



# 79<sup>th</sup> STECF Plenary Report

## Evaluation of the CFP Regulation and EC consultation

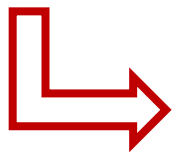


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During the STECF winter plenary of 2022 (PLEN-22-01), STECF outlined two tasks to be completed:

- First, STECF was requested to consider the **online questionnaire of the targeted consultation on the 2022** Report on the Functioning of the Common Fisheries Policy as a background document.
- Second, **STECF was requested to provide its feedback**, comments and references to specific scientific articles that Commission should take into account, highlighting what worked well and what not, as well as innovative best practices.



The STECF addressed the TOR by issuing a questionnaire to its members, to which 20 experts responded.

## 2025 STECF consultation on the evaluation of the CFP Regulation (this year's request)

The evaluation of the CFP Regulation will assess the impact of the CFP Regulation on the conservation of marine biological resources and the management of fisheries and fleets that rely on them. It will also examine the policy's effects on the supply chain, consumers, and public authorities across the EU MSs **over the past decade (2014-2024)**.

- **21 April 2025** – closure of the 12-week public consultation (364 replies)
- **Until Autumn 2025** - Input from stakeholders and evidence is gathered to feed into the assessment
- **Spring 2026** - MARE aims to publish the evaluation as a staff working document.

ToR 2. Discuss on the basis of an ad hoc contract, previous STECF reports on topics, such as **CFP objectives, landing obligation, multi-annual plans, international dimension, conservation measures, fishing opportunities etc**



The report from the ad hoc contracts summarised the STECF advice provided in plenary reports **between 2014 and 2024**. In total, advice from 589 ToRs from 32 plenary reports were summarised.



The ad hoc report emphasises that **assessing the success or failure of the CFP solely on the basis of STECF reports may lead to a biased perspective**. In particular, it must be kept in mind that STECF reports are initiated by the DG MARE to address specific issues, and STECF responds to questions formulated by MARE.

The ad hoc report strived to summarise the key findings for each studied article.

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Here, the main points of interest:

- ❑ **Multi annual plans** (Article 9) would secure greater stability for the fishing sector and reduce the risk of stock collapse. In some occasions, the **STECF plenaries found that the FMSY range approach to allow for flexible fishing opportunities, addressing mixed fishery challenges** while providing biomass protections against overfishing, represents an improvement over the basic regulatory provisions.

[...] Here, the main points of interest:

❑ **The landing obligation** (Article 15) **came with many difficulties that challenged its implementation**, including STECF to review a large number of requests for exemptions. [...] **Issues that the STECF plenaries reported, included:**

- ✓ limited efforts to improve gear selectivity,
- ✓ a lack of effective control and enforcement measures,
- ✓ misreporting of discards under exemptions,
- ✓ cases of non-compliance risk for so called choke species,
- ✓ room for requesting derogation while difficulty for STECF in assessing the species survivability after capture,
- ✓ challenges in assessing the disproportional costs of handling unwanted catches etc.

[...] Here, the main points of interest:

- ❑ **Fishing opportunities** (Article 16). **The still ongoing overfishing situation in the Med (i.e.  $F/FMSY > 1$ ) is a sign of failure to achieve the management target (by 2020, and presently 2025).**



**STECF plenaries reported on several occasions issues with mixed species fisheries and the impossibility to fish at FMSY for all species.** Also, some species were initially left aside and potentially overfished when classified as non-quota species, a tendency that might get corrected with the implementation of the Technical Measures Regulation.



[...] Here, the main points of interest:

- ❑ **Collecting data requirements for fisheries management** (Article 25) supported by the DCF data have purposes that go beyond monitoring for fisheries management, stock assessment and the analysis of the economic situation of the EU fleet, including supportive data for research works. **The implementation of the social dimension of the EU fisheries policy is found still in progress; for example, allocating effort or catch limits to different fleets based on sustainability criteria depending on CFP Article 17 is still not fully implemented.** Important improvements have the DCF requirements, in the production of Annual Economic Report and in the FDI.



