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10 demands in the EU Common Fisheries Policy reform 2012-2013

What the Greens want

Marine resources are a public good, not a private resource. The right to exploit those resources, therefore, should be allocated according to criteria that ensure that fishing contributes as far as possible to the public interest. Greens propose that the allocation of the right to fish should be based upon criteria rather than market forces – specifically, on the environmental and social aspects of the fishing. Fishermen should be required to demonstrate that their fishing operations do not damage the marine environment and make significant contributions to coastal fishing communities. This view of who should have the right to fish colours Green demands and leads to the following.

The Greens want to:

1. End overfishing by 2015

With three of four European fish stocks for which information is available in a bad state – we have to act now. The EU must end overfishing by 2015 in order to rebuild stocks by 2020 to be kept above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY). This is the only way to ensure a profitable fishing industry, no longer reliant on handouts of public money - with more fish in the sea, fishermen can fish less and earn more. In fish lingo: we want to achieve fishing mortality below Fmsy by 2015 in order to have biomass above Bmsy by 2020.

2. Make environmental protection a prerequisite

We must do things in the right order and prioritise protection of the environment. Only with more fish in the sea can we have socially and economically sustainable jobs for fishermen. Long term environmental goals must be prioritised over short term economic gains.

3. End discarding – stop the dumping of fish

Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of fish and other species are thrown back dead into the sea each year. This terrible waste has to end. We want a discard ban in the EU, so that no fish can be dumped in the sea and all fish landed must be deducted from the quota. This must be coupled with

incentives for fishermen to avoid catching the unwanted marine species in the first place – for example by using more selective gear – as well as measures to prevent the creation of a parallel market for bycatch species. All this should be done within five years.

4. Establish long-term management plans

We want clear fishing control rules that make overfishing illegal and prevent quotas being set at levels greater than the scientific advice. To this end, binding, long term management plans must be established for all fisheries. With strict plans, ministers won't be able to play with fishing quotas and jeopardise the future of fisheries-dependent people.

5. De-centralise decision making

The targets and timelines shall be set at the EU level – but the ways to reach the goals shall be decided and implemented on a level closer to people dependent on fisheries and other stakeholders. Managers, fishermen, scientists, civil society and other stakeholders shall all participate in the process.

6. Use public money for the transition of the fishing fleet

We must put an end to subsidies that lead to overfishing. Funds should not be used for enhancing fleet capacity. Instead, public money should be used to help the transitioning into a sustainable fishing industry, for example by subsidising selective fishing gear, adopting less environmentally destructive fishing practices or measures of common interest such as control, data collection etc.

Fishing less intensely than the effort needed to catch MSY will require short-term reduction in catches over a transitional period while fish stocks rebuild. During this transitional period, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund should provide money to help the fishermen such as for retraining or diversification of their business.

7. Make everyone follow the rules

There should be sanctions against Member States that do not fully respect their obligations under the Common Fisheries Policy, such as reporting complete data on fleet capacity and catches. Today too many Member States fail to respect their most basic obligations under the CFP and must be held to account.

8. Stop the privatisation of the sea

We do not support the Commission's proposal to make transferable fishing concessions (TFCs) mandatory for Member States. Mandatory TFCs would mean the privatisation of a public resource – the sea – which is not acceptable. Fish stocks are not private property.

9. Give priority access to low-impact fishing vessels

The right to fish should be allocated based on environmental and social criteria. We want to give

prioritised access to those who fish in a way that is less damaging to the environment and creates more jobs. This means that fishing permits should not be granted based on historical catches, because that would reward those who have contributed most to overfishing. Fish stocks are public resources, and should be exploited in a way that benefits society as a whole.

10. Fish responsibly in the rest of the world

28 percent of the fish caught by EU fishing vessels are taken outside EU waters. These vessels should operate under the same rules as vessels within the EU. In fisheries agreements with third countries, EU fishing vessels should only catch a surplus of stock that is not needed as food and livelihood for the local population. Ship-owners should pay themselves for their fishing licenses.

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