

European Association of Fish Producers Organisations
Association Européenne des Organisations de Producteurs dans le secteur de la pêche



EAPO / AEOP

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Letter by e-mail attachment to:

DG MARE - Ms. Charlina Vitcheva (Charlina.Vitcheva@ec.europa.eu)

EAPO20-53

Ostend, 2 December 2020

Dear Ms Vitcheva,

Subject: Seafood promotion campaign, COVID-19-consequences on markets, and interannual flexibility in fishing opportunities

EAPO would like to thank you for your latest answer of the 12th October and for the participation of members of DG MARE in the EAPO GA.

EAPO members are grateful for the information on the #TastetheOcean-campaign and look forward to its launch in December, in Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Spain.

As explained previously, EAPO very much welcomes this endeavour and is prepared to fully support it by reaching out to our members and asking them to get in touch with their respective communication agencies. EAPO would also encourage the Commission to contact the Member States to cooperate and supplement the campaign by reaching out to a wide audience through local marketing campaigns not only on social media, but also on major national TV/radio channels for instance. For the sake of an optimal outcome, avoiding the message getting dispersed and guaranteeing that it gets correctly to a wider consumers public, we are of the opinion that everyone shall converge to the same direction and that a joint communication strategy should be followed. In this sense, EU-wide guidelines based on the particularities of the “Taste the Ocean” campaign structure, which would serve as a guide for POs to follow-up the fish consumption incentive campaign, would be very much appreciated.

Conversely, initiatives already taken by EAPO members under EU-funded projects should be made visible and ideally, new initiatives of this kind carried out by POs should be supported with funds directly managed from the European Commission.

To us, it is key to urgently reboot the sector in light of the COVID-19 crisis consequences and it is equally important to keep it afloat afterwards.

The COVID-19 second wave and the lockdown measures imposed in most countries have again affected the seafood markets across the EU. The closure of restaurants is the main driver of this collapse in prices. Fishers are anxious over Christmas and the end of year celebrations period that normally represents an important part of the annual revenues. On the longer term, rising unemployment rates and economic recession announcements are signs that consumers purchasing power will be diminished, affecting their ability to buy sustainable European fish products.

In light of these bleak prospects and of the important economic losses already suffered, EAPO has been arguing numerous times for increasing the interannual flexibility percentage in the carrying-over of fishing opportunities. We believe it is now the right time to give fishers the option to carry over more than the existing 10% of their fishing quotas to next year – as defined under the Flexibility Regulation or art 15(9) of the Basic Regulation. This measure has been implemented in 2014 and 2015 for pelagic species to tackle the very serious market disruptions. It is now extremely important to apply an augmented flexibility for banking up to 25% of the quota applicable to all commercial fish species. This budget-free instrument is severely needed during this second-wave of the crisis when temporary cessation schemes are exhausted and cannot provide relief anymore. Although still requested by EAPO, such an option would now come too late for some more seasonal fisheries.

Besides, some fleets have been able to move their effort into other fisheries and avoided their usually targeted species due to reduced demand as a consequence of the corona crisis. For some of these fleets, like for instance the one fishing for sandeels in Denmark, increased interannual flexibility in terms of borrowing more than 10% from 2021 could be a costless, sustainable, and effective mean of keeping their businesses afloat and crew employed in the medium to short term in this very particular time.

EAPO would once again like to command the Commission for these honest exchanges and trusts that you will take this information into account. We remain at your disposal to clarify any question as put forward hereabove and to provide any relevant additional input as required.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'P. Visser', with the name 'Pim Visser' written in smaller letters below it.

Pim Visser