Globally STECF is of the understanding that essential elements for the efficient provision of advice (data collection, databases, toolboxes, capacities for monitoring and feedback) **have improved substantially between 2014 and 2024.**

Among the unclearities and ambiguities in the formulation of objectives and related articles

**1. Unclear goal setting:** Most objectives in Article 2 are framed in “vague” terms terms that are difficult to operationalise and monitor. They are not well defined and cannot be easily measured. **The MSY objective is the only objective that has a relatively well established frame** with quantitative indicators and reference points. Other objectives do not, or only partially, comply with so-called SMART requirements (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound). **This is particularly the case for objectives in relation with social and economic goals, e.g. “achieving fair standard of living”**

[...] Among the unclearities and ambiguities in the formulation of objectives and related articles

**2. Unclear framing of the statistical significance:** There is a requirement for quantitative evidence which is framed using terms that suggest a well-defined statistical structure something that has **often proven difficult or even impossible to establish.**




For example, exemptions from the landing obligation rely on concepts like “disproportionate costs”, or “high survivability”, while exemptions from gear bans in MPAs depend on demonstrating “no significant adverse impact”. Similarly, distinctions between “targeted” and “bycatch” fisheries require clear definitions. [...]

[...] Among the unclearities and ambiguities in the formulation of objectives and related articles

**3. Some concepts have multiple interpretations.** For instance, “Fishing opportunity” seems to equate with TAC; however, other definitions consider also effort quotas (EU Parliament), or spatial and temporary allocations. These created some challenges for advice provision (e.g. **in the assessment of the implementation of Article. 17)**

Criteria for the allocation of fishing opportunities by Member States  
When allocating the fishing opportunities available to them, as referred to in Article 16, Member States **shall use transparent and objective criteria including those of an environmental, social and economic nature**



**Regarding these unclear concepts, STECF fully acknowledges the complexity of defining policy objectives, but underlines the challenges that this poses for providing evidence-based advice.**

*STECF has had extensive debate over the years on the economic and social objectives of the CFP, **and the requests to assess socio-economic impacts has increased over the last years.***

### Observations

- The debate on it includes also considerations on **the time frame involved**, where social and economic objectives and conservation objectives can be more conflicting in the short-term than in the long term perspectives where they are better aligned.
- STECF has also discussed that social, economic and conservation objectives involve **different layers of responsibility**. There may be different understandings on the respective roles of the EU and of Member States.

### [...] Observations

- STECF takes note of the ruling of the European Court of Justice (C-330/22,2024) interprets Article 2 as a whole, which requires that “the CFP ensure that fishing and aquaculture activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term and are managed **in a way that is consistent with the objectives of achieving economic, social and employment benefits, and of contributing to the availability of food supplies**”.



**STECF observes though that the only operational goal specified in Article 2 of the CFP is the MSY, and that social, economic, and ecosystem aspects are not addressed as operational goals, which hampers the ability to advise on their progress.**

### [...] **STECF concludes that:**

- a full synthesis and deeper understanding of the functioning of the CFP based on the analysis of the suite of STECF advice **would require more resources in terms of both expertise and time.**
- essential elements for the **efficient provision of advice** have improved substantially between 2014 and 2024, but that intrinsic difficulties to provide scientific advice have remained.
- **early consultation with scientific bodies in charge, regarding the operational and technical formulations of EU regulations during their elaboration phase,** might contribute to ensuring a clear and unambiguous frame for their subsequent scientific evaluation.

***This evaluation will consider how the existing CFP Regulation is performing to date*** and assess how the legal framework allows its current objectives to be met and address emerging challenges.

The questions are organised around the **standard evaluation criteria** used by the EC in order to assess the extent to which the CFP Regulation:

- ✓ is effective in fulfilling expectations and meeting its objectives;
- ✓ is efficient in terms of cost-effectiveness and proportionality of actual costs to benefits;
- ✓ is relevant to current and emerging needs;
- ✓ is coherent (internally and externally with other EU interventions or international agreements).



