

STOP FOSSIL # FUEL SUBSIDIES

No plan for the future of the EU fishing fleet is not an option

March 18, 2022

CONTEXT

AGRIFISH will discuss with the Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries on Monday March 21, requests from the fishing industry for state aid and financial support in response to the increased price of fuel.

TOPLINE

1. Unlike other sectors (e.g. agriculture, transport) there is no medium- or long-term plan for the EU fishing fleet to transition to decarbonise.
2. Oil prices fluctuate and are acutely vulnerable to geopolitical uncertainty and disruption.
3. The European Commission and member states must describe a future for EU fisheries beyond environmental destruction which is not dependent on fossil fuels and state aid.
4. Any temporary short-term support must be in the context of realising this future and a more resilient marine environment and fishing sector.
5. A crisis is an opportunity to transform, not a reason for state aid addiction - the invasion of Ukraine and the escalating climate and biodiversity emergency are existential crises which must not be missed.

POINTS

- The invasion of Ukraine has led to significant increases in oil prices and uncertainty in food markets, including access to fish e.g. Barents Sea cod.
- Increased fuel prices have impacted the fishing sector, in some cases leading to a cessation of activities - the pressure is real, as it was in previous crises e.g. COVID & Brexit.
- Representative bodies for the sector have responded by requesting¹ state aid and measures to alleviate the rising costs, including funds through the EU's European

¹ <https://fiskerforum.com/calling-on-von-der-leyen-to-stand-up-for-the-rights-of-eu-fishermen/>

Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, and that member states be allowed to increase direct aid.

- The viability of the sector is dependent on the health of fish stocks and volatile global oil prices.
- Fish stocks are vulnerable to climate change, but more so to continued overfishing, despite a legal requirement to fish at sustainable levels by 2020, at the latest.
- Depleted fish stocks require burning more fuel to be fished - correspondingly healthier stocks require less fuel.
- And healthier EU fish stocks would mean less dependency on the importation of fish, and so alleviate global food insecurity.
- The most destructive fishing practices use more fossil fuel and emissions and ecosystem destruction, thereby worsening both the climate and biodiversity crises.
- Other sectors (e.g. farming & transport) are exploring how to decarbonise, the fishing sector must do the same.

IN THE SHORT-TERM

The following principles² were developed to inform the provision of state aid in response to the COVID crisis:

1. Concurrent crisis response: policies to address one crisis should have a positive impact on other existing and anticipated crises.
2. Efficiency: obtain the best results with limited resources.
3. Rationality: effective policy requires a linkage between the crisis being addressed and the policy proposal.
4. Speed: a crisis situation requires a rapid response.
5. Institutional integrity: support measures should respect existing institutions.
6. Anti-abuse: ensure that policies are directed towards their intended recipients.
7. Consultation: engage industry and civil society in policy generation.
8. Clarity and transparency: to protect against abuse, policy intent should be stated and outcomes monitored.
9. Conditionality: there should be clear eligibility criteria and transparent procedures for application.
10. Integration: fisheries support policies do not exist in a vacuum and should strengthen policies in other areas.

For example measures could include:

- Remote surveillance and non-observer monitoring programmes to prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
- Income support for any cessation in fishing due to the cost of fuel;
- Invest in zero-emission fishing vessels³;
- Invest in transition towards low impact fishing gears and techniques;
- Invest in the transition of fishers towards other maritime sectors.

² <https://our.fish/publications/covid-19-blue-recovery/>

³ <https://maineclimatetable.org/electrifying-the-lobster-fleet/>