

European Association of Fish Producers Organisations
Association Européenne des Organisations de Producteurs dans le secteur de la pêche



EAPO / AEOP

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EAPO20-25

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Letter by e-mail attachment to:

COMMISSIONER Virginijus Sinkevičius (cab-sinkevicius-contact@ec.europa.eu)

CC: EP PECH Committee secretariat (pech-secretariat@ep.europa.eu)

Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius,

Subject: EAPO position on the Farm to Fork Strategy

EAPO has taken note of the Commission's publication of the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy.

The broad, integrated vision from production to consumption and diets is one to be embraced. The goals of the Strategy, to guarantee a resilient food system ensuring sustainability, food security, and safety is one shared by EAPO.

The F2F Strategy insists on the sustainable aspect of the food systems and wishes to develop an "EU policy framework" for it. EAPO welcomes the recognition of the efforts already accomplished by fishers and the need to support their income. The EU fishing sector has approached the balancing of capacity with opportunity by substantially reducing the fleet and has made huge efforts in the past twenty years to ensure that fishing is sustainable both in terms of catches of fish and other environmental impacts. These endeavours have succeeded and as the latest STECF report¹ points out the trend remains positive. However, this is not the case everywhere else in the world and the need to "raise the standards globally" as highlighted by the Strategy, is much needed.

In this respect EAPO also has a concern with the F2F Strategy, namely the interpretation of 'sustainability' in the Strategy. While the importance of environmental sustainability is clearly recognised, the fishing sector also wants to recall the importance of the social and economic sustainability. The need for primary producers to be paid a fair price should not only be mentioned but should constitute the fundamental building block upon which the attaining of the objectives of

¹ Monitoring the performance of the Common Fisheries Policy (STECF-Adhoc-20-01)
<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120481/ki-ax-20-002-en-n.pdf>

the F2F Strategy is achieved, combined with concrete proposals to improve fishers income thereby empowering the communities within which fishers live and work.

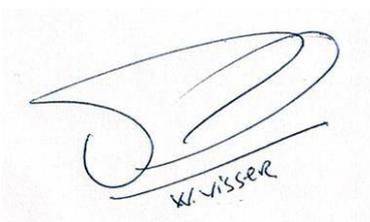
The F2F Strategy is a significant component of the Green Deal. It therefore shares medium to long term objectives that take into account the future generations. On this topic, EAPO would like to stress the necessity for the fishing sector to increase and maintain a significant attractivity. This is true in order to appeal to young people to work in the industry, but equally to guarantee investments and the sustaining of many coastal communities that are dependent on the sector. EAPO therefore invites the Commission to empower fishers and their producer's organisations by acknowledging the multi-generational contribution in the sustaining of our Oceans.

Moreover, the introduction of such a policy framework should not delay the introduction of the level playing field for all products sold in the EU, including imports into the common market. Any potential implementation of a sustainability criteria should also apply to imports. This is to guarantee that EU fishers would face a fair competition with products coming from outside of the Union. Differences that exist in sustainability levels of production across the world cannot be overlooked. Doing otherwise would penalise EU producers.

Sustainability is also ensured through resilience of the food systems both in regular times and in times of crisis. The Strategy recognises that a "contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security [needs] to be put in place in times of crisis". In order to maintain food security during a crisis, it is clear for EAPO that the resilience of the sector needs to be ensured along with the maintenance of the markets throughout such crisis. It is paramount for the "contingency plan" to take into account these two components.

Finally, the fishing sector is of the opinion that seafood produce should marketed and promoted for its sustainability as a naturally derived food source and should be explicitly mentioned when referring to healthy, sustainable diets. This is also true in terms of GHG emissions as seafood products provide an animal protein with the lowest carbon footprint to EU consumers. EAPO finds that the EU should organise promotion of its fisheries and its product. Their qualities of highly nutritious, protein rich food with virtually no land or water use and a production generally covered by ambitious sustainability objectives in the relevant policies, also resulting in one of the lowest carbon footprints food, need to be acknowledged and communicated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Visser', with the name 'P. VISSEER' written in smaller letters below it.

Pim Visser,

President