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EU fisheries policy reform

EU governments trying to wriggle out of sustainable reform of CFP

The final scheduled rounds of negotiations between the European Parliament and Council on proposals to overhaul the EU's Common Fisheries Policy are set to take place this week (Tuesday - Wednesday, 28-29 May). Ahead of the talks, Green MEPs have expressed concern that EU governments are unwilling to commit to the necessary far-reaching reforms voted by the European Parliament (notably on ending discards and sustainable fisheries management plans) and called on the EP not to back down. Commenting ahead of the talks, Green fisheries spokesperson **Isabella Lövin** (MEP, Sweden) said:

"It is extremely concerning that EU governments continue to oppose the proposals by the European Parliament for a meaningful and ambitious reform of the EU's fisheries policy. In spite of claims to the opposite, EU governments are moving in the wrong direction and are trying to wriggle out of putting the CFP on a sustainable footing. The latest Council mandate is even less ambitious in a number of key areas.

"With negotiations now in the endgame phase, the European Parliament needs to insist on setting fishing quotas at sustainable levels by 2015, with an aim of stock recovery by 2020. It is also imperative that there are binding targets for improving fishing gear selectivity. The Greens will also continue to push to ensure that those who fish in a more sustainable way get priority access.

"Despite a clear public desire to end the senseless and wasteful practise of discards for all harvested species, as voted by the MEPs, EU governments' main preoccupation seems to be to try and secure various exemptions (1). Parliament's negotiating team must dig in its heals and ensure a real discard ban with limited exemptions. Crucially, there is a need to ensure that permitted discards are counted per fishing trip and not as a yearly total to reduce the scope for chicanery.

"The European Parliament has expressed willingness to compromise with the conservative demands from EU governments but not on core principles that are central to the reform. We cannot waste this historic opportunity to reform the EU's malfunctioning fisheries policy; the EP must not back down."

(1) EU governments want a de minimis exemption on the discard ban that could apply even without a multiannual plan or a discard plan.

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