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NOTE

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Information point by the Commission on implementation dialogue on small-scale and coastal fisheries (24 November 2025)
- Information Note

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On 24 November 2025, Commissioner Kadis hosted an **Implementation Dialogue on Small-Scale and Coastal Fisheries (SSCF)** with fishers, NGOs, and representatives from various sectors. The Dialogue addressed pressures on SSCF, implementation of EU rules, the allocation of fishing opportunities and the role of innovation to strengthen sector resilience.

The Dialogue coincided with key EU policy processes, including the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Regulation, the preparation of the Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture, and the implementation of the European Ocean Pact. In this context, the future of SSCF was framed not solely as a sectoral concern, but as an issue linked to food security, territorial cohesion, competitiveness, climate resilience and the sustainability of the blue economy.

SSCF represents 76% of the EU fleet but contributes only 6.6% of the catches, yet it is essential for local economies, cultural heritage, and employment. However, 23% of vessels operate at loss, reflecting structural vulnerabilities and limited capacity to absorb economic and environmental shocks.

Challenges include climate change, stocks displacement, invasive species (particularly in the Mediterranean), high energy prices, market volatility and competition for maritime space. Enhancing innovation, generational renewal, and improved working conditions are essential to ensure the sector's continuity. Ensuring a level playing field with third-country operators, particularly in relation to environmental and labour standards, was also highlighted as essential for maintaining fair competition on EU market.

Participants to the Dialogue highlighted an inconsistent implementation of EU policies across Member States, calling for better transparency, funding access, and socio-economic criteria in the allocation of fishing opportunities. **Access to fishing opportunities and allocation systems emerged as one of the most sensitive and persistent concerns**, including preferential access to the 12 nautical mile zone. Strong support was expressed for the establishment of a **binding EU Action Plan for SSCF**, complemented by clearer rules within the **CFP** and dedicated measures in the upcoming revision of the **Common Market Organisation (CMO)**, to ensure fair access to **waters, quotas and markets**.

The CFP Regulation requires Member States to manage their fishing opportunities using transparent and objective criteria, including those of an environmental, social, and economic nature. While the Commission ensures that national prerogatives align with the CFP objectives, Member States have discretion in how the criteria are applied.

Innovation was identified as essential to modernise the sector, reduce regulatory burdens through digital tools, promote selective and low-impact gear, and support the energy transition and generational renewal. Stakeholders stressed that progress requires fisher involvement through **co-management** and participatory processes, plus stronger cooperation with science, NGOs, and public authorities. Concerns were also raised about **invasive species**, especially in the Mediterranean, with calls for stronger mitigation and adaptation measures.

Finally, stakeholders emphasised better **implementation and enforcement** of existing CFP rules, with some pointing to targeted revisions of specific provisions.

Stakeholders also stressed the importance of **strengthening support systems and improving funding accessibility**. Proposals included **simplifying procedures related to the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)**, improving predictability through **published funding calendars**, and establishing **dedicated advisory services** within Member State **EMFAF managing authorities** to ensure that EU funds effectively reach SSCF.

This implementation dialogue echoes the Commission's 2023 Fisheries and Ocean Package, which announced a vade-mecum on the allocation of fishing opportunities in order to improve transparency and support SSCF.

This was reaffirmed through the 2025 Ocean Pact and led to the publication, in November 2025, of the **Communication for enhanced transparency and good governance in the allocation of fishing opportunities by Member States**¹. This Communication invites Member States to reflect on the systems and methods they are currently using for allocating fishing opportunities and encourages Member States to foster good governance. This Communication also seeks to support SSCF and promote responsible, least environmentally damaging fishing practices, as outlined in Recital 33 of the CFP Regulation.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/6227/oj>