

Make Fishing Fair

Information Pack
2024





The sea can be protected better and with more conviction by those who frequent it every day. Small coastal fishermen represent the first sentinels of the sea. The sea is not a container of fish products to be poured onto the market, and fishing boats must not and cannot become industrial. Sometimes the best way to move forward with greater awareness is to take a step aside. Crabs teach us this.”

Renato Galeotti

Professional fisherman and representative, APS Fishermen’s Houses Association, Vada, Italy.

What is the issue?

The turbid seas of policy are allowing billions of public money to fund the pollution and depletion of our coasts. Current process rewards high volume catches without considering overfishing, seabed damage or emissions. Fishing quotas and subsidies are benefitting those that do the most damage instead of supporting fishers who are vigilant about their impact.

For decades, low-impact, small-scale fishers have been fishing responsibly, with the preservation of their communities and our environment in mind but are being overlooked.

The EU can encourage the restoration of degraded marine ecosystems by supporting small-scale fishers who produce the greatest benefits for both society and the environment. The Commission should redirect public money spent on harmful capacity-enhancing subsidies for larger-scale, high-impact fishing to the small-scale fishers whose practices support all types of life involved.

What are we doing about it?

Thousands of small-scale fishers across Europe have come together to write an open letter to the EU Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans & Fisheries asking for the reallocation of resources and opportunities so that this overlooked sector can enjoy the clear, calm waters they deserve.

What are we asking for?

- Provide public funds to low-impact vessels with lower emissions, redirecting fuel subsidies from higher polluters
- Support local jobs and communities by rewarding less harmful fishing, through revised quota allocation

What is 'small-scale and low-impact'?

'Small-scale coastal fishing' means fishing activities carried out by marine and inland fishing vessels of less than 12 metres and not using towed gear. It can also refer to fishers on foot such as shellfish gatherers.



Small-scale fisher testimonials



Bally Philip
National coordinator, Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation:

"It is clear to us from our work in advocating for small-scale and low-impact fishers that the current arrangements for fisheries management offer the public and the sector itself far poorer social, economic and environmental outcomes than we would be getting if the distribution of fishing opportunities was more equitable. This issue needs raising at the highest levels of government. Considering the current climate and biodiversity crisis it's important to realise that prioritising access to fishing opportunities for small-scale and low-impact fisheries can be a big part of building resilience such as reducing the impacts of industrialised fisheries and protecting jobs in coastal communities while supplying the most sustainable food available."

Sandra Amezaga

Fisher and representative, Mulleres Salgadas, Portugal:

"It is urgent to focus on the care of the seas, protecting small-scale fishing and shellfishing methods that carry out sustainable productive activities. The participation of women in the dialogue of the European fishing community is something that needs to be addressed immediately. Gender issues in fisheries are a vitally important cutting across all the problems."



Gwen Pennarun
Patron pêcheur de bars, Association ligneurs pointe de Bretagne:

"Article 17 is there, but Member States need to do more to enforce it. Small-scale fishers practice sustainable fishing, aware of the fragility of the resource and the environment in which it evolves. They depend on quotas and adapt their catching techniques according to the season, the weather, and the moment's opportunities. We need to help preserve this way of working. These are fishers with a different view of the fishing industry. They respect the sea that sustains them. They have the right to exist and to make a living from a profession they love. Help them get through this challenging period."

Renato Galeotti

Professional fisherman and representative, APS Fishermen's Houses Association, Vada, Italy:

"I have been a professional fisherman for 12 years and I started at an advanced age, after having done something else for the previous decades. The choice of fishing is, for me, a way to give continuity to a lifelong environmental commitment; the sea can be protected better and with more conviction by those who frequent it every day.

Small coastal fishermen with gillnets represent the first sentinels of the sea. Since the beginning of my fishing business I have chosen to sell directly to end users who are part of Solidarity Purchasing Groups, because this allows human contact similar to what existed in small seaside towns before the uncontrolled growth of industrial fishing. This is why I wholeheartedly endorse the letter addressed to European Commissioner Sinkevičius. The sea is not a container of fish products to be poured onto the market, and fishing boats must not and cannot become industrial. Sometimes the best way to move forward with greater awareness is to take a step aside. Crabs teach us this."



Wolfgang Albrech

Retired fisher and president, Fischereischutzverband, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany:

"We will consider Article 17 as fully implemented, regardless of what Member States allegedly already carried out, only when measurable positive changes in quota allocations in small-scale fisheries are demonstrated. This is yet to be the case."

David Lange

Director, FSK-PO, Denmark:

"Small-scale, low-impact fishing is key to the green transition in future European fisheries and central to the future well-being of coastal communities. It also contributes to an improved maritime environment and increased biodiversity, which are essential for healthy seas and future food security."