## EC Factual Summary Report on CFP Reg. Evaluation

Some relevant info on the sample

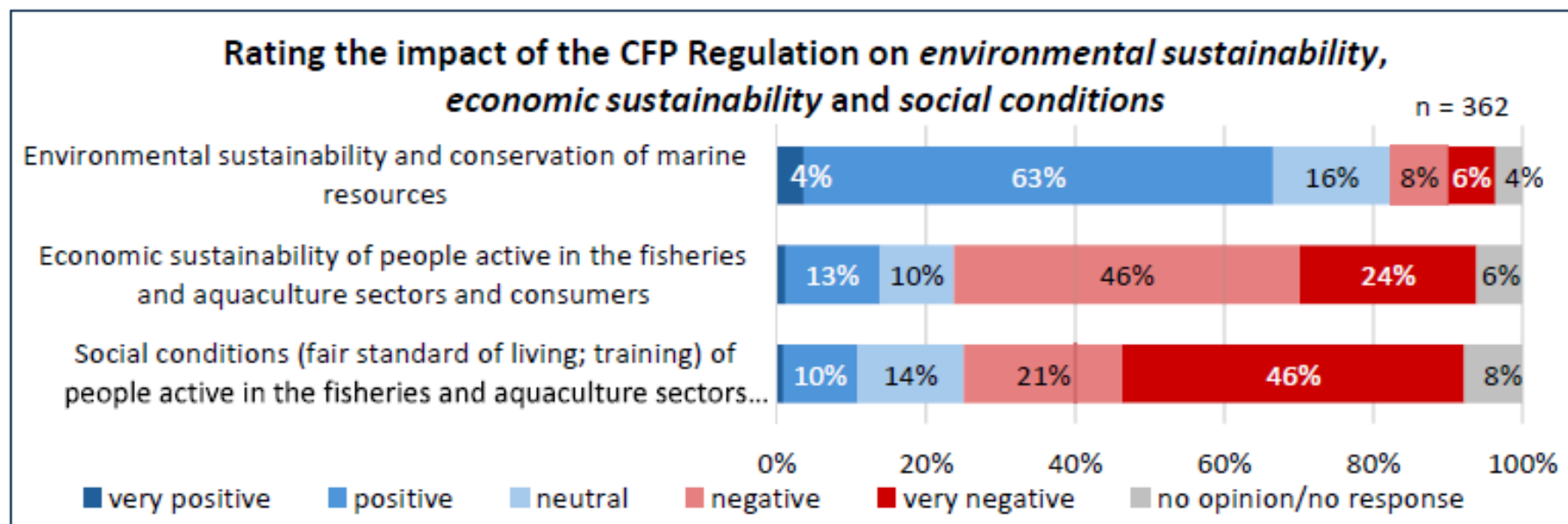
In total, there were **362 responses received**. 30 different countries were represented, including 23 EU Member States and 7 non-EU countries. **The large majority of responses (212) were received from Spain**, and a high number (20-30) were also received from France.



