

To Virginijus Sinkevičius
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels

Dear Commissioner,

We would like to express our deep concern about your proposal to extend the eel fishing closure period from 3 to 6 consecutive months. Such a measure is totally disproportionate and may lead to the complete decline of this fishing industry, which is mainly artisanal. Being a cultural tradition on the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts for more than 500 years, eel fishing represents up to 80% of the professionals' income.

Your proposal goes beyond the recommendations of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and may have a very negative impact on the stocks, as fishermen are very much contributing to the restocking of this species by working closely with environmental and academic entities.

We would like to point out that for many years eel fishermen have been respecting very tough European rules to preserve this species. They have been "good pupils" by reducing their activity and collaborating with the scientific community.

Today they are sounding an alarm on the consequences of the new additional measures you have announced, in the current difficult economic context and confronted with increasing competition from non-European fleets, which could take advantage of the severe restrictions imposed on the European fleet.

Your proposal is not going in the right direction because it does not take into account:

- Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing of eels and eel trade between the EU and third countries.
- The problem of cormorants, for which there is no impact assessment or monitoring strategy.
- The need to combat the direct and indirect impacts of human activities other than fishing, in particular obstacles to fish migration, pollution and contamination of natural environments. The essential role of the fleets in eel restocking, which is an EU legal obligation for the preservation of this species.

We consider it necessary to convey our views to you before the final decision is taken at the meeting of the EU Council of Ministers on December 11 and 12. Traditional eel fishermen

deserve to be duly recognized for their role in maintaining the fragile environmental balance of our beautiful lagoons and estuaries. Derogatory measures for the artisanal fleet should be adopted in order to preserve fishermen's environmental and social role.

We sincerely believe that a study should be carried out on anthropogenic causes of eel stocks decline, as well as on the impact that the new fishing closure would have on artisanal fishing. A comprehensive recovery plan for this species is necessary covering not only fishing activities, but also other human activities that contribute to the deterioration of eel fishing industry, such as hydroelectric dams or pollution.

Furthermore, we ask you to accompany any additional restrictive measure aimed at limiting eel fishing with financial measures that are adequate with the wider social and economic consequences that could result from it.

The fishermen of the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, France and Europe are counting on you.

We thank you very much in advance for your action.

Irène Tolleret

Pierre Karleskind

Clara Aguilera

Gabriel Mato

Sylvie Brunet

Giuseppe Ferrandino

Marie-Pierre Vedrenne

Peter Van Dalen

Annie-Schreijer-Pierik

Valérie Hayer

David McAllister

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Niclas Herbst

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