Søren Jacobsen

Small-scale fisherman, Elsinore, Denmark:

"A binding implementation plan for Article 17 along with clear guidelines on how to develop and apply transparent and objective criteria to reward sustainable fishing practices and protect ecosystems and local communities is of the utmost importance for the small-scale fishers, coastal communities, fish-stocks and marine ecosystems."



Luis Rodriguez

Small-scale fisherman, Cabo de Gata, Spain:

"Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius, I am a fisherman. I always thought that my job depended only on doing things well, fishing responsibly, and taking care of the sea, which I considered mine and to which I owe everything I am. But now I know that it's not like that. I know that we depend on the policies that regulate natural resources, and low-impact fishing is your best ally in achieving socio-economic and environmental objectives. We will continue to work at sea to ensure the food sovereignty of our people, generate employment, and witness all the changes taking place at sea. On your side, you need to make sure that the policies that are put in place support us and do not destroy what we are building set-by-set, day-by-day."

What is the global picture on fishing?

Global Fisheries Benefits and Impacts.













Infographic from Daniel Pauly and Seas Around Us. Seasaroundus.org



Large-scale



Small-scale

<p>Annual landings for human consumption</p>	 <p>About 60 million tonnes</p>	 <p>about 27 million tonnes</p>
<p>Annual catch discarded at sea</p>	 <p>10 million tonnes</p>	 <p>almost none</p>
<p>Annual catch used to produce industrial fishmeal and fish oil.</p>	 <p>26 million tonnes</p>	 <p>almost none</p>
<p>Fuel used per tonne of fish for human consumption</p>	 <p>5-20 tonnes</p>	 <p>2-5 tonnes</p>
<p>Number of fishers employed</p>	 <p>about 1/2 million</p>	 <p>about 12 million</p>
<p>Government subsidies (billions of USD)</p>	 <p>25-30 billion USD</p>	 <p>5-7 billion USD</p>

What is the European picture?



Harmful subsidy allocation

In France, trawlers receive up to 75 euro cents for 1kg of fished resources, while other fleets receive less than 30 euro cents per kilogram. In 2019, the EU large-scale, high-impact fleet was exempted from paying €71 million in fuel tax. For the EU small-scale fleet, this would have been just €3.1 million.



Unfair and opaque fishing opportunity allocation

Fishing opportunities in Europe are concentrated in the hands of the wealthier, larger, industrial fishing vessels, with a more extensive fishing history.

Fishing opportunity allocation in most Member States is based on historical catch records, which are often flawed and inaccurate, and favour the larger-scale, high-impact fisheries that have caught a higher volume of fish.

Using historical track records to allocate opportunities has faced criticism, for providing an unfair advantage to companies with extensive fishing histories. It has incentivised more aggressive fishing such as the case of bluefin tuna fishing in

Spain, when historical track records were used when the population was overfished, and small-scale fishers faced constraints on their fishing activities.

Across Europe, there has been limited implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy Article 17 in most Member States. By applying environmental, social and economic criteria in a transparent way to the allocation of fishing opportunities, Article 17 would reward sustainable practices and encourage a shift to low-impact fishing. But there are gaps in transparency in how fishing opportunities are allocated, and allocation practices rarely deviate from the standard allocation based on historical catch records.

The contribution of small-scale, low-impact fisheries

Small-scale passive gear generates twice the added value per tonne landed compared to large-scale, high-impact fishing.

The EU small-scale fishing sector used 0.9 billion litres of fuel cumulatively over 2010-2020, corresponding to 2.4 million tonnes of CO2 emissions, a fraction of the amount used by the large scale, high impact fleet.

The real cost of large-scale, high-impact fisheries

The EU large-scale fleet used an estimated 21 billion litres of fuel over 2010-2020, with an average of 1.9 billion litres per year, resulting in an estimated 56 million tons of CO2 emissions.

When it comes to French fisheries, 1 kg of fished resources from trawls and seines is subsidized at between 50 and 75 euro cents, while other fleets are subsidized at less than 30 euro cents per kilogram landed.

French deep-sea industrial trawlers receive 85% of subsidies. The industrial bottom trawler fleet receives five times more subsidies per job than coastal vessels using passive gear, and almost twice as much per kilogram landed.



Supporting Organisation Contacts:

This is an initiative from small-scale fishers across Europe, led by Low Impact Fishers of Europe, facilitated by Blue Ventures and supported by Patagonia EMEA.

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To get in touch with small-scale fishers quoted in this pack, to obtain original language quotes or for comment on the asks.

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