

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003013/24
to the Commission
Pernando Barrena Arza (The Left)
(18 December 2024)**

Subject: Unfair competition from third-country fleets for EU mackerel catches

Basque Country fishing fleets catch mackerel within the EU quotas. Fleets from countries such as Norway, Iceland and the Faroe Islands, meanwhile, also fish for mackerel in their waters but are not subject to any restrictions on how much they catch. This situation is seriously affecting the Basque sector. First and foremost, overfishing of mackerel in the North Sea means that less and less mackerel reaches the Cantabrian Sea from the North Atlantic. Those mackerel catches also flood the EU market, as the countries of origin have preferential trade agreements with the EU.

In view of the above:

1. Is the Commission aware of the overfishing in the North Sea, the damage it causes to expected catches for the Basque fleet? Is it also aware that those catches are sold within the EU and pose unfair competition to EU catches?
2. Is the Commission planning to adopt any type of measure to mitigate the overfishing of mackerel and unfair competition in how the fish is distributed in the EU by Iceland, Norway and the Faroe Islands?

Submitted: 18.12.2024

**Answer given by Mr Kadis on behalf of the European Commission
(4 February 2025)**

While the coastal States agree that the total catches of mackerel should be set in line with the best available scientific advice, the lack of a comprehensive quota sharing agreement means that coastal States decide individually the level of their annual quotas, thereby collectively exceeding such advice.

Unilateral mackerel quota increases by some coastal States threaten the sustainability of shared stocks and undermine the efforts to manage fisheries responsibly.

This unsustainable exploitation not only threatens the long-term viability of the stock, but also negatively impacts the economic sustainability of the EU fleet, reducing profitability due to diminishing catch rates and potential regulatory constraints.

Coastal States consultations for a sharing arrangement are ongoing since 2022 with an active involvement from the EU, represented by the Commission, in close coordination with the Council.

The Commission's focus in these consultations is to advocate for comprehensive arrangements that ensure a sustainable, equitable, and fair management of the mackerel stock.

Moreover, as regards trade, mackerel is currently no longer covered by the EU's additional bilateral market access concessions to the European Economic Area (EEA) countries.

The Commission is determined to strengthen the EU's sustainability tools. It has therefore adopted in September 2024 a proposal to clarify the application of Regulation 1026/2012 ⁽¹⁾ to address third country practices regarding non-sustainably fished stocks.

This proposal is currently under discussion in the European Parliament and the Council as part of the ordinary legislative procedure.

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2024:407:FIN#:~:text=Regulation%20%28EU%29%201026%2F2012%20of%20the%20European%20Parliament%20and,to%20adopt%20certain%20measures%20regarding%20the%20fisheries-related%20act>