

# BalticSea2020

## **THE REFORM OF THE CFP CAN SAVE RESOURCES AND FISHERMEN!**

### **An ambitious reform of the Common Fisheries Policy must be adopted by the European Parliament**

By Björn Carlson, Founder of BalticSea2020

On 18 December, the European Parliament will vote on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. As many people have criticized the European Commission's proposal, it is essential to keep in mind the challenges faced by European fisheries. It is now in the hands of Members of the European Parliament to improve the situation for fishing stocks, as well as the fishermen's.

Reform is urgent: for the last thirty years, the CFP has failed to curb overfishing and discarding. In this respect, the Commission figures are alarming: 62% of Atlantic stocks and 82% of Mediterranean stocks are overfished while member states of the European Union have authorized catch levels 40% higher than the average scientific recommendations over the last ten years. In addition, each year 1.7 million tons of fish are thrown back dead into the sea, equivalent to one quarter of perfectly edible fish caught in the EU; a situation that seems absurd as the EU imports more than half of the fish it consumes.

However it is not all doom and gloom. Progress has been made over the last years. For example, 22 stocks out of 88 are now sustainably fished in European waters. This achievement has been made possible by following management strategies which are part of the proposed reform of the CFP and are being discussed by our representatives in the European Parliament. Rebuilding stocks and maintaining them above Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2015 would ensure long-term sustainability of stocks, while the discard ban would encourage fishermen to fish more selectively, thus contributing to the increase in commercial catches and reducing bycatch and allowing smaller fish and juveniles to grow.

These are well-tested concepts and have proven very successful in various European regions, including in the Baltic Sea.

Finally, it is necessary to put an end to wasteful subsidies that increase fishing capacity. Subsidies should be conditional on achieving the objectives of the CFP, and be directed towards improving gear selectivity and the provision of scientific data.

If such measures would be adopted by the European Parliament, not only would the stock size increase by 80% and catches by 588,000 tons by 2020 but the net profit margin of EU fishing activities would also be multiplied by 3.5 by 2022 (source: European Commission impact assessment accompanying the proposal on the Common Fisheries Policy, published in July 2011).

This reform would benefit to everyone: the profitability of the fishing industry would improve benefiting fishermen; consumers would have better access to quality fish; and the marine environment would be preserved.

The decision is now in the hands of Members of the European Parliament who must adopt a reform which goal is not to stigmatize fishermen, as we have sometimes heard, but to put in place a framework for long-term sustainability of the fishing industry instead.

Let's not waste this once every 10 years opportunity to let fishermen benefit from abundant resources and give this industry the means to continue.