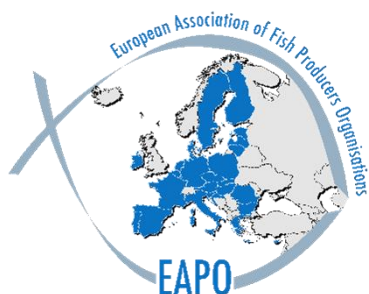


European Association of Fish Producers Organisations

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



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PRESS RELEASE

Nature Restoration Law

We support nature restoration, but through a well-thought-out and inclusive legislative proposal that builds upon existing laws.

- EAPO supports nature restoration, but not this instrument built in contradiction with the successes achieved by EU fisheries and environmental policy. We call for the rejection of the proposal for nature restoration law in its present form.
- We call for the full implementation of MSFD and existing pieces of legislation before voting and deciding on a new legislation that does not build on all that has already been achieved (Threshold Values, Programmes of Measures, Member States Coordination Group...).
- We request that a comprehensive socio-economic impact assessment is carried out to help fishers and farmers mitigate the impact.
- We request that the MSFD evaluation and the planned impact assessment are finished before we adopt new legislation that is supposed to deal with the results of those exercises.

Since the publication of the Commission's proposal on the 22nd of June 2022, the Nature Restoration Law has been at the centre of the attention. With NGOs calling it the last chance to protect the environment and the Commission actively requesting MEPs to vote in favour. The discussion took an unprecedented turn with 2 EP Committees voting in favour of the rejection of the law.

The Nature Restoration Law's objective is to set targets for nature restoration for 2030, 2040, 2050 to allow for ecosystem services to be maintained and to ensure the environment is protected. It is a regulation that requests Member States to set up restoration plans to "improve good conditions".

In 2008, the EU adopted the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) to maintain healthy, productive and resilient marine ecosystems while securing a more sustainable use of marine resources. It requires Member states to set up plans to reach Good Environmental Status on a list of 11 descriptors that describe what the environment should look like when GES has been achieved. The Commission published an additional decision in 2017 requesting that quantitative threshold values be set up to help Member States monitor when GES is achieved. DG ENV, along with European Member States has worked to develop threshold values for 3 of the 11 descriptors. More work needs to be done for the rest of the threshold values to be developed. It doesn't make sense to introduce new legislation when the existing legislation had still to be fully implemented.

Furthermore, this new initiative as said before does not build on existing successes and legislative regulations. In 2017, the Commission stated that the Nature Directives¹ were fit for purpose, yet no mention of Natura 2000 areas can be seen in the Commission Proposal. In 2023, the Commission stated that the Common Fisheries Policy² was fit for purpose, yet no mention of the link between good condition and MSY. We are at risk of seeing fish stocks fished at sustainable levels and at the same time not in good condition. This comes at a time when fishing pressure in the North-East Atlantic is at an all-time low³.

Moreover, the Commission will be publishing an evaluation report on MSFD in July 2023. After this evaluation report, an impact assessment report will take place between 2023 and 2025 with a possible revision in the next Commission Mandate. The shortcomings of the 2008 MSFD will be addressed in the revision to come, restoration of marine ecosystems can be added to the definition of Good Environmental Status giving visibility to Member States and to fishers by ensuring coherence between EU legislation.

MSFD, the CFP and the EU Nature Legislation are not the only European piece of legislation that refers to restoration. The Commission Staff Working Document Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on nature restoration lists 5 existing pieces of legislation (Birds Directive, Habitats Directive,

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2017-01/swd-2016-472-final_en.pdf

² https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/common-fisheries-policy-today-and-tomorrow-fisheries-and-oceans-pact-towards-sustainable-science_en

³ https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/cfp-monitoring/-/asset_publisher/oz5O/document/id/58227533?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fstecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu%2Freports%2Fcfp-monitoring%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_oz5O%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-2%26p_p_col_pos%3D1%26p_p_col_count%3D2

Water Framework Directive, Environmental Liability Directive, and the Invasive Alien Species Regulation) and a variety of initiatives from the Green Deal that are relevant to nature restoration. This is without counting the recent Montreal Kunming agreement setting a 30% of protected areas including other effective conservation measures OECMs by 2030, 10% being strictly protected.

Finally, the Nature Restoration Law lacks a comprehensive socio-economic impact assessment that would have ensured the commitment of EU fishers and farmers to the initiative. As it stands, the only known impact is that this Law will induce further fishing ground reduction. Further reduction due to the Offshore Renewable Energy and Marine Protected Areas objectives. The only known consequence is an increase of imports further decreasing the EU's food security.

===== **Ends** =====

The European Association of fish Producers Organisations (EAPO) represents 28 Producers Organisations (POs) from 9 EU Member States with approximately 10,000 vessels, 3.5 million tonnes of landings and € 3 billion first sale value.

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