



The future of our oceans: Towards a new vision for global fisheries & aquaculture

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Online event



Chaired by Pierre Karleskind MEP

Chair of PECH Committee and
Co-chair of the Fisheries and Aquaculture WG of
the EP Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development”

Speakers:

- **Pierre Karleskind**, MEP
- **Dr. Manuel Barange**, Director, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department
- **Veronika Veits**, Director, International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries, DG MARE, European Commission
- **Javier Garat**, President, Europêche
- **Marco Gilmozzi**, President, Federation of European Aquaculture Producers
- **Dr. Antonia Leroy**, Head of Ocean Policy, WWF European Policy Office
- **Manuel Pizarro**, MEP
- **Isabel Carvalhais**, MEP
- **Nicolás González Casares**, MEP
- **Ernesto Peñas Lado**, Member, IUCN/CEM/FEG

Welcome Remarks

MEP Pierre Karleskind

“Environmental and competitiveness objectives within the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, despite seemingly opposed, should go hand in hand.”

Mr. Pierre Karleskind started the discussion by stressing that **environmental and competitiveness objectives within the fisheries and aquaculture sectors**, despite seemingly opposed, **should go hand in hand**. Furthermore, Mr. Karleskind mentioned the EP Committee’s on Fisheries’ ongoing work towards **making the EU Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy more “blue”** and underlined that the European Commission fully supports this approach. Additionally, Mr. Karleskind stressed the importance of the **zero-tolerance goal for Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing** and added that **sustainable aquaculture will play an important role in the effort to build resilient food systems**.

Keynote address

Dr. Manuel Barange, Director, FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department

“Society expects a new narrative for fisheries and aquaculture, which recognizes its benefits for food security, livelihoods, trade and cultural values, while simultaneously facing sustainability challenges.”

During his intervention, Dr. Manuel Barange highlighted that fish consumption is growing at twice the rate of population growth and thus **fisheries and aquaculture are a net contributor to global nutrition transformation** and simultaneously a **significant income generator for developing countries**. Moreover, Dr. Barange stressed that fish stocks under intense management are increasingly sustainable or rebuilding, thus underlining **the importance of management**. One of Dr. Barange’s key messages was that society expects a **new narrative for fisheries and aquaculture, which recognizes its benefits for food security, livelihoods, trade and cultural values, while simultaneously facing sustainability challenges**. In that line Dr. Barange mentioned some key issues that were highlighted at the FAO International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability, including the importance of fisheries and aquaculture in **minimizing the environmental impact of food production systems**, the -seemingly contradicting- **compatibility between conservation and sustainable use**, the emergence of **management as the best conservation tool** and the need to urgently **implement transformative adaptations to climate change**. Dr. Barange concluded his intervention by underlining that this **“blue transformation”** requires re-investment in fisheries management, sustainable intensification of aquaculture, support to emerging supply chains and reconciliation of sustainability and food security priorities.

Panel Discussion

Veronika Veits, Director, International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries, DG MARE, European Commission

“Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) need to be expanded to 30% of the marine environment and to that end maritime spatial planning is of key importance.”

Ms. Veronika Veits began her intervention by pointing out that fisheries and aquaculture need to be both parts of the EU economic recovery and the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss. At the same time, they need to be **aligned with the principle of sustainability**, in order to **balance conservation and resource use**. To that end, the **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) plays an important role** and its full implementation, along with achieving or maintaining maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels, remain among EU’s immediate goals. Furthermore, Ms. Veits mentioned new measures that will be implemented in the same direction. More specifically **an Action Plan to conserve fisheries resources and protect marine ecosystems will be adopted in 2021** and **a report on the functioning of the CFP will be published in 2022**.

Ms. Veits also mentioned that wild capture fisheries alone cannot ensure food security. Therefore, in the context of the ongoing review of the **Strategic Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of EU Aquaculture**, one of the main objectives is **ensuring sustainability and promoting competitiveness - through the revision of marketing standards- of the aquaculture sector**. Moreover, Ms. Veits highlighted the importance of **expanding Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to 30%** of the marine environment and stressed that **maritime spatial planning is of key importance**. Ms. Veits also underlined the significance of **international cooperation and capacity building in developing countries** in achieving a balance between conservation and sustainable use of fisheries and aquaculture. In than line, **EU’s Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements will be evaluated in 2021** and the possibility of an **EU Ocean Africa initiative is being explored** within the context of the new EU-Africa Strategy. Last but not least, Ms. Veits highlighted the EU’s global ambition of a **zero-tolerance policy to IUU fishing** and argued that a digital certification scheme would be effective to that end.

