

**LIFE Statement on the Implementation
of the Common Fisheries Policy
November 2021**

The Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) was launched in 2012 on the eve of a newly reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) to unite European small-scale fishers to achieve fair fisheries, healthy seas and vibrant communities.

Meeting on November 5 and 6 2021 for a virtual Fishers' Forum and LIFE General Assembly, LIFE Members noted with concern that:

Due to systemic failure of Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) implementation, the CFP is failing to achieve its socio-economic and environmental objectives. This is disproportionately affecting us, the small-scale low impact coastal fishers, and undermining the sustainability of our communities and the natural resources on which we depend.

Eight years after the adoption of the reformed CFP in 2013 and its implementation in 2014, the intended improvement in sustainability outcomes for the small-scale low impact fleets across the EU are not being delivered, and the opportunity to harness our potential to achieve wider social, environmental and economic sustainability goals is being squandered.

To address this, LIFE calls for a review of the implementation of the CFP in 2022 towards establishing:

Fair Access to Fishery Resources for Small-scale Low Impact Fishers

Despite comprising around 75% of the active EU fishing fleet by vessel numbers and providing 50% of sea-going employment, lack of sufficient fishing opportunities means that our sector is only able to land 5% of the EU's catch. Fishing rights should be given to those who fish in the most sustainable way and who provide the greatest benefit to society with priority access to resources, rather than to those who fish the most, as is currently the case. Article 17 of the CFP provides a mechanism for achieving this. It needs to be implemented both in the letter and the spirit of the law.

The fishing rights of small-scale low impact fishing fleets to be ring-fenced against privatization or transfer to larger scale fishing companies. Legal provisions need to be put in place to prevent the concentration of fishing rights in the hands of relatively few companies and speculative trading markets for fishing quotas, activities that have detrimental environmental and socio-economic impacts.

The Commission and Member States have a duty to ensure full transparency on the allocation of fishing opportunities by making public the details of the companies and vessels to whom fishing opportunities have been allocated, and the quantities allocated.

Secure Fishing Areas - and a say in how they are managed

Our fishing areas are increasingly invaded by larger scale intensive high impact fishing activities, which have a detrimental effect on both the fishery resources and the marine environment. This impacts negatively on our livelihoods, reduces our

catches, disturbs the reproduction of fish stocks, and undermines the future prospects for our sons and daughters. We call for inshore fishing areas to be reserved for small-scale low impact fishing activities under co-management regimes.

The CFP should recognize the importance of co-management and promote and support co-management initiatives.

Public monies for public good not individual gain or the maximization of profits at the expense of the environment, to help us to fish better not to fish more

The misuse of public funds through the European Structural Funds (EMFF) has created a distorted sea in Europe, benefitting fishing companies with larger scale high impact fishing operations with windfall subsidies. This gives them an unfair advantage and contributes to overfishing and environmental degradation, contrary to SDG 14.6.

Fish stocks and the marine environment are public resources that need to be conserved in a sustainable manner if fishing is to have a future. This requires giving attention to the three pillars of sustainability – the environmental as well as the social and economic pillars. LIFE therefore urges that under the new European funding scheme for the maritime sector – the EMFAF - that priority is given to protecting the environment and conserving fish stocks, and to supporting collective projects that contribute to social and economic sustainability of fishing communities.

An End to By-catch and Discards

An instrument like the landing obligation makes no sense for the conservation of fish stocks. Due to its poor implementation, it is of questionable use for scientific stock assessment, and it is a huge burden to fishers. Discarding must be reduced through improved selectivity of fishing gears. Gears that have unacceptably high by-catch rates of non-target species and of fish below minimum size should not be licensed to fish.

Fisheries Control Based on Risk of Infraction

Our fleet segment contributes 5% of the catch by volume, we have a comparatively low impact on the environment, and we are happy to comply with sensible, practical and bespoke control measures for our fleet segment. We call for control measures to be applied proportionately, using a risk-based approach to fisheries control and enforcement, that focuses on those fleet segments that have the highest risk of infraction and where infraction is likely to cause a significant breach of fishing regulations. For example, in fisheries activities where the risk of significant by catch and discarding is high.

Support for Fishers of the Future

The average age of fishers is increasing faster than the population as a whole, and younger generations are losing interest in taking up fishing as a livelihood. Special effort is needed to encourage, train and support younger generations to take up small-scale low impact fishing either as a way of life or as a part-time activity combined with several other livelihood activities, including combining tourism and fishing.

Fair Access to Markets

Small-scale low impact fishers provide the cream of the catch. We provide catch of the day fresh fish of a high quality for direct human consumption, supplied locally, seasonally diverse, caught in a sustainable manner, contributing to the socio-economic well-being of our communities and rooted in our shared maritime cultural heritage.

The inherent value of our fish catches is not being realised, and we as fishers are losing out as price takers in a market where supply and demand determine prices. These are set according to the volume of landings from the larger scale sector and the prices offered by large retailers. This is undermining the viability of our businesses. To obtain their full added value and a fair price, our products need to be differentiated on the market, with short supply chains as direct as possible to the consumer.

We ask for support and capacity building, and an enabling policy environment, based on value not on volume, so that we can form our own small-scale producer organizations and other appropriate commercial structures through which we can organize our activities and supply our products.

Celebrate the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA)

2022 is designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA). To mark the occasion, LIFE calls on the European Commission to incorporate SDG 14b – *to provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets* - into the CFP objectives.