

BalticSea2020

Dismantling harmful subsidies

In the ongoing reform process of the Common Fisheries Policy, the Foundation Baltic Sea 2020 calls for a dismantling of harmful subsidies. The current system not only undermines the sustainability of fishery resources, but also significantly undermines effective fisheries management, distorts trade and damages the environment.

Even though Baltic Sea 2020 believes that a range of issues have to be addressed in the context of the CFP reform we choose to focus this article on one of the most controversial ones, the issue of harmful subsidies.

The fisheries sector today is characterized by overfishing, overcapacity and an aggregated profit equal to around zero. Still, the EU grants large subsidies to the industry. This has been recognized as a problem by several member states as well as by the European Commission itself. Moreover, there is a broad recognition that current aid levels cannot be sustained. Hence, action must be taken to properly re-evaluate the subsidies granted by the EU.

Baltic Sea 2020's overall position on this issue is based on the assumption that most current subsidies that increase fishing efforts, benefit specific groups, attempt to overrule market forces or are based on short-term considerations, should be eliminated or phased out.

Support that is for example distributed directly to individual beneficiaries or to small groups often distorts competition and should be scrutinized with regard to their effectiveness, consistency with other policies and market distorting impact. This support that might be targeted at e.g. de-commissioning schemes, fishing ports, shelters or modification of vessels for other activities, can and should be subject to immediate elimination.

Together with many likeminded stakeholders we have shown that we have a true commitment to push the agenda of change towards a sustainable fisheries policy. Baltic Sea 2020 has presented these views in meetings, seminars and workshops with politicians and stakeholders, and we are committed to continue our intense dialogue.

Right now there is a window of opportunity for the European Commission to closely examine and take concrete steps towards dismantling the most harmful subsidies. This is a much needed turning point and the process cannot be allowed to lose momentum.