

# POLICY BRIEF

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## A market oriented collaborative initiative in fisheries.

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Fisheries and aquaculture in the EU represent a relatively prosperous sector due to a recent increasing per capita consumption in both quantity and value.

In Greece, there were 15,385 active fishing vessels in 2015, with coastal fisheries accounting for 95% of vessels. Middle scale vessels (almost equally among purse seiners and trawls) accounted for only 3.3% of the total fleet. However, the prevalence of coastal fisheries is not reflected in production, where middle scale vessels account for approximately 63% of the annual catches and 50% of catch value.

Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that while purse seiners and trawls are obliged to unload and register the totality of their catch in fish auctions, coastal operators have the opportunity to sell their catch directly at the port of landing, without registering it. This exemplifies just one of the differentiations in the application of regulations (according to the status of the operator) that have been highlighted by local stakeholders in Kavala (North-western part of the Aegean archipelago).

Other notable differences exist in the management of fisheries and fishing stocks, with the Common Fisheries Policy area representing the most significant level of differentiation. Thus, spatial and temporal restrictions are imposed on purse seiners and trawls but not on coastal fishers. In order to overcome these obstacles, the respective operators head to international waters, just 6 miles from the coast. On the other hand, technical measures that apply for coastal fishers are not controlled efficiently. It is a rather complex situation, aggravated by the existence of “amateur” fishers who, according to stakeholders, avoid any control, constituting a serious threat of unfair competition for small coastal operators. It is worth noting that no quota or Total Allowable Catch restrictions are applicable in the area.

This situation together with the deficient monitoring and data collection system, renders the task to compose multiannual plans impossible and undermines efforts towards collective and participatory procedures in policy formulation. On the other hand, it has an impact on the effectiveness of structural measures for the modernisation of the fleet. Most local stakeholders suggested that their expectations from the modernisation schemes have clashed with the strict restrictions imposed by the CFP.

In order to overcome this impasse 18 fishers in Kavala, the whole purse seiners fleet (which account for 70% of the fishing effort in the area) in collaboration with an environmental NGO and with the support of a big retailer, initiated an effort to achieve certification for anchovy and sardines, under the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) scheme.



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## Key messages

- Facing a rather adverse institutional environment, increased environmental pressures as well as negative market prospects (considering the ongoing financial crisis in Greece) local purse seiner vessel operators have adopted an initiative proposed by an environmental NGO in addition to market based tools in an effort to increase their competitiveness.
- Implementation through a collective institution, i.e. the creation of an informal local management committee, with the participation of fishers, authorities, experts, NGOs and retailers, seem to have considerable success, so far.
- The outcome of the participatory procedure followed has been the imposition of a regulating system to the fleet, which has been collectively designed and voluntarily implemented. Specific temporal restrictions have been agreed by the committee. More specifically: one day less weekly and 4 additional days monthly in order to reduce the fishing effort of the fleet have been voluntarily enforced, by the totality of the Kavala fleet.
- Initial results are encouraging. Fishers' market power has been increased since the quantity of the catch has been reduced and better controlled. The quality of life for both owners as well as the workers of the fleet has been improved, due to increased leisure time. And the reduction of fishing effort is expected to improve the situation of the stocks.
- Collaboration with the retailer has been also productive, since the initiative has been part of a campaign, which increased social recognition of the Kavala purse seiners' fleet's efforts both at the local and the national level.
- Collaboration with the NGO has resulted in a multiplier effect. More specifically, one of the elements that characterise the initiative has been the collective decision of self-imposed restrictions. This has already been applied in another initiative for the creation of a Marine Protected Area. On the other hand, the MSC certification prospects seemed to be appealing for other areas, since there is interest by other fleets to repeat the process and seek an improvement of their image and competitive position in the internal market.
- One of the factors that seem to be important for the, up to now, successful evolution has been the relatively small number of individuals who had to collaborate in the case of Kavala.
- Limiting the MSC certification to only two small pelagic species sardine and anchovy also seemed to be important.
- The fact that this relatively small fleet controls a significant part of the total catch of these two-specific species, made possible the co-ordination of efforts.
- In the case of the Kavala purse seiners fleet, a bottom-up, market-oriented initiative created significant positive synergies with the Common Fisheries regulatory policy measures, towards the sustainable management of fisheries.