

Public letter to the President of the European Commission

Brussels, 15 October 2026

Subject: Call for decisive action to revise the Common Fisheries Policy

Dear President von der Leyen,

At the beginning of your mandate, you underlined that Europe's fishermen and women would remain at the heart of our coastal communities and economies. You committed to appointing a Fisheries and Oceans Commissioner to ensure that the sector remains sustainable, competitive and resilient, and that the European fisheries chain benefits from a level playing field.¹

As we approach the publication of the Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2040, we believe it is essential to translate these commitments into concrete action. On 2 March 2026, the European social partners for sea fisheries brought your attention to the alarming and structural decline of the EU fleet. The letter documented falling revenues, employment down 31% between 2013 and 2023, and projections that the number of active EU fishing vessels could fall to the lowest level in history. It warned that, without corrective action, the fleet's decline could become irreversible, threatening jobs, coastal communities, Europe's food security and Europe's maritime sovereignty.²

The proposed approach to the next Multiannual Financial Framework adds to these concerns. We regret that it does not appear to provide the dedicated and predictable funding required to support the sector's transition and long-term competitiveness. In March 2025, organisations representing the seafood value chain called for a reinforced, independent fund with increased resources to support investment, sustainability, decarbonisation and food security³. A sector facing declining production, rising costs and mounting demands cannot be expected to deliver Europe's ambitions without the means to do so.

Europe can neither speak credibly about food security and resilience while excluding fisheries, aquaculture and seafood from its priorities, including its food and protein strategies. The forthcoming Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture 2040 represents an important opportunity to address the structural challenges facing the sector and to establish a clear policy direction for its future. In this context, **we believe that a targeted revision of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) should be a central element of the Commission's approach.**

¹ Ursula von der Leyen, *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024–2029*, section "Sustaining our quality of life: food security, water and nature," p. 22. [European Commission](#).

² ETF, Europêche and Copa-Cogeca, *Alarming decline of the EU fishing fleet – EU urgent corrective action*, letter to President von der Leyen, 2 March 2026

³ AIPCE-CEP, Copa-Cogeca, EAPO, Europêche, ETF and FEAP, *United call for a reinforced specific fund for fisheries and aquaculture in the next Multiannual Financial Framework*, 20 March 2025

The absence of this potential revision would undermine the rest of the Vision's content and call its proposals into question, leaving an idealistic and unrealistic scenario that is detached from the sector's needs. The Commission is proposing to navigate towards the future in a ship that is already taking on water—a situation acknowledged in its own evaluation of the current CFP.

The EU seafood supply chain has repeatedly called for reform. The Council has echoed that call, and the European Parliament has now urged the Commission to submit the necessary legislative proposals by the end of 2026. Should the Commission fail to act, Parliament has reserved the right to launch a legislative own-initiative procedure under Article 225 TFEU, calling on the Commission to submit proposals addressing these concerns.⁴

These developments underline the growing recognition that the current framework should be assessed in light of the sector's evolving economic, social and environmental challenges. While strategies, roadmaps, studies and evaluations are valuable, they need to be accompanied by concrete measures and a clear legislative perspective to deliver meaningful results for fishing businesses and coastal communities. The diagnosis is clear, and the political calls have been made. What is missing is legislative action with concrete proposals to address the identified problems.

We therefore urge the Commission to use the publication of the Vision 2040 on 20 October to set out a clear commitment to an urgent, targeted revision of the Common Fisheries Policy. Such a revision should strengthen the balance between environmental, economic and social sustainability; facilitate fleet renewal and investment; improve working conditions and increase attractiveness of fisheries jobs, tackle administrative bottlenecks; and provide the conditions necessary for a competitive, resilient and sustainable European fisheries and seafood supply chain.

Furthermore, we call on the Commission to explicitly include the revision of the Common Fisheries Policy in its 2027 Work Programme, accompanied by a clear timeline and an ambitious approach to addressing the concerns raised by the sector and the European institutions.

Europe's fishing fleet and the communities that depend on it are facing significant and, in many cases, persistent challenges. The decisions taken now will have a lasting impact on their future, on the availability of European seafood and on the EU's strategic autonomy in food production.

The Vision 2040 should therefore be more than a statement of long-term ambitions. It should provide a credible pathway towards a viable future for European fisheries and aquaculture, supported by the necessary policy reforms, investment and political commitment.

We trust that the Commission will take these serious concerns into account and use this opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to a strong, sustainable and competitive European fisheries sector.

⁴ *Europêche welcomes Parliament's strong call to revise the CFP*, 17 September 2026, including reference to the European Parliament resolution. [Europêche](#).

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and the relevant members of the College to explain our concerns and present concrete proposals for a balanced, effective and future-ready framework.

Yours sincerely,



Javier Garat
President of Europêche



Elli Tsiforou
Copa-Cogeca Secretary General



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