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AN ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE THE IMPACT OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY ON POLISH SEA FISHING

PRÓBA OKREŚLENIA WPŁYWU REFORMY WSPÓLNEJ POLITYKI RYBACKIEJ UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ NA POLSKIE RYBOŁÓWSTWO MORSKIE

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Streszczenie. Wspólna Polityka Rybacka w obecnym kształcie nie rozwiązuje głównych problemów rybołówstwa morskiego. Nakład połowowy jest zbyt duży w stosunku do coraz bardziej przełowionych łowisk, zbyt dużo decyzji podejmowanych jest na szczeblu unijnym, a przyłów zasobów morskich jest za duży i dodatkowo marnotrawiony. Reforma Wspólnej Polityki Rybackiej ma doprowadzić do zrównoważonych połowów, poprzez ograniczenie nakładu połowowego oraz wzrost zasobów ryb. Mają temu służyć przekazywalne koncesje połowowe oraz maksymalny dopuszczalny połów. Z kolei przekazanie części kompetencji regionom, ma lepiej dostosować środki realizacji wyznaczonych celów, do specyfiki i różnicowania poszczególnych basenów morskich oraz łowisk. Ograniczenie przyłowu będzie można osiągnąć poprzez zastosowanie bardziej selektywnych narzędzi połowowych oraz okresowe zamykanie łowisk. Natomiast sam przyłów, można będzie przeznaczyć na cele konsumpcyjne lub przemysłowe. W polskim rybołówstwie morskim zreformowana Wspólna Polityka Rybacka, poprawi wykorzystanie limitów połowowych na dorsza oraz zwiększy zaangażowanie sektora rybackiego w rozwiązywanie lokalnych problemów. Przyczyni się także do ograniczenia przyłowu oraz wyeliminuje marnotrawstwo zasobów ryb.

Key words: contemporary problems of sea fishing, Polish sea fishing, reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Słowa kluczowe: polskie rybołówstwo morskie, reforma Wspólnej Polityki Rybackiej, współczesne problemy rybołówstwa morskiego.

INTRODUCTION

At the initial stage of the European Communities' operation, fishing constituted an integral element of the Common Fisheries Policy. In 1983, this particular industry was separated and began to function as the Common Fisheries Policy (for more information on the subject Brocki et al. 2000)¹. In 1993, under the Maastricht Treaty a fishery fund was created – Financial Instrument for Fisheries (Holden, Garrod 1996) – which was replaced by the European Fisheries Fund in 2007. They constitute the financial means to support the EU fishery sector. In 2002, the first reform of the Common Fisheries Policy was implemented; it did not, however, bring the desired effects (Daw, Gray 2005). Consequently, the EU offered a reform package which would change the current dimension of the fisheries policy. The

¹ The Common Fisheries Policy consists of four pillars, ie. protection of living resources, structural policy, common market organization and deep-sea fishing policy.

package comes into force on 01.01.2014, which is when the EU's new financial policy is to be introduced.

The unfortunate tendency of declining fish stocks while maintaining a steady fishing capacity has been visible in the EU's fishery for years. This leads to a situation in which the fishing fleet is too large in relation to the fishing stock. As a consequence, there are fewer and fewer catches per fishing vessel, and the viability of fisheries decreases, especially in the case of fish species that form the economic basis of the business. At the same time, subsidising the fishery industry requires more and more funds. A large part of these funds is earmarked for the reduction of the fishing fleet and compensation for the temporary cessation of business. Another drawback of sea fishing is the additional catch. Parts of the catch are released back into the sea as they are less valuable from the economic view point. This contributes to the waste of the already limited resources. Centralising the decision-making process at the EU level does not really fit the specificity and diversity of individual sea basins and fishing grounds (Shepherd 2003, Da Rocha et al. 2012). Therefore, legal acts are often incomprehensible and trigger opposition from the fishing sector in EU member countries (Damanaki 2012).

Similar problems occur in Polish sea fishing. Even though the Polish fishing fleet has been reduced by almost 40% since entering the EU, the viability of fisheries remains low. This applies mostly to a limited range of species which constitute the economic basis of the fishing business. The fishing quotas are not always exhausted. The unwanted additional catch is relatively small, nevertheless a part of the overall catch is still wasted. What is more, as in other countries under the Common Fisheries Policy, the detailed top-down regulations do not fit the specificity of Polish sea basins and are often criticised by the sector.

The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy is a new issue. Opinion regarding its influence on the future of the fishing sector is divided both in the fishing community and among experts. It should be noted that the reform has not yet been accepted by all parties in the EU's complicated legislative process.

