



Federal Ministry
of Food
and Agriculture

Towards Sustainable Fisheries

in Germany and the EU



Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

The basic principle of European fisheries policy laid down by the **European Union's Common Fisheries Policy** (CFP) is to ensure that all fishing activities are sustainable. Accordingly, management of the fish stocks must be based on the maximum sustainable yield (MSY). From 2020, the **maximum sustainable yield** is the **management target** for all stocks.

The introduction of a **general landing obligation**, which was phased in by 2019, also serves the target of sustainable fisheries. This includes the requirement that all catches of species subject to catch restrictions must in principle be landed even if they are unwanted and of no commercial value to the fisherman. This market-oriented approach is intended to encourage fishermen, who have to generate an economic return, to optimise the selectivity of their fishing gear to avoid unwanted by-catches, particularly of juvenile fish.

At the same time **regionalisation** constitutes an integral part of the Common Fisheries Policy which boosts cooperation between coastal states, particularly in terms of fleshing out the landing obligation and the technical measures, in order to take better account of the different conditions in the various marine areas.

Developing multi-annual plans

The scientifically-based **multi-annual plans** for the different fisheries and marine areas form the backbone of the Common Fisheries Policy. Under EU fisheries policy, Germany supports the development of multi-annual plans and the expansion of these plans to include as many commercially utilised fish stocks as possible. To that end, the **fisheries research** of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) provides important input. In addition, the Federal Government plays an active role in developing technical rules to avoid unwanted by-catch.

We also support efforts aimed at the **sustainable management** of fish stocks and **protection of the marine environment** on an international level. This applies in particular to measures taken within regional fisheries management organisations and to EU fisheries partnership agreements with third countries. Especially with regard to agreements with African developing countries, the Federal Government is committed to promoting measures to develop local fisheries administrations and the fishing industry. Germany also promotes the development of capacities in the areas of fisheries management and monitoring through bilateral development co-operation projects.



| Fighting illegal fishing

Political efforts to ensure sustainable fishing in the oceans are often undermined by **illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing** (IUU fishing). Catches from IUU fishing are estimated to be worth **up to EUR 10 billion**. This has a highly destructive effect on legal fisheries and on marine biodiversity.

Germany actively supports the EU in playing a leading role in the global fight against IUU fisheries. The measures applied include stricter controls, complete traceability of fishery products from third countries and severe penalties for non-compliance. In this way, the EU wants to keep IUU fishing and its products out of European waters, ports and the European internal market. Developing countries are also provided with support in protecting themselves against illegal fishing.

| Sustainable inland fisheries

One of the Federal Government's key priorities is to ensure **sustainable fisheries** in Germany's rivers and lakes. It aims, in co-operation with the federal states (Länder) responsible for inland fisheries, to help improve protection of migrating species of fish (e.g. eel, salmon and sturgeon) through **research projects** and **restocking measures** at European level. To this end, the government supports the expansion of fish passes, co-operation between the Länder themselves, and cooperation between the Länder on the one hand and other riparian states and power plant operators on the other.

Consumer responsibility – quality labels for fishery products

With the overexploitation of the oceans in mind, consumers in



Germany ask about

the origin of fish, the production technologies used and the management of fisheries. A range of **material providing guidance** is available on the subject of sustainable fisheries. Consumers can, for example, find out about trade names, catch methods and origins of fish on the websites of manufacturers of fish products or on the packaging of fish and fish products. For example, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) runs a certification and labeling scheme for sustainable fishing in open waters that corresponds to the best practice guidelines both of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN-FAO) and of the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL), a global association for sustainability standards. Naturland or Friends of the Sea assess the sustainability of fisheries on the basis of various principles and criteria. They promote fish with a certified origin, and check the traceability systems of companies that use fish from certified catching businesses. Consumers are also informed about the issue of overfishing. In this way, critical inquiries by consumers have long since brought about a **change in the purchasing behaviour** of important global buyers of fish and seafood who are now demanding more and more fish from certified fisheries. Despite the progress and positive figures recorded here, however, it should be kept in mind that a lot of fisheries



The German fisheries sector catches an average of roughly **200,000 tonnes** of fish and seafood every year

worldwide still do not participate in this or similar programmes.

| The German fishing fleet

With its fishing fleet, the **German fisheries sector** catches an average of roughly **200,000 tonnes of fish and seafood** every year, which is worth some **EUR 202 million**. The degree of self-sufficiency in respect of fishery products in Germany is only approx. 21 %.

The number of fishing vessels that are part of the **German fishing fleet** is steadily declining and only comprises around 1,300 fishing vessels at present. Around 1,000 small-scale coastal fishing vessels, with an overall length of less than 12 metres, make up the majority. Sea fishing continues to be supported by federal funds, in particular because of the current poor state of two stocks that are important for the Baltic Sea fisheries and the associated reduction in fishing opportunities.

Impact of Brexit on fisheries

The EU will lose a large part of its water bodies as a result of Brexit. With the strong support of the German government, the EU is endeavouring to maintain the current fishing opportunities for the EU fleet in British waters. In addition to this, it is important to ensure, in collaboration with Great Britain and Norway, that the management of fish stocks in the North Sea, which straddle several fishing zones, continues to be sustainable in the future.



Fisheries as an important economic factor for coastal regions

Jobs connected to the fishing sector – whether directly or indirectly – continue to form the **backbone of many regions** along Germany's North Sea and Baltic coast. Traditionally, the fisheries sector is an integral part of the local economy and way of life. The situation is similar in respect of inland fisheries in rural areas. In both cases, the fisheries sector promotes the attractiveness of the respective area as a tourist destination.

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