Javier Garat, President, Europêche

“It would be more beneficial to expand responsible fisheries’ management in places that are falling behind in this respect, rather than introducing radical measures, like expanding MPAs and Strict Protection Zones.”

Mr. Javier Garat reiterated that **management of fisheries can be the best conservation tool** and underlined the importance of tackling climate change, maritime litter, IUU fishing and overexploitation of fish stocks. One of Mr. Garat’s key messages was that **the fishing industry needs security, stability and predictability** and in that line, since there are already numerous rules in place, **an effort to simplify those rules instead of**

introducing new ones is needed. Mr. Garat also stressed that it would be very fruitful if **NGOs** followed the lead of the fishing industry and **promoted sustainable management through stakeholder cooperation and investment in scientific analysis and new technologies.** Last but not least, Mr. Garat highlighted that it would be more beneficial to **expand responsible fishing management in places that are falling behind in this respect rather than introducing radical measures,** like expanding MPAs and Strict Protection Zones. However, it was clarified that the **fishing industry is in favor of establishing MPAs,** as long as they are based to science, have clear and measurable objectives and are periodically monitored.

Marco Gilmozzi, President, Federation of European Aquaculture Producers

“There is no level playing field in the EU market among EU and non-EU producers and the EU aquaculture production is thus unable to grow.”

Mr. Marco Gilmozzi initially highlighted the importance of the aquaculture sector for bridging the gap between production and demand for seafood. However, Mr. Gilmozzi stressed that **EU producers are subject to an ever-increasing number of rules,** which increases the sector’s costs. Therefore, there is **no level playing field in the EU market** among EU and non-EU producers and the **EU aquaculture production is thus unable to grow.** In that line, one of Mr. Gilmozzi’s key messages was that it is essential to **address three issues, in order to promote the EU aquaculture sector** and boost production; the simplification of the complex licensing legal framework; ensuring level playing field in the EU market; and increasing consumer information regarding product origin.

Dr. Antonia Leroy, Head of Ocean Policy, WWF European Policy Office

“For us, the Farm-to-Fork Strategy should not only be nice words on the paper, but it should also be put into practice in regulations.”

Dr. Antonia Leroy started her intervention by highlighting that **a global vision on oceans and aquaculture is needed,** while at the same time improvements are essential, notably regarding the SDG 14 (Life Below Water). Furthermore, Dr. Leroy **focused on the Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity Strategies by underlining their timeliness.** Nevertheless, **two main gaps** were identified; the issue of **investment,** including subsidies, and the issue of EU fish products’ **traceability and transparency.** Additionally, Dr. Leroy mentioned several actions to tackle fisheries’ unsustainable exploitation at an EU level, e.g. increasing transparency regarding who is assessing fisheries and fostering international regulations that limit flags of convenience. To that end, Dr. Leroy highlighted the fact that the industry has a crucial role to play. Dr. Leroy concluded her intervention by mentioning actions that consumers can undertake, such as consuming less but better quality seafood, and demanding more transparency.

Reactions by MEPs

MEP Manuel Pizarro

“We can never consider fishermen as the problem; they are part of the solution for the sustainable use of the oceans.”

Mr. Manuel Pizarro focused on three issues during his intervention. First of all, regarding the issue of management, Mr. Pizarro stated that **more management plans and increased transparency are needed**. The necessity for **enhanced dialogue among all stakeholders, including fishermen** that are often overlooked or scapegoated, was also underlined. Secondly, regarding MPAs’ objectives, Mr. Pizarro stressed, that it is **important to clearly define their role and to invest heavily in order to create well-managed MPAs**. Last but not least, as far as food chains linked to fisheries are concerned, Mr. Pizarro claimed that there is **a need for innovation and investment, especially in the development of aquaculture**.

MEP Isabel Carvalhais

“I believe that there is still a long way to go to enhance the communication between the fisheries sector and consumers.”

