

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002536/25
to the Commission
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(24 June 2025)**

Subject: Compliance with quotas for mackerel and protection of small-scale fishing

Small-scale fishers who fish in the North-East Atlantic describe the mackerel fishing season as a failed one, in particular for the fleet using small-scale hook-and-line fishing methods, which depends on this kind of fishing for an essential part of their income.

Basque fishers report that overfishing by third countries like Norway and Iceland reduce the availability of mackerel in Basque waters. While the seine fleet is able to diversify its catches, the hook-and-line fleet has been severely affected.

Decline in mackerel biomass is a cause for great concern, since scientific studies warn of a possible zero quota in 2026 if the trend persists.

Pending the new report from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), and in view of the above, the following questions thus arise:

1. What measures is the Commission adopting so that third countries respect scientific recommendations and quota agreements, and in this way ensure sustainable exploitation of mackerel stock?
2. What support mechanisms is the Commission considering for the fishers that depend on mackerel?
3. Considering the Union's commitment to small-scale fishing, which concrete actions does the Commission intend to promote in order to ensure the viability of small-scale fishing fleets facing competition from more industrialised fleets?

Submitted: 24.6.2025

**Answer given by Mr Kadis on behalf of the European Commission
(7 August 2025)**

1. Total allowable catches are based on the best scientific advice. However, quota disputes, including unilateral increases by certain third countries, are leading to overfishing and negatively affecting mackerel stocks. The EU is actively engaged in consultations with other coastal States to conclude comprehensive and balanced sharing arrangements, and contrary to other partners it has kept its quota stable. Moreover, the Commission advocates coherence across policies, including trade. The review of Regulation (EU) No 1026/2012 ⁽¹⁾ on measures against unsustainable fishing by third countries, on which the European Parliament and the Council have reached a political agreement in May 2025, is a key step.

2. The Commission fully recognises mackerel's ecological and socioeconomic importance. Member States can use their programmes under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) to support affected fishers and strengthen sector resilience.

3. Under EMFAF, small-scale fisheries benefit from exceptional support, with almost all related projects eligible for 100% public funding. The Commission supports their resilience through decarbonisation, sustainable practices, and by promoting local value chains. Under Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 ⁽²⁾, Member States can grant preferential access to waters up to 12 nautical miles and determine national quota allocations. Efforts to support small-scale fisheries also focus on improved safety and accident data, social indicators, and strengthening Producer Organisations. Small-scale fisheries will also be the focus of the next implementation dialogue the Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans will host on 24 November 2025.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 316, 14.11.2012, p. 34.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22-61.