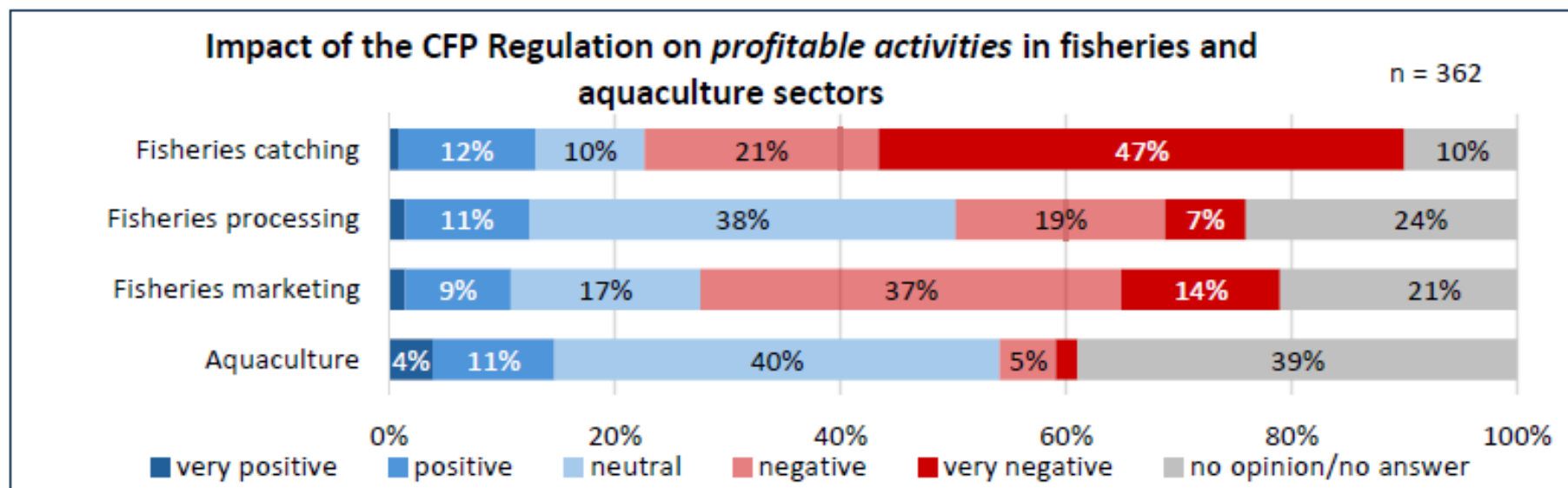
**59% From Spain**

**Among the Spanish respondents, the large majority (70%) were representatives of the fishing industry.**

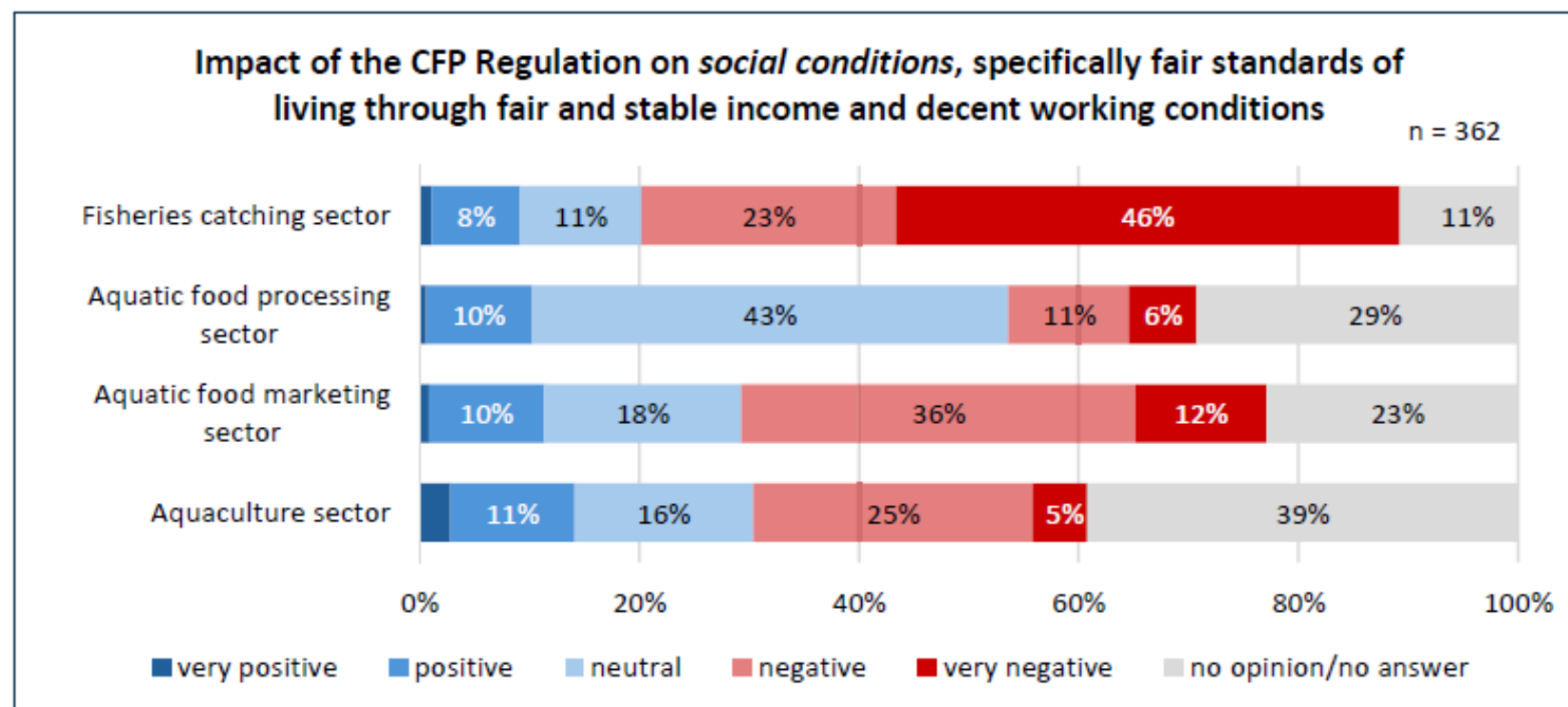
**Figure 5: Q1. ‘What impact do you think the CFP Regulation has had on contributing to *environmental sustainability* and conservation of marine resources, *economic sustainability* of people in fisheries and aquaculture and consumers, and *social conditions* (fair standard of living, training) of people in fisheries and aquaculture?’**



