

Recovery plans for fish stocks threatened with collapse

Information Sheet No 5: Accompanying Structural Measures

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Under Community legislation public aid may be made available to vessel-owners and fishermen in order to assist both temporary and permanent cessation of fishing activity.

As part of the recovery plans the Commission intends to review the relevant Community Regulation, with a view to improving the contribution that can be made by public aid to the necessary restructuring of fishing activity.

Action will be proposed under two headings:

- aid for temporary cessation of fishing;
- aid for decommissioning fishing vessels;

No changes will be proposed concerning social measures.

Aid for decommissioning

The Commission considers that encouragement of decommissioning should be the priority for Community aid. In order to make early decommissioning more attractive it would be appropriate to provide for a 20% increase in the decommissioning premium if the request is made in the first two years of the recovery plan.

Given the limited Community funds available, it would also be appropriate to limit access to the “enhanced” decommissioning premium to vessels that can demonstrate a minimum track record of catches of either cod or hake, (such as, for instance, average landings of either cod or hake in excess of 25% of total landings). Apart from this condition, Member States would remain free to devise national procedures of the selection of eligible vessels in order to use public funds to maximum effect.

Aid for temporary cessation of fishing

The Commission considers that the reduction of fishing effort required for the recovery of cod and hake is likely to be substantial and permanent. Nevertheless, it may be appropriate to provide for additional Community co-financing of national aid for temporary lay-up of fishing vessels, in the event of national aid to compensate for compliance with the fishing effort limitations decided under the recovery plans.

The Commission is therefore considering, in respect of temporary cessation of fishing caused by a recovery plan:

- removing the current limit for the financial contribution from the FIGF to national compensation aid for the temporary cessation of fishing (currently € 1million or 4% of the Community financial assistance allocated to the sector in the Member State concerned);

- specifying that Community contributions to such measures will only be made during the first year of the recovery plan. National aid will continue to be permitted for up to three years.

Social measures

Council Regulation 2792/99 provides for financial assistance from the FIFG for

- part-financing of national early retirement schemes for fishermen;
- individual compensatory payments of up to € 10,000 per beneficiary to fishermen who have worked on vessels that are decommissioned;
- compensatory payments of up to € 50,000 per beneficiary to fishermen of at least 5 years experience for the purpose of retraining or transfer to employment outside the marine fisheries sector.

The Commission is not considering changing either the conditions for or limits to these aids.