

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

International Ocean Governance and Sustainable Fisheries

Brussels, 14 MARS 2017
MARE/B3/JS/mg 1325669

Mrs Ronja Karkinen
Chair of Board
Changemaker Finland
Eteläranta 8 / PL 210
00131 Helsinki
FINLAND

Subject: Sustainable fisheries and healthy seas

Dear Mrs Karkinen,

Thank you for sending us the letter from the "Changemaker" Finland, addressed to Commissioner Vella, who has requested me to reply on his behalf.

The European Commission shares your views that it is indispensable to secure sustainable fisheries and healthy seas. Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (hereafter - SFPAs) are based on three main principles: sustainability, transparency, and solidarity through partnership. Throughout the time, SFPAs have managed to get wide recognition and become a benchmark for good fisheries governance in the world. They are the best example in terms of sustainability, as they are based on the best available science and on the negotiation of access for the EU fleet only where they can target the so called "surplus". Whether the EU fleet fishes in the EU waters or in the rest of the world, it applies the same conservation principles. The EU turned its policy around to make fisheries environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

With regard to your suggestion on the incorporation of a quota system based upon the TAC policy, we consider that it is not necessary for SFPAs covering tuna and tuna-like species. As you may know, tuna is a specific species as it is highly migratory, and the approach is very much governed by the relevant tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organisation's (hereafter – RFMO) management and conservation measures (quota or fishing efforts are assigned for the respective RFMO contracting parties).

Concerning SFPAs covering species other than tuna, quota systems based upon the TAC policy can be used but only if there is enough scientific data. Otherwise, an effort control method is used. It is also important to note that measures of RFMOs managing those species, and conclusions of the Joint scientific committees of the specifically concerned mixed – species SFPAs are taken into consideration.

On the landing obligation, allow me to provide you with more detailed information: the landing obligation, as laid down in the Common Fisheries Policy¹, applies to all EU fishing vessels operating in EU waters and non-EU waters not under the jurisdiction of a third country. However, where RFMOs to which the EU is a Party have adopted provisions introducing discarding obligations, the EU legislation has been amended² accordingly to ensure legal clarity and consistency with relevant international rules. The EU is actively promoting, in RFMOs, its policy in relation to discards and several tuna RFMOs (IOTC – Indian Ocean; IATTC and WCPFC – Pacific Ocean) have already adopted conservation and management measures introducing a discard ban of tropical tunas. Subsequently, this discard ban applies also to all the EU vessels that operate under SFPAs in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

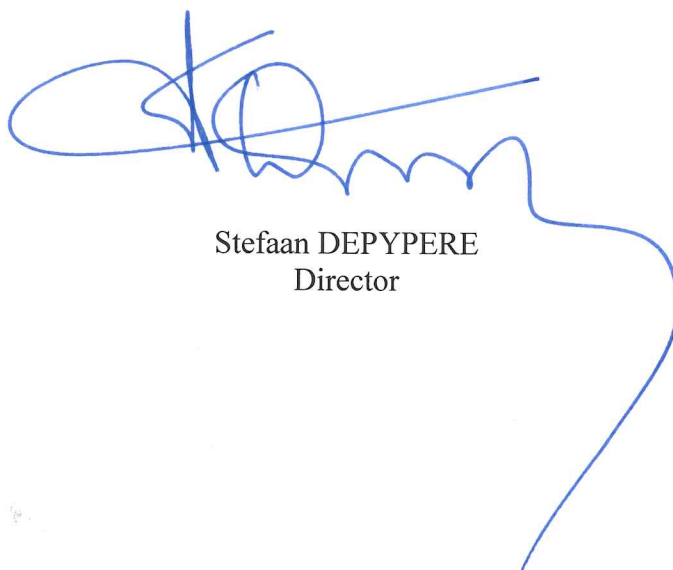
EU vessels fishing in waters under the jurisdiction of a third country have to comply with the national legislation of that country. None of the active fisheries protocols under SFPAs for tuna and tuna like species in the Atlantic Ocean include an obligation to land catches (or a discard ban). Mixed SFPAs, as well as the fisheries protocol between the EU and Greenland, establish a discard ban for Union vessels.

I take the opportunity to remind you that all fisheries agreements and protocols concluded with a third country are public and published in the Official Journal of the EU. This information, including independent evaluation studies of previous and new Protocol, is also available on the DG MARE website :

https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/agreements_en

Thank you again for your interest. We remain at your disposal for your suggestions or enquiries.

Yours sincerely,



Stefaan DEPYPERE
Director

¹ Council Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 11 December 2013, on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 (EC) and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22)

² Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 2015/98, on the implementation of the Union's international obligations, as referred to in Article 15(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, under the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas and the Convention on Future Multilateral Cooperation in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (OJ L 16, 23.1.2015, p. 23). And, Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 2016/171, amending Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 2015/98 (OJ L 33, 10.2.2016, p.1).