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Position Paper on the European Commission Consultation
on the Reform of the Control System of the CFP

1. Introduction

The EAPO values the Commission's initiative to prepare a reform of the control system of the CFP starting with a broad stakeholder consultation. The consultation document has been thoroughly reviewed and the members of EAPO have agreed this position paper, providing an input to the raised issues and an agreed opinion on how to organize this reform.

In the Commission's consultation document, four new policy framework criteria are listed. In the EAPO's view the development of a widely spread culture of compliance is the main one. We agree with the intention to arrive at a level playing field and that to achieve this target some of the other new policy framework criteria – simplification, standardization and harmonisation - are necessary.

The best way to achieve a culture of compliance, is to have a bottom-up approach, building the control system from grass root level with the input of all the stakeholders.

2. Expression of Views on the nine Objectives identified in the Consultation Paper

Objective 1 : Develop a new approach as regards inspections and control.

The EAPO finds that for this objective a level playing field is needed and at least some harmonisation. However, insufficient details are available at this point in time to comment on the level of harmonisation that would be most beneficial. It goes without saying that any implementation of a harmonisation exercise should be carried out in a very careful manner.

With reference to the harmonisation of conversion factors, for instance, a lot more scientific advice is needed to determine the best way to achieve the intended results. Generally in respect of a revised approach, the EAPO considers it to be very important to also focus on inspections and control on land and on the entire trade of fisheries products.

Objective 2 : Rationalisation of the rules

The EAPO welcomes not only the rationalisation but certainly also the simplification of the rules. A rationalisation should certainly include a collation of around twenty regulations impacting the control policy. The EAPO finds that achieving stakeholder approval of the rules prior to issuing them is an essential element and is a rationalisation in itself.

Objective 3 : Strengthen the capacity of the Commission

The EAPO supports the strengthening of the capacity of the Commission where it is aiming to achieve a level playing field for the control. However, this obtaining of extra power should be based on a redefined cooperation with the Member States. This cooperation should clearly specify and restrict where necessary the capacity of the Commission. The EAPO, for instance, sees no benefit in transferring to the Commission the decision making process on Real Time Closures.

The EAPO looks positively upon the development of an EU inspectorate, but is also well aware that the impact on the Member States sovereignty is an item to be carefully considered.

Objective 4 : Harmonise sanctions

The EAPO supports this objective but also realizes that the Commission will have a difficult task to take into account the opinion of the Member States and their respective national legislations. We also consider it very important to introduce the possibility to apply administrative sanctions in order to tackle existing disproportions between infringements and sanctions.

Objective 5 : Strengthening of cooperation and of assistance

The EAPO fully supports this objective emphasizing that more focus should be placed on the onshore sector.

Objective 6 : Develop a culture of control

The EAPO considers that this is a key issue to reach the CFP objectives. Every strategy and measure to strengthen a culture of control should firstly be understood and accepted by the industry. We believe that the culture of control and thus the CFP efficiency will be greater if the earlier mentioned bottom-up approach is used. With that type of stakeholder involvement the word 'control' in objective 6 should be changed to 'natural compliance'. The EAPO fully supports the development of a culture of natural compliance.

Objective 7 : Use of modern technologies

The EAPO considers that the use of modern technologies should be used to reduce the cost of operations.

Objective 8 : Increase cost effectiveness

As above, modern technologies can contribute to the reduction of costs.

Objective 9 : Adapt the mandate of the Agency

The EAPO finds that not all the issues in the Court of Auditors report are covered in the Commission's consultation document. The adaptation of the Agency's mandate in our view should be based on what can be learned from the Court of Auditors report and should contribute to the remedying of the identified shortcomings.

3. Conclusion

In the EAPO's opinion this is a good opportunity to make measures from the CFP more efficient and effective towards a long term sustainability of resources and competitiveness of the EU fleet.

It is necessary to strengthen the culture of control, making it a culture of natural compliance, through the visibility that the control policy is built up from grass root level with bottom-up input from the stakeholders and through a dialogue with the policy-makers.

The EAPO finds that rules, measures, mechanisms, quota arrangements, recovery and management plans, control measures, inspections and sanctions will only be effective if they are established on a dialogue and consensus basis rather than being imposed through a top-down process.

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