

Mr. Costas Kadis
Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Brussels, 10 Mars 2026

Subject: Request for EU measures to address the sharp increase in fuel prices affecting the fishing sector

Dear Commissioner Kadis,

On behalf of Europêche, the representative body of the European fishing industry, we would like to express our deep concern regarding the sharp and disproportionate increase in production costs currently faced by fishing companies across the European Union as a result of the rising price of fuel.

Over recent days, many fleet segments throughout Europe have warned that their economic situation is approaching a critical point. In several cases, vessels are already operating at a loss on each fishing trip, as fuel costs now exceed the revenues obtained from the sale of fishery products. This situation threatens the economic viability of fishing operations and risks forcing vessels to cease activity.

The current international context, marked by significant geopolitical uncertainty linked to conflicts in the Middle East and the resulting escalation in global oil prices, is further aggravating the situation. As fuel represents one of the largest operational costs for fishing vessels, the continued increase in prices is severely undermining the competitiveness and sustainability of EU fishing companies. If this situation persists, it will also lead to higher seafood prices for European consumers, as operators will be unable to absorb such high-cost increases.

The situation is also critical for EU vessels operating in distant waters. These vessels are currently facing exceptionally high logistical costs, including the sharp increase in freight and crew travel prices, and growing difficulties in securing fuel and other essential supplies. These developments threaten not only the economic viability of fishing companies but also the continuity of EU fishing activities in non-EU waters.

In this context, and in order to ensure that fishing activities can continue and that the supply of seafood products to European consumers is not disrupted, we respectfully urge the European Commission to consider the adoption of appropriate emergency measures at EU level. In particular, we encourage the Commission to reactivate and adapt the emergency support instruments that were successfully deployed during the 2022 energy crisis, in order to avoid lengthy legislative procedures and ensure a rapid response to the current situation.

Furthermore, Europêche calls on the Commission to examine:

- The mobilisation of crisis support mechanisms within the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), including increased flexibility to support fishing operators affected by exceptional fuel price increases.
- The possibility of temporary and targeted support schemes, including the adaptation of State aid rules where necessary, to allow Member States to provide urgent relief to their fishing fleets. In this context, it is essential that any aid ceilings are designed per vessel rather than per company, as per-company ceilings have proven inadequate for companies operating multiple vessels and limits the effectiveness of support measures.
- The activation of exceptional market measures under the Common Fisheries Policy where appropriate, in order to mitigate the economic impact of the current situation.
- The exploration of additional short-term financial instruments to help maintain fleet activity while safeguarding employment and the continuity of seafood supply in the European Union.

In addition, we believe that the current situation also highlights the need for structural measures that can both respond rapidly to future crises and strengthen the long-term resilience of the sector. In this regard, the Commission could explore mechanisms to facilitate access to strategic fuel stocks for the fishery sector in EU ports where appropriate.

Furthermore, as part of the broader EU decarbonisation agenda, the Commission could consider options to facilitate preferential access for the fishing sector to alternative and lower-emission fuels, including subsidised HVO and FAME biodiesel solutions where feasible. Such measures would both support the sector in the short term and contribute to the long-term energy transition of the EU fishing fleet.


More broadly, the current crisis also illustrates the importance of maintaining the capacity of the sector to invest in energy efficiency and modernisation. Past restrictions on support for vessel renewal and engine modernisation have limited the sector's ability to improve fuel efficiency and reduce dependence on volatile fuel markets. Future policy frameworks should therefore take these realities into account when designing support instruments for the fisheries sector.

The European fishing sector remains fully committed to the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy, including sustainability, food security, and the resilience of coastal communities. However, the current surge in fuel prices represents an external shock that requires swift and coordinated action at European level.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter with you at your earliest convenience and to explore possible solutions that can help ensure the continuity and stability of the EU fishing sector.

Thank you very much for your attention to this urgent matter.

Kind regards

Javier Garat 
President of Europepeche