MARIA DAMANAKI
MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

B-1049 BRUSSELS

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MK/ab CAB (2013) 1755953

Dear Mr Levy, dear Mr Stansfield,

Thank you for your letter of 20 May where you express your valid concerns about the use of subsidies in the EU fisheries sector.

Let me emphasize that the Commission is very aware of the very important points you raised. In fact the Commission has addressed these concerns in its 2011 proposals for an ambitious reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and for the European Fisheries Fund (EMFF). These proposals recognise that environmental sustainability is a prerequisite for economic and social sustainability and that overcapacity is the main driver of overfishing.

Indeed the Commission's proposal for the EMFF no longer includes EU support for fleet subsidies, such as scrapping and temporary cessation aid as they have proven unsuccessful in addressing overcapacity. This proposal focuses instead on supporting the transition to sustainable fisheries and to a profitable sector which no longer depends on subsidies. It makes funding conditional on the Member States' administrative capacity to implement the data collection and control and enforcement systems effectively. It limits support for modernisation to clearly defined objectives such as gear selectivity, storing of discards or health and safety.

The Commission's proposal for the EMFF also requires that both operators and Member States comply with key objectives and rules of the CFP, in particular control obligations, the IUU Regulation and data collection obligations. Finally, the proposal details the information about the beneficiaries and operations (type, expenditure, location, etc.) which Member States will have to make publicly available, in line with the Transparency initiative, while avoiding[1] the disclosure of the names of natural persons (as opposed to legal persons), which follows a 2010 ruling by the European Court of Justice.

A political agreement was reached on 29 May 2013 between the European Parliament and the Council on the CFP proposal according to which MSY will have to be reached by 2015 where possible, and at the latest by 2020 for all fish stocks. Discarding will be phased out progressively between 2015 and 2019. Member States will also have to ensure that their fleet capacity is in balance with their fishing opportunities, submitting annual reports on the balance between fishing capacity and fisheries resources and developing action plans to reduce overcapacity whenever a fleet segment is affected.

[1] Pursuant to a 2010 judgment of the Court of Justice of the EU
http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2010-11/cp100110en.pdf

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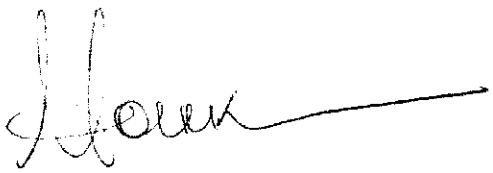
As for the EMFF, we are still awaiting the outcome of the negotiation process between Council an Parliament which will determine the final shape of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. I know that there are aspects of the Commission's proposals which may change in the course of the negotiations. It is important however to have a clear understanding and agreement on the fundamental objective of the proposal: to increase the policy's effectiveness and impact.

We have, together with the Council and the European Parliament, the obligation and the responsibility to develop a Common Fisheries Policy that will ensure environmental, economic and social sustainability. This objective requires moving away from possible short lived gains and adopting a long term, comprehensive view.

I very much hope you can join me in ensuring that we continue to making the reform of the CFP a success and that the EMFF can continue to support the economic development of the fisheries sector by promoting sustainable economic growth and jobs.

Yours sincerely,



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