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Subject: renewal of the FEAMP

Your ref: Opinion 125 received on 18 December 2018

Dear Sir,

I would like to thank you for SWWAC's opinion on the renewal of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (FEAMP). Allow me to provide the below clarifications on the points raised in this opinion concerning the proposal adopted by the Commission on 12 June 2018.

Simplification

The Commission's proposal is designed to simplify the implementation of the FEAMP as compared with the extremely complex architecture of the 2014-2020 period. This is based on a precise and strict description of the opportunities for funding and of the rules of eligibility ("measures"), which complicated the use of the fund for Member States and beneficiaries. The architecture proposed for the period after 2020 is based on four priorities broken down into areas of support describing the general framework, and eliminates the measures level. In the framework of shared management, it will be the Member States' responsibility to draw up their programme and to specify the most appropriate means to achieve the FEAMP's priorities. A wide range of actions identified by the Member States may be supported in accordance with the national eligibility rules, as long as these actions are covered by the areas of support established in the FEAMP regulation.

This flexibility granted to the Member States is however accompanied by a list of ineligible operations defined in the regulation in order to avoid harmful effects with respect to fish conservation. Moreover, the Commission has proposed that the investments and the compensations destined for the fishing fleet (definitive shutdown of fishing activities, extraordinary interruptions in fishing activities, purchase of a used ship, and replacement of fishing gear) should be strictly subject to their compatibility with the conservation objectives of the CFP.

The architecture proposed by the Commission also includes an assessment of the performance of the programmes on the basis of successful completion and result indicators. The Member States will report on progress made concerning the results obtained and the Commission will carry out an annual inspection of the performance based on the annual performance reports made by the Member States, allowing potential implementation problems to be detected upstream and allowing measures to be taken.

The Commission considers that this simplified architecture will optimise the implementation of the programmes and help achieve the FEAMP's strategic objectives. The flexibility and orientation towards results and the mutual trust between the Commission and the Member States constitute the three principles of effective simplification.

Generational renewal

The Commission shares the SWWAC's concerns regarding the need for generational renewal in the maritime careers. Increasing the attractiveness of the fishing professions for young people is clearly an extremely important challenge for the future of the fishing sector. The proposal for the new FEAMP thus includes investment in the improvement of working conditions on board, for example regarding safety, selectivity and energy economies, and also support for the training of fishermen and campaigns to enhance the overall image of maritime professions.

Blue economy

Support for the blue economy is an important aspect of the Commission's proposal. It is necessary to promote its sustainable development so as to guarantee long-term social, economic and environmental benefits.

As regards support from the FEAMP for direct management, the proposal puts the accent on the essential conditions for the development of the blue economy, particularly the promotion of integrated governance of maritime policy, the transfer of research and innovation to the economy, the improvement of professional qualification, knowledge of the oceans, the fight against climate change and the development financing instruments allowing innovative projects to gain access to funding.

The blue economy also relies on partnerships between the local players who contribute to the vitality of the communities and coastal economies. The Commission's proposal provides the tools for these partnerships, particularly local development led by the local players (DLAL) through shared management.

Financial aid for companies

The number 1 priority of the Commission's proposal is aimed at reaching the environmental, economic, social and employment objectives of the common fisheries policy (CFP) defined in article 2 of regulation 1380/2013. The support for this Priority is designed to guarantee that fishing activities are sustainable in the long term in all respects and contribute to the security of the food supply. In particular, a central challenge is to achieve sustainable fishing based on Maximum Sustainable Yield and to reduce the negative consequences of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem. In this context, the FEAMP can support innovation and

investment in fishing techniques which have a low impact on the ecosystems and produce low carbon emissions. The support related to Priority 1 also includes innovation and investment on board the fishing vessels aiming to improve health, safety and working conditions, energy economy and the quality of fish catches, on condition that the fishing capacity is not increased.

The Commission has taken account of the small-scale near-shore fishing situation by proposing preferential treatment for the beneficiaries of this type of fishing by means of a 100% financial aid intensity rate. Furthermore, the proposal reserves certain areas of support for small-scale near-shore fishing, i.e. the purchase of used fishing vessels and the replacement or modernisation of the vessels' fishing gear.

Also, in view of the challenges to be taken up in the sustainable exploitation of fishing resources in accordance with the CFP conservation objectives, the Commission has proposed to reintroduce the FEAMP's support for the definitive shutdown of fishing activities in the fleet segments for which a structural overcapacity has been recorded, as provided for in article 22, section 4, of the regulation relating to the CFP. In order to ensure consistency between the structural adaptation of the fleet and the conservation objectives, it is proposed that this support should be strictly conditional on and related to obtaining the required results.

Finally, the Commission has proposed that the FEAMP should compensate extraordinary interruptions of fishing activities caused by the implementation of certain conservation measures, emergency measures, the interruption of the application of a fishing agreement, natural disasters or environmental incidents. This compensation can only be granted in the event of unexpected circumstances which have significant consequences for fishermen.

Marketing

The competitiveness of the fishing sector depends in the main on the effectiveness and the efficient organisation of the market. Transparency, stability, quality and diversity of the supply chain, and the information of consumers are important challenges. In this regard, the Commission has proposed a specific area of support of the FEAMP for fishing and aquaculture product marketing, as per the objectives of common market organisation (CMO). This support will in particular allow the creation of producers' organisation, the implementation of marketing plans, the promotion of new commercial opportunities and the development and distribution of market information.

Implementation of the data collection inspection system

The inspection of fisheries and the development of a culture of compliance with the rules are essential to ensure the efficient implementation of the CFP. The success of the CFP also depends on obtaining reliable and comprehensive scientific data to allow a conservation policy based on the best available scientific opinions. In view of the importance of these two challenges, the Commission has proposed to ring-fence at least 15% of the financial allocation of each FEAMP programme and to grant them an increased cofinancing and aid intensity rate.

Improvement of selectivity

The landing obligation is one of the main challenges of the CFP. It has brought about considerable changes in fishing practices, sometimes with a significant financial cost. The Commission shares the SWWAC's opinion as regards the necessity to improve selectivity. Therefore, the proposal for the FEAMP allows the support of innovation, pilot projects, the dissemination of knowledge and investment aiming to reduce unwanted catches. This covers the development and purchase of selective fishing gear for example. The proposal also provides for an increased aid intensity rate (75%) for all projects that contribute to the implementation of the landing obligation.

Ensuring a prosperous marine ecosystem

The protection of biodiversity and of the marine ecosystems is an essential challenge for the health of the seas and oceans and is the subject of special support from the FEAMP in the Commission's proposal. Financial aid has therefore been provided for, for example, for the collection of lost fishing gear and marine waste, for the achievement of a good ecological state of the marine environment in accordance with the framework directive "strategy for the marine environment", for the management of the Natura 2000 zones and for the species protection measures in accordance with the Habitats and Birds directive.

I would like to thank the Advisory council for the work they have carried out and would ask you to contact Mrs Pascale Colson, Advisory council coordinator (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu, +32.2.295.62.73) should you require any additional information relating to this reply.

Yours faithfully,


João AGUIAR MACHADO

Copy: Mrs Veits, Mrs Roller, Mrs Zito, Mrs Vaigauskaite, Mrs Colson, Mrs de Diego, Mr Guerre

