



6 rue Alphonse Rio • 56100 Lorient
+33 297 83 11 69 • info@cc-sud.eu
www.cc-sud.eu

On modernisation of fishing vessels to improve working conditions on board

Introduction

The European fishing fleet is composed of a wide range of vessels, in terms of dimensions, purpose and age. The characteristics of the vessel have of course an impact on the working conditions and safety of the crew.

The CFP defines the ‘fishing capacity’ of a vessel as follows: ‘fishing capacity’ means a vessel's tonnage in GT (Gross Tonnage) and its power in kW (Kilowatt) as defined in Articles 4 and 5 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2930/86.

In the CFP we can also read that “Member States should take specific measures to align the number of Union fishing vessels with available resources, based on their assessments of the balance between the fishing capacity of their fleets and the fishing opportunities available to them” and that “the Common Fisheries Policies should contribute to the improvement of safety and working conditions for fishing operators.”

Impact of gross tonnage and propulsion on working conditions and safety

The calculation of gross tonnage of a trawler has to take into account all volumes (including fish tanks, fish sorting and freezing installations, accommodation for the crew, etc...).

In order to maximise profits, the vessels owners’ priority is maximising fishing capacity while remaining ceilings of the gross tonnage. The gross tonnage limitation has therefore a negative impact on safety, comfort as it punishes initiatives to add extra safety, comfort and quality improvements to ships as the involved extra cubic meters have to compete with e.g. fish hold volume, volume of engine room or fuel tanks.





6 rue Alphonse Rio • 56100 Lorient
+33 297 83 11 69 • info@cc-sud.eu
www.cc-sud.eu

The needed modernisation of the vessels, that can bring benefits for the crew in terms of decrease of vibrations, emissions, noise and in principle more space on board and an increased safety is hindered by the gross tonnage ceiling.

Even though a direct link between the propulsion power and a vessel's fishing capacity can be in some cases justified, propulsion power is strongly related to fishing vessel safety, especially in bad weather conditions.

Comfort on board of fishing vessels

The need of improved comfort on board of vessels (bigger common spaces on board, cabins for 2 instead of 4, or 6, better and more sanitary facilities) has been a long standing demand of the unions. It has been reinforced by the adoption of the ILO "Work in fishing" Convention 188 and has been also identified as one of the conditions to attract more young workers in the sector, in particular for long distance fishing vessels.

The current ceilings leave little space to improve the accommodation space.

Landing obligation and working conditions on-board

Another factor that influences the possibility to modernise the vessels is the implementation of the landing obligation. The landing obligation implies that it is not possible anymore to discard unwanted catch: this means that on board of the trawler there must be space to store and (possibly) process the unwanted fish.

Furthermore the vessel will need to make more journeys between the fishing waters and unloading ports and back to the fishing waters, using more fuel, and therefore possibly needing bigger fuel tanks to avoid refilling each time the vessels unloads.

This of course as to be done respecting the ceilings of the current regulations and consequently leaves even less space for modernisation of the vessel to the benefit of the crew.





6 rue Alphonse Rio • 56100 Lorient
+33 297 83 11 69 • info@cc-sud.eu
www.cc-sud.eu

The landing obligation has also an effect in terms of working hours and income of fishermen.

Conclusions

For the abovementioned reasons an increase of the ceiling of gross tonnage capacity or the introduction of alternative methods to calculate it would give more flexibility to improve the living and working conditions on board while preserving the sustainability of the resource.

Nevertheless, even under the current rules, the vessels owners have to make an effort to modernise their trawlers, to improve the working conditions of their crews. This can be done in a high number of vessels, in particular in the older ones, while respecting the current gross tonnage ceilings.

It is not only a matter of health and safety on board, but also a matter of improving the conditions of one the jobs that remain among the most dangerous ones.