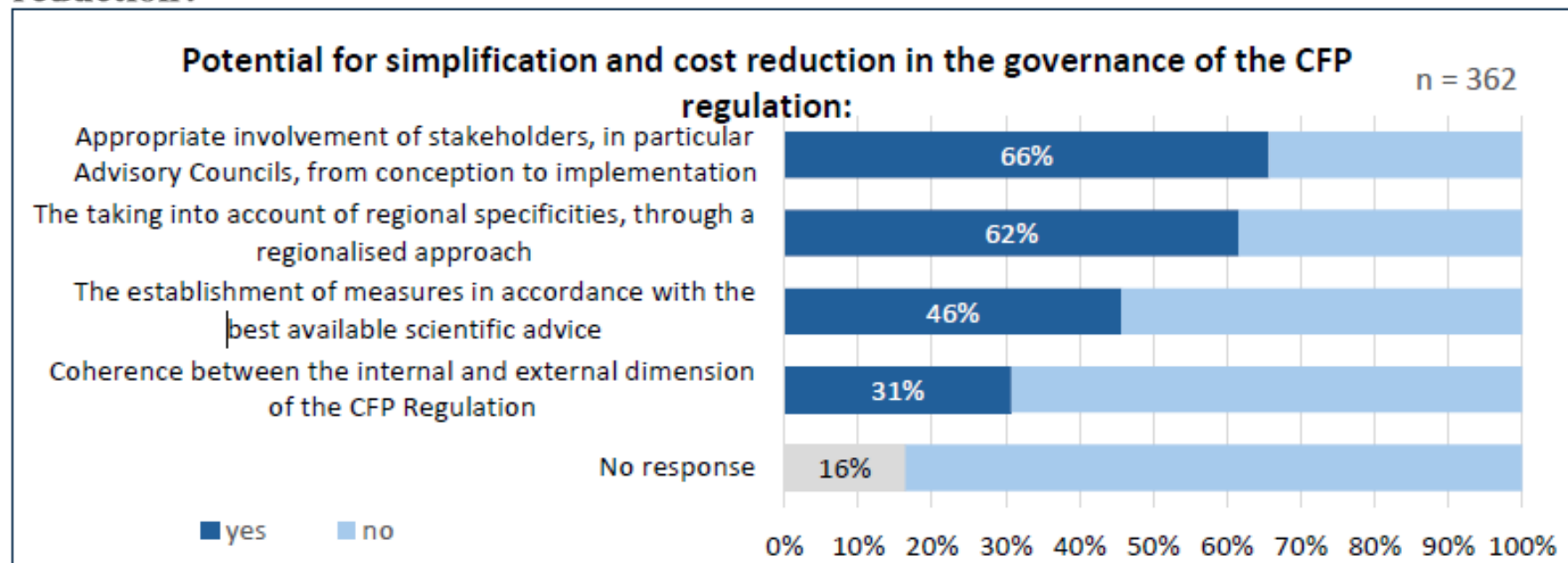
**Figure 7: Question 1b. ‘What impact do you think the CFP Regulation has had on the contribution to the *economic sustainability* of people active in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors (owners, workers, employers operators), specifically on *contributing to profitable activities*?’**



**Figure 10: Question 1c. ‘What impact do you think the CFP Regulation has had on contributing to the social conditions of people active in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors (owners, workers, employers, employees, operators), specifically on ensuring a fair standard of living through fair and stable income and decent working conditions?’**



**Figure 26: Question 7b. ‘If you selected “governance”, which of the following governance areas do you think have potential for simplification and cost reduction?’**



- ✓ *The consultation sample should be considered when results are analyzed*
- ✓ *What about the Advisory Council's contributions?*

### NEXT STEPS

The Commission is now analysing the feedback received, alongside ongoing input from expert groups and targeted consultations.

**The findings from these initiatives will inform the next stages of process.**

Updates on the evaluation's progress will be available on the Commission's website, and stakeholders are encouraged to stay informed through official channels.





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