish stocks.

The new regulation emphasises the need to strengthen the conservation of marine ecosystem in order to ensure sustainable local areas. This requires improved coordination with local fisheries stakeholders, as well as a greater involvement of local fishermen in the conservation and management of marine ecosystems. In the period 2007-2013, FLAGs have already demonstrated their capacity to mobilize and coordinate local fisheries stakeholders in the implementation of joint actions that lead to a better conservation and management of the local resources (as in the following French project on involving fishermen in the [co design of a marine protected area](#)). In addition, awareness raising is key to ensuring greater engagement of local communities in tackling this serious, but often neglected, challenge.

3. Small-scale fisheries

The CFP ensures special protection for small-scale fisheries (SSF), with Member States required to give preferential access to small-scale, artisanal or coastal fishermen/woman. SSF associations are natural partners of FLAGs in coastal areas due to their close link to the territory. FLAGs can help their local SSF to get involved in the implementation of the new CFP, bridging the gap between the needs of fisheries and the local community.

In the **conference working group**, FLAGs and local communities called for a greater role in **supporting local co-management of fisheries resources**, as well as more support for the **integration of fishing activities into other local economic activities or sectors**, such as tourism. In this process, FLAGs can play a proactive role in **linking the “sea” economy with the “land-based” economy** of the territory. Support could be provided for integrated actions that bring together the fisheries value chain (production, processing and marketing) with other economic actors/sectors in the area, thereby helping to maximise existing synergies and enhance the sustainability of the small-scale fisheries sector. **Diversification** is also an important dimension of community-led local development and FLAG’s strategies could give priority to the diversification needs of artisanal fisheries.

4. Common market organisation

The market organisation is a key component of the CFP. In recent years fishing and coastal communities have developed many activities for adding value to fisheries products, including through innovative marketing or packaging. The new CFP now calls for further action to empower the fisheries sector and to better inform consumers. To meet these challenges, the EMFF has put in place various measures, which could support activities such as: adding value to, or improving the quality of fish; certification and labeling schemes; processing activities run by fishers; the marketing and direct sale of fish; the promotion of environmentally friendly processing methods; and projects that seek to ensure that consumers have a diverse supply of fisheries and aquaculture products.

During the conference, fisheries stakeholders underlined the important role that FLAGs can play in continuing to **strengthen the involvement of local fishermen/women in the commercialisation of their catch**. Also, better informed consumers will be more receptive to the added value of locally produced seafood. FLAG's strategies could contribute to increasing fish consumption and to reducing the need for imports of fish by **promoting the local marketing and direct sales**, among other activities. FLAG initiatives **to develop and promote the identity of their area** could also contribute to the branding of **local products**, strengthening the **association between the product and the area**.

5. Aquaculture

The CFP reform assigns a central role to aquaculture. It is the first time that a fisheries policy includes specific support for aquaculture activities, highlighting in particular its potential for job creation in coastal areas. Due to its strong link with the territory, aquaculture could be an important dimension of community-led local development.

The development of aquaculture, and the related aims of diversification and improvement of quality of life in coastal and inland areas, calls for strong integration with initiatives linked with maritime, coastal and inland spatial planning.

At local community level, aquaculture could be a dynamic source of employment, especially in activities that foster integration with other sectors, such as tourism, fisheries, etc. The development of new forms of aquaculture (seaweed production, integrated aquaculture,...) also opens up additional opportunities for FLAGs and local communities.

6. The social dimension

A number of aspects related to the human dimension of the CFP are also crucial for local areas. Particular attention is given to the problems of falling employment in the fisheries sector, as well as to the low attractiveness of the sector, especially among young people.

The CFP opens up pathways to vocational training, re-qualification and lifelong learning for those working in the fisheries sector. Within the new CFP, more and better skills for fishermen will be encouraged. These activities will directly benefit coastal communities and open up possibilities for the creation of new businesses and new jobs.

FLAGs could support this process, helping to provide career pathways for those wishing to stay withing the sector, but also those interested in diversification or in benefiting in new employment opportunities in the blue and smart economies.

During the 'Sailing to 2020' conference, FLAGs and fisheries sector representatives also highlighted the **need for more training and information on the CFP reform** and its implication for local stakeholders. This could include **dissemination and communication activities at local level** on the CFP and Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP).

Networking and the exchange of experience and best practices among stakeholders, promoting the role of women in fishing communities, and promoting under-represented groups involved in SSF are enshrined in the new fisheries policy. Here, FLAGs also have an

important role to play, **reaching out to** these **underrepresented groups** within the community and creating linkages at local level between the different stakeholders.

7. Management regulations, new governance structures and regionalisation

The CFP includes new measures in fisheries management, focusing on an ecosystem-based approach, long term management plans, and the transferability of concessions in order to bring fish stocks back to sustainable levels, while also ensuring that fishing is profitable for the fishing industry and for fishing communities. The principles of good governance introduced by the CFP imply a greater involvement of stakeholders in decision-making. The CFP will, therefore, benefit from the knowledge and experience of fishermen and other local stakeholders. FLAGs can facilitate the participation of local stakeholders in these new governance structures and in ensuring they have the capacity and support to engage in a meaningful way.

Participants of the conference insisted however on the fact that **the pace of implementation of the EMFF must increase** if the impacts of the reform are not to **outpace the opportunities**. This requires action at Member State and EU level, to ensure delays are minimized and that the administrative aspects are streamlined and kept as simple as possible. This is **particularly important for small-scale fisheries** and shellfish gatherers ('mariscadoras'), which risk being excluded because of their limited administrative capacity.

In conclusion, the new CFP presents challenges to local communities but it also opens up a range of opportunities. Local strategies developed by FLAGs can channel the interest, ideas and resources of "fisheries dependent areas" into meeting these challenges and ensure the communities concerned benefit from the opportunities presented.