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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION
of the
European Fishery Statistics

{SWD(2019) 425 final}

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

European Fishery Statistics (EFS) cover fisheries products caught from the sea and produced from aquaculture in the EU, Norway and Iceland. They have been provided since the 1950s to support the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The legal basis for the statistics consists of acts adopted between 2006 and 2009.

The statistics are part of a complex system of fisheries-related data in the EU and worldwide. This gives rise to discrepancies (as pointed out by the European Court of Auditors) and inefficiencies for data producers serving different organisations through parallel data flows.

The main conclusion of this evaluation is that EFS are an important independent source of information, serving several types of user need linked to fisheries management, market monitoring and research.

However, their relative added value for fisheries management has been on a downward trend, as other data sources such as the Control Regulation and the Data Collection Framework are better targeted and also cover socio-economic aspects, while European business, labour force and social statistics do not provide enough detail on the fisheries sector.

Relevance

There is evidence that EFS have been serving their purpose, providing relevant input on fisheries production, for policymaking in a wider context (in particular as regards the environment and the maritime economy) and for market monitoring in the business sector, research and media use. However, their relevance has declined, as the development, monitoring and evaluation of the CFP have required more data and information since the 2013 reform.

Effectiveness

EFS are used intensively for market monitoring purposes and are useful for international organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. However, they are not used to the extent expected for the needs of the CFP. Because the aquaculture sector is made up of a limited number of very specialised companies, some data are not available for reasons of confidentiality.

Statistical quality

The benefits of EFS are higher data quality standards and the independence of the information, in particular in an area covered by a common EU policy. The statistics are considered more accurate and more complete than similar datasets addressing fisheries policy needs.

Efficiency

The cost of EFS is limited by the fact that, in most countries, catch, landing and aquaculture statistics are compiled from the raw data collected for policy purposes. Eurostat compiles

fishing fleet statistics directly from the EU fishing fleet register, without the need for input from the Member States.

The evaluation confirmed that EU and global fisheries data systems give rise to significant inefficiencies by requiring each country to report overlapping but slightly different datasets to several different organisations.

Coherence

While the internal coherence of EFS is good, other European statistics linked to fisheries (international trade, production of manufactured goods, businesses and labour force, and organic aquaculture statistics) provide a less-than-ideal basis for analysing the maritime economy in detail.

Analysis of the coherence between EFS and Control Regulation data revealed some persistent discrepancies. While these remain small overall, they are significant in Mediterranean countries where the fishing fleet is composed of a large number of small vessels.

EU added value

Individual countries acting separately could not compile such long, independent and comparable time-series of fishery statistics in a consolidated publicly available database.

The discontinuation of EFS would represent a reputational risk for the Commission and in particular for the European statistical system and Eurostat, as the CFP would not be based on independent baseline statistics.

Lessons learned

The CFP requires good-quality fishery statistics that are independent and fit for purpose, serve a wide range of user needs and fit well into the overall international fisheries data ecosystem.