EU autonomous tariff quota for imported fisheries products

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EU launches public consultation on linking certain fish quotas to sustainability criteria

Public consultation: Sustainable imports of fishery products under the EU Autonomous Tariff Quota Regulation

Update

Autonomous trade measures (known as autonomous tariff quotas, ATQs) for fishery and aquaculture products enable the EU fish processing industry to import raw materials at reduced rates or duty-free from non-EU countries when processors have insufficient access to such materials.

The EU is reviewing whether to link access to the EU market under the ATQ regime to certain sustainability criteria. These criteria address issues such as the conservation and management of fish stocks, and the social and labour conditions in which fishing takes place.

Impacted products

Fish and fisheries products

What is changing?

The current ATQ Regulation 2023/2720 provides tariff-free access on a first-come, first-served basis for specific quantities of fisheries products, but there are currently no sustainability criteria in relation to fish entering the EU under this Regulation.

The European Commission is evaluating whether such criteria should be introduced from 2026, and is collecting the views of stakeholders through a questionnaire that covers 10 questions including:

- “Do you think that the ATQ regime should be conditioned upon environmental sustainability criteria?”
- “Do you think that the use of the ATQ regime should be conditioned upon compliance of social sustainability criteria (e.g. working conditions, such as avoidance of forced labour)?”

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- "To what extent would it be important to have more detailed information about the environmental and/or social sustainability of processed fisheries products along the value chain and up to the consumers?"

Why?

The lack of sustainability criteria in the ATQ Regulation raises questions about whether the EU can maintain a steady supply of fishery products in sufficient quantities and/or at competitive prices, and whether the Regulation is consistent with the EU's broader sustainability ambitions. Including sustainability goals in ATQs for fish would complement other EU sustainability initiatives such as the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive.

Timeline

The Commission is considering introducing sustainability criteria into the ATQ regime after 2026.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

If the EU chooses to introduce sustainability criteria into the ATQ regime, this could potentially link access to the EU to (for example) the country of origin's ratification of environmental and/or labour conventions.

Recommended Actions

The consultation via the European Commission's Have Your Say webpage closed on 3 July 2025.

Background

Regulation 2023/2720 sets ATQs for certain fisheries products for the 2024–2026 period. The Regulation opens 31 quotas for unprocessed and semi-processed fisheries products – raw material then used by the EU's food processing sector to meet the increasing demand for fishery products. For most products, the in-quota tariff is set at zero.

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Resources

European Commission (2024) Sustainable imports of fishery products under the EU Autonomous Tariff Quota Regulation

Sources

Regulation (EU) 2023/2720 opening and providing for the management of the Union autonomous tariff quotas for certain fishery products for the 2024–2026 period

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