EU strategy on fisheries external action

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EU Common Fisheries Policy external strategy: Review

EU strategy for fisheries external action

Update

The European Union (EU) is reviewing its strategy for fisheries external action beyond 2030. This initiative will set out general policy principles and objectives, and identify possible needs for future legislation. The review will cover existing fisheries management instruments and frameworks such as those concerning shared fish stocks; international organisations; the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing; and the revised EU control regulations, among others. The EU also aims to identify how a new generation of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements with partner countries can better support their development and food security.

Impacted products

Fish and fishery products

What is changing?

The EU is reviewing its strategy for fisheries external action beyond 2030.

The strategy review will cover:

- fisheries management instruments and frameworks such as those concerning shared fish stocks
- sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs) and international organisations (including regional fisheries management organisations, RFMOs)
- the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing
- the revised EU control regulation and its application externally
- the legislation that regulates the EU external fleet and protects vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas.

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A new generation of SFPAs will be developed in cooperation with partner countries. These will take a regional approach in terms of fisheries access, ocean governance (including science-based decision-making), and blue economy.

Why?

The EU's high dependency on fish caught in waters shared with non-EU countries, and on fish imports from these countries, calls for more effective action on external fisheries. To achieve this, the EU is aiming at wide public consultations involving citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders within and outside the EU.

The main aim is to identify how the EU's fisheries external action can strengthen the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainability – and promote enhanced global and regional governance – while maintaining EU competitiveness.

The ongoing evaluation of the EU Common Fisheries Policy and review of general policy principles and objectives will identify possible needs for future legislation.

Timeline

The European Commission is carrying out a series of consultations in 2025 and expects to present a proposal for new rules in the third quarter of 2026.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

The key pillars of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) – shared stocks, RFMOs, SFPAs, and the fight against IUU fishing – will remain core areas of the EU's fisheries external action. The initiative will explore how legislation can be improved to deliver on the EU's international commitments in cooperation with its partner countries.

Recommended Actions

The consultation via the European Commission's Have Your Say webpage closed on 15 September 2025.

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Background

The review of the EU's strategy for fisheries external action is one element of a broader package. Instruments are either being:

- revised (for example a proposal regarding countries allowing non-sustainable fishing)
- considered for revision (European Commission 2024a)
- under consideration (impact assessment on trade in shark fins: European Commission 2024b)
- being followed up (report on consumer information, European Commission 2023a)
- or due for implementation, such as the new traceability obligations under the revised fisheries control regulation (European Commission 2024c) and the prohibition of products made with forced labour on the EU market (Regulation 2024/3015).

The analysis of the SFPAs (European Commission 2023b), the Regulations on sustainable management of the external fleet (European Commission 2025), and the evaluation of Regulation 734/2008 on protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the high seas, have already been completed. See also the Commission communication on the CFP (European Commission 2023c).

Further reviews relating to external fisheries, markets, and trade that concern other legal instruments include:

- a 12-month study on feed for aquaculture (including fishmeal and fish oil) began in January 2025
- a 2025 impact assessment on better protecting sharks through trade (European Commission 2024a)
- an impact assessment on the regulation of autonomous tariff quotas
- a study on labelling and consumer information (also covering imports) expected in the third quarter of 2025 (European Commission 2023a)
- a feasibility study on traceability of prepared and preserved products, including imported products, to be launched in 2025
- a baseline study on implementation of the International Maritime Organization Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel in 2025
- a study on flags of convenience expected in the third quarter of 2025 (European Commission 2023d).

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Resources

European Commission (2023a) Report […] on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products

European Commission (2023b) Evaluation and analysis of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) between the EU and third countries – Final report.

European Commission (2023c) Oceans and fisheries: Common fisheries policy (CFP)

European Commission (2023d) New EMFAF call for tender for study on the practice of open registers for vessels. News Article, 5 July.

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

European Commission (2024b) The Commission improves shark trade monitoring, as part of the follow-up on European Citizens' Initiative. News Announcement, 16 December.

European Commission (2024c) Oceans and fisheries: Control Regulation

European Commission (2025) Scientific and technical knowledge of the EU-fisheries, exploited stocks and sensitive marine habitats in the high seas and third countries waters. European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency.

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1026/2012 on certain measures for the purpose of the conservation of fish stocks in relation to countries allowing non-sustainable fishing

Sources

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