

MEPs approve new EU sustainable fishery regime

February 6 2013



Fish dealers wait for customers at the Sandakan central fish market in Malaysia on February 4, 2013. The European Parliament approved Wednesday a new fisheries accord hailed by environmental groups as a breakthrough in managing a key food resource which has been over-exploited for years.

The European Parliament approved Wednesday a new fisheries accord hailed by environmental groups as a breakthrough in managing a key food resource which has been over-exploited for years.

MEPs adopted the proposals by 502 votes to 137 and will now take them up with the European Council, which groups the 27 member states.

The measures are meant to restore under-pressure species by ensuring that EU fisheries are run on a 'Maximum Sustainable Yield' basis, a system which leaves a large enough breeding population in place to replenish stocks.

The EU ranks as the world's third largest fishing community behind China and Peru but many species are under severe pressure, with 68 percent of all stocks said to be overfished.

The new fishery regime significantly aims to end the practice of dumping by-catch, those fish which are either unwanted or unsuitable.

The European Commission welcomed the vote, saying it represented real progress—a view echoed by environmental groups which in the past have been very critical of EU fisheries policy.

EU Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Maria Damanaki said she was "especially pleased" with parliament's support "for a policy that is based on exploiting fisheries resources sustainably ... (and) introduces a discard ban."

Damanaki launched the reforms in 2011, aiming to make the EU [fishing industry](#) both economically viable and environmentally sound.

[Greenpeace](#) called the vote "historic," bringing the prospect of "a fast recovery of Europe's [fish stocks](#) one step closer."

"This vote signals a momentous shift away from [overfishing](#)," it said in a statement, adding that countries such as Spain and France who oppose the measures "will find it increasingly hard to act as proxies for a

handful of powerful companies."

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