

European Association of Fish Producers Organisations

Association Européenne des Organisations de Producteurs dans le secteur de la pêche



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Fishing industry energy transition from fossil fuels

First, EAPO would like to highlight that the energy transition is one of the key steps towards improving an already low carbon and high value protein source for consumers, we believe that promoting seafood as part of a sustainable, climate neutral food consumption to be a key step towards lowering individual consumers' carbon footprint all the while ensuring a balanced and healthy diet.

An already low contribution to CO2 Emissions

The contribution of the total maritime sector to total CO2 emissions is less than 3%¹, with the fisheries sector's footprint being very small. The sectors' carbon emissions have dropped compared to 1990, for example in France, when compared to 2017 emission were reduced by 50%. Furthermore, a drop to 59% of the engine power compared to 1990 has been recorded in France, translating into an overall decrease in the ratio of emissions produced and fish mass obtained, decreasing from 3.4kg of emissions per kg of capture to around 2.2kg since 1990². These figures must be confirmed at a European level.

However, the sector understands the need to reduce its emissions to be in line with the Objectives of the Green Deal, European Fishers are committed to working on the solutions.

This document is the reply of the European Association of fish Producers Organizations to the consultation on energy transition. The objective of this initiative is to set out a strategy for the energy transition of the EU's fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Our reply is divided into a list of prerequisites on how the transition should be handled.

¹ Fourth Greenhouse Gas Study 2020 by the International Maritime Organization

² Étude sur les émissions de gaz à effet de serre par la flotte de pêche française, Union des Armateurs à la Pêche de France, 2020

Choosing the right technology

Before choosing, it is important to have an investigation of the degree of maturation of these technologies and their degree of adaptation/limitation, according to EU experts (costs, benefits, etc.). A long list of technology capable of replacing fuel exist, the difficulty at this stage is being able to understand their limitations and identifying the best use for fishing vessels depending on their size, the species they target and their specific fishing patterns. Different solution may be found for different vessel types and metiers.

Ensuring the crew's safety

Regarding safety onboard, the alternatives to fuel must ensure the safety of the crew. One of the issues with some new green fuels is that they are not as stable as traditional fossil fuels at ambient temperature and pressure. The challenge faced by the industry is to find an affordable alternative fuel that does well in terms of energy intensity, that isn't too technologically intensive to be used in high humidity conditions, and that doesn't require too much space on board.

Supplying the vessels

The next big challenge on fuel transition is supplying the vessels. The infrastructures to supply fishing vessels with fuel exist and allow for a vessel to supply itself with fuel in "almost" any European harbour. We will need to ensure that new fuels will be available in sufficient quantities for vessels to function normally and in sufficient number of places for vessels to secure normal operation.

There is no need for a unique solution for all fishing vessels, as fuel was, but we need to ensure each harbour has the necessary fuels and infrastructures to support the vessels in case of engine failure. For this to happen, there need to be a discussion at a local level to identify the best solution for the specific use of the vessels.

This discussion must happen before fishing vessels invest in new fuels and technologies.

The easiest technologies to implement will be fuel cells and batteries as most of the infrastructures needed to recharge them already exist. But the electrical network must be strong enough to withstand the electric charge needed to recharge the cells and batteries. These issues are the same for cruising ships needing to connect when in harbour.

Funding the transition

Once the choice is made, funding the transition will be the next big step. First, the most fuel intensive vessels today are the ones that are the most impacted by the ongoing fuel crisis. This means that they will be the one most invested in finding a solution to reduce fuel costs, but it also means their financial situation was the most impacted and their self-funding is at its lowest point. It is important to highlight that when financing a vessel with new engine technology, the ship owner bears all the high risks associated.

The high risks added to the difficult financial situation makes the need for public funding all the more important.