Ms. Isabel Carvalhais raised two main points during her intervention. The first one concerned **the importance of communication on fisheries issues, especially between producers and consumers**. In that line, Ms. Carvalhais **stressed the significant potential of aquaculture for the future**, and therefore underlined **the necessity to improve its transparency, in order to build consumers’ trust**. Then, Ms. Carvalhais addressed the issue of **gender inequality and equity in fisheries**, stressing that women always had a prominent role in the entire sector. Ms. Carvalhais concluded her intervention by highlighting the relevance of Ms. Veits’ and Ms. Leroy’s interventions, notably regarding the need for well-managed MPAs. Nevertheless, Ms. Carvalhais stated that **it is also important to take into account the growing world population** in that line highlighted the importance of aquaculture.

MEP Nicolás González Casares

“The importance of the fisheries’ sector in Europe is notorious, not only for the economy, but also for the social and, of course, for food security.”

Mr. Nicolás González Casares started his intervention by **highlighting the impact of climate change on the oceans** and therefore on the coastal communities. In that line and relating to IPCC reports, the **European seas will be among the most affected world regions regarding oceanic biomass decline due to rising sea temperature**. Therefore, Mr. González Casares emphasized the risks for the European food systems and for the socio-economic viability of coastal communities. Then, Mr. González Casares underlined **the need to**

tackle this issue from multiple angles and reiterated the need to avoid scapegoating European fishermen for unsustainable fisheries. Moreover, Mr. González Casares stressed that **aquaculture is the best way to achieve the objectives of the Farm-to-Fork Strategy**. The prominence of the fishery sector in Europe involving millions of people and its social, economic and environmental aspects, were also discussed. Finally, Mr. González Casares argued that in addition to addressing the fisheries' environmental impact, a holistic approach should be adopted, notably by focusing on other environmental issues as well, such as pollution, plastic waste or climate change.

Discussion with the audience, moderated by Ernesto Peñas Lado, Member of IUCN/CEM/FEG

During the discussion with the audience, the issue of feeding wild-caught fish to farmed carnivorous fish and its impact on human food systems was raised. Mr. Gilmozzi argued that raw materials are needed in every sector, in order to produce the final product, while also mentioning that mainly byproducts or fish leftovers are used to feed farmed fish. As far as the balance between marine conservation targets and social conditions attached to fisheries is concerned, Ms. Veits highlighted that the main objective of the CFP is to achieve biological sustainability, involving social, economic and environmental aspects. Moreover, regarding the range of coastal areas dedicated to aquaculture in Europe, Mr. Gilmozzi focused on the lack of a licensing system to launch new aquaculture projects in coastal zones. Finally, during the discussion with the audience the issue of effective support to sustainable seafood products was addressed. In that line, Dr. Barange underlined the need for more effective fisheries' management, while Mr. Garat added that there is a need for rules' simplification and for increased collaboration among scientists, industry, policymakers and NGOs.

Closing remarks

Ernesto Peñas Lado, Member of IUCN/CEM/FEG

“There is a general consensus on the need for a new narrative in fisheries and aquaculture.”

Summing up the event's main messages, Mr. Ernesto Peñas Lado initially pointed out that **there is a general consensus among stakeholders regarding the need for a new narrative in fisheries and aquaculture** and therefore the **necessity to provide objective data on the status of world fisheries**. Moreover, according to Mr. Peñas Lado, instead of being considered as problems, **aquaculture and fisheries should be seen as solutions to the growing world demand for animal protein**. In that line Mr. Peñas Lado underlined the **necessity to balance the exploitation of fish stocks and the protection of biodiversity** and highlighted that those two are compatible. However, Mr. Peñas Lado stressed that **the**

regulation of the fishing industry is complex and could undermine its development. Regarding MPAs, Mr. Peñas Lado warmly welcomed the general consensus on this issue and highlighted the fact that the industry is not against such conservation measures, as far as clear science-based targets are defined. Mr. Peñas Lado also stressed the importance of tackling IUU fishing and fostering capacity-building for better management in developing countries. Last but not least, Mr. Peñas Lado underlined the importance of stability, trust and dialogue between the fishing and aquaculture sectors as well as environmental NGOs.