



European Economic and Social Committee

NAT/215
Fisheries/Compensation for
additional costs incurred by
remoteness

Brussels, 29 October 2003

OPINION

of the European Economic and Social Committee

on the

Proposal for a Council Regulation introducing a scheme to compensate for the additional costs incurred in the marketing of certain fishery products from the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands and the French departments of Guiana and Réunion as a result of those regions' remoteness

COM(2003) 516 final - 2003/0202 (CNS)



On 11 September 2003, the Council decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 37 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the

Proposal for a Council Regulation introducing a scheme to compensate for the additional costs incurred in the marketing of certain fishery products from the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands and the French departments of Guiana and Réunion as a result of those regions' remoteness
(COM(2003) 516 final – 2003/0202(CNS)).

On 23 September 2003, the Bureau of the European Economic and Social Committee instructed the Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment to prepare the Committee's work on the subject.

Given the urgent nature of the work, at its 403rd plenary session of 29 and 30 October 2003 (meeting of 29 October 2003), the European Economic and Social Committee appointed **Mr Sarró Iparraguirre** as rapporteur-general and adopted the following opinion by 76 votes in favour and two abstentions.

1. Introduction

1.1 The outermost regions of the Community (the Portuguese autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira, the Spanish autonomous community of the Canary Islands and the French overseas departments of Guadeloupe, Guiana, Martinique and Réunion) are lagging behind in socio-economic terms, which is why the Community provides assistance for promoting their economic and social development, and their smooth integration in the dynamics of the internal market.

1.2 In this context, the Council has set up programmes of specific options for alleviating the remoteness and insularity of these outermost regions.

1.3 The difficulties faced by the fisheries sector in the outermost regions of the Community are exacerbated, in particular, by the cost of transporting fishery products to the markets as a result of their remoteness and isolation.

1.4 Article 299(2) of the EC Treaty recognises the need to adopt special measures to assist the outermost regions and mentions the fisheries sector explicitly.

1.5 In response to this situation, in 1992 the Community introduced a scheme to assist producers in these regions in the marketing of certain fishery products. The scheme was renewed in 1994, 1995, 1998 and 2002¹, thus offering a commercial outlet for the main species concerned.

¹ OJ L 162, 30.6.1994, p. 8; OJ L 236, 5.10.1995, p. 2; OJ L 208, 24.7.1998, p. 1; OJ L 89, 5.4.2002, p. 1.

1.6 The scheme was last renewed by Council Regulation (EC) No. 579/2002 of 25 March 2002², which lays down that this scheme will apply until 31 December 2002.

1.7 This Proposal for a Regulation stipulates that this scheme to compensate for the additional costs incurred in the processing and marketing of certain fishery products in these outermost regions must continue after 2003.

2. **Comments**

2.1 The EESC believes it is necessary for this compensation scheme to continue so that certain fishery products can continue to compete with those from other regions in the EU.

2.2 The proposed Regulation also provides for support for the processing and marketing of fishery products from the non-industrial and inshore fishing industry. The EESC welcomes the fact that non-industrial and inshore fishing are included in the proposed Regulation and urges the Commission to continue to support this type of fishing, which is of considerable social and economic importance in these outermost regions.

2.3 The EESC believes it is important for the future of this proposed Regulation that consideration is given to the possibility of adjusting the amounts and quantities that it sets for the various species. However, the EESC is of the view that the procedure for adjusting the amounts and quantities laid down in Article 8 is too complicated. The Commission should therefore draw up a simpler procedure so that practical decisions can be taken more quickly.

2.4 The EESC agrees with the proposed Regulation that economic measures should be financed by the Guarantee Section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and that the Commission should report on the implementation of the measures, accompanied by proposals for appropriate adjustments, every four years, starting on 1 January 2007.

3. **Conclusions**

3.1 The EESC believes this Regulation must be published as soon as possible.

3.2 The EESC understands that the Regulation is of a permanent nature and that, if necessary, the measures must be revised so as to maintain the objective of compensating for the additional costs incurred in the marketing of certain fishery products from the outermost regions of the EU.

²

OJ L 89, 5.4.2002, p.1

3.3 The EESC believes that the procedure for adjusting amounts and quantities laid down in Article 8 must be made more simple, practical and flexible.

Brussels, 29 October 2003.

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

The Secretary-General
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

Roger Briesch

Patrick Venturini