For the transition to happen, the funding tools must be adapted to the needs of fishers. As of today, this is not the case, the funding tools at the fishers' disposal are not adapted to their financial situation as well as the funding needed to transition. An important topic regarding EMFAF and EMFF on engines is that it is only possible if the overall power of the engine is reduced by 30 %.

On top of the initial issues, the overall funding conditions do not allow for visibility for fishers, investing in a new engine costs a lot of money, having a condition stating that the investment must be paid back, creates a lot of uncertainty. This uncertainty comes on top of an already important leap of faith towards technologies that are not confirmed to be the energy of the future.

Overall, fundings must be divided in three phases corresponding to the maturity of the technology:

- Phase 1: Initial funds directed to research projects to ensure that new technologies and fuels are well known.
- Phase 2: Testing funds to test new technologies in real-life conditions,
- Phase 3: Equipment funds to allow for the democratization of approved technologies.

For now, the first phase has been done, the industry needs a real investigation of the degree of maturation of these technologies and their degree of adaptation/limitation, according to EU experts (costs, benefits, etc.). Once the results are published, we will be able to move to phase two: Real-life conditions testing.

On a side note, funding the harbour infrastructures is important as well.

Mechanic and fishers' training must not be the bottleneck our energy transition.

The mechanics working on fishing vessels have been trained on maintaining fossil fuel engines that make up to a 100 % of the engines used by fishing vessels, as well as other vessels. Tomorrow, the same mechanics will need training to take care of the maintenance of 5-6 fuel types depending on the chosen fuel and technology. Green transition must be followed by measures to secure an upgrade of green competencies.

Change capacity management to ease the transition

Another prerequisite is about legislative changes needed to facilitate the energy transition. The new fuels have different needs for them to be used as fuels onboard. Most of them need to be stored in very specific conditions, more space intensive than fossil fuel. For the same quantity of energy new fuels need 1.75 to 4.6 times more volume. This need for capacity must be considered at a European level, changes to the CFP must be made to adapt capacity management imposed to fishing vessels: GT and kW both were originally designed to regulate the evolution of capacities supposedly reflected the fishing capacities, not emission of GHG.

To add to the discussions on the changes to the CFP, recent support measures under the BAR include certain measures that limit and restrict fishing companies in investing in necessary capacity for green transition. These restrictions and limitations on a large number of EU vessels and companies must be included when developing ambitions and the time frame for green transition.

A green view to fisheries management

Fisheries management in EU combines the use of catch limits, effort limitations, spatial and temporal restrictions, technical measures and many other elements in order to secure long term sustainable exploitation of the marine resources, while respecting historic, cultural and political differences and priorities in the different Member States. However, there is no green dimension to the current Common Fisheries Policy, the management measures currently in place have not been analysed or evaluated in relation to their impact on CO2 emissions and climate change. For many fisheries spatial restrictions result in suboptimal exploitation patterns and extensive steaming distances and /or time

spent fishing, the same is relevant for certain other technical measures and historic restrictions on e.g., vessel size and/or engine power. EAPO recommends a thorough evaluation of the impact of current managements measures on greenhouse gas emissions at both EU and national levels. EAPO believes that fisheries management measures must help facilitate energy transition of the EU fishing fleet, not the contrary.

Final words

Some prerequisites are needed before the fishing and aquaculture sector can safely transition away from fossil fuels:

- An initial study assessing the trends in carbon emission since 1990 must be done at a European level.
- Multistakeholder discussions to identify the best available technology for the needs of the fishing fleets. These discussions must take into consideration each individual fishing fleet's characteristics to hand them a tailor-made solution.
- Once this solution is identified, investments in harbour infrastructure and training of fishers on these technologies need to happen to be ready once the technology is market ready.
- In the meantime, changes to capacity management must be made to allow for these technologies to be installed on the ships.
- Current fisheries management measures must be evaluated with a view to their impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Possible solutions that can facilitate reductions in emissions should be identified and implemented as a priority.
- European funds must then finance the installation of the equipment required and allow for visibility for fishers.