The main objective of the following article is to show the impact of the aforementioned reform on sea fishing, with particular emphasis being placed on the Polish fishing industry. Despite numerous innovative changes, the reform and its potential effects should be approached with caution. It has already undergone many modifications which have failed to bring about the expected results.

In this article, the material, temporal, and territorial scopes were identified. The material scope is concerned with the key postulates changing the present shape of the Common Fisheries Policy, ie. transferable fishing licenses and maximum fishing quotas whose purpose is to adjust fishing activities to the resources of marine organisms, regionalisation of decisions concerning deep-sea fishing, and the limitation and management of additional catches of non-standard sized or unwanted fish.

The territorial scope consists of the Polish marine area. Within this territory, there are ports and harbors at which the Polish fishing fleet is stationed. It is also a location where producer organisations operate, these are to become an important link of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy.

The temporal scope comprises the years 2003–2012. In this period, the process of withdrawing the Polish fishing fleet from operation was initiated. This article attempts to define the impact of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy on Polish deep-sea fishing. The reform takes effect in 2014, yet some of its postulates are already being implemented in Polish sea fishing.

The article consists of an introduction, four chapters and conclusion. The introduction contains justification for the choice of subject and the article's main premises. In the first chapter, the characteristics of the main problems of the EU's sea fishery are outlined, while in the second chapter the most vital premises of the reform are presented. The third chapter contains the characteristics of Polish deep-sea fishing presented against the background of EU issues. The fourth chapter is concerned with defining the impact of the reform on the Polish sea fishing sector. The final part consists of conclusions.

The study is based on relevant literature and on materials collected from the years 2005–2011. In this period, empirical research was conducted, primarily surveys and in-depth interviews. These were targeted at the owners of fishing vessels, fishermen and representatives of port management entities.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF MARINE FISHERIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Fishing effort and the volume of resources

One of the major problems of the Common Fisheries Policy is fishing overcapacity and, as a consequence, the overfishing of fishery grounds. The diminishing fish resources and the simultaneously increasing fishing effort contribute to a decrease in catch per fishing vessel. This causes a decline in the profitability of fishing. The Common Fisheries Policy requires more and more funds. Compensation for fishermen for a temporary cessation of business and for the withdrawal of fishing vessels from operation requires billions of Euros from public funds (Markus 2010). Yet, the fishing grounds remain overfished, and the fishing capacity of fishing vessels is growing (the European Commission 2013).²

Making decisions concerning the Common Fisheries Policy

The procedure of secondary legislation within the EU is complicated, and this also concerns regulating the Common Fisheries Policy. A large number of legal acts are issued. Not

² According to the calculations of The European Commission, in 2012 (in the EU) 75% of grounds were overfished, and the fishing capacity of fishing vessels has increased yearly by 2–3% since 1994. This consumed 2.73 bn euro of public funds.

only does the European Union determine the objectives of the fisheries policy, but also the funds to be used for their implementation. The increase the powers of the European Parliament in the legislative process after the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 further complicates and prolongs the law-making procedure (Wentkowska 2009). Centralisation and tendencies towards mismanagement at the highest level mean that more and more funds are being consumed, and the bureaucratization of the legislative process is becoming more and more expensive.

Additional catch

In the natural course of fishing, undersized fish get into the fishing nets along with species of fish for which the owner of the fishing vessel does not have fishing quotas. These fish are wasted by being thrown back into the water. Since some species have a high mortality rate, some fish are disposed of after they have already died. The volume of additional catch on the waters falling under the EU jurisdiction varies. In certain sea basins it is quite high, reaching tens of percent³.

THE MAIN DIRECTIONS OF THE REFORM OF THE COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

Fishing effort and the volume of resources

Generous subsidies for restocking fish resources and reducing the fishing effort have failed to bring the expected results. Therefore, other mechanisms should be developed in order to improve the situation in this respect (Da Rocha et al. 2012). These are supposed to be: transferable fishing licenses and a maximum allowable catch.

Transferable fishing licenses give the owner of a fishing vessel the right to the long-term exploitation of live marine resources. They can sell or loan the license. This is supposed to contribute to a greater flexibility of the use of fishing quotas. The owners of fishing vessels who wish to remain in business will be able to acquire the right to additional catches, which will result in an increase in profitability. For other fishermen, the sale of the rights to fish will result in financial compensation in return for withdrawal from operation. The transferable fishing licenses are supposed to increase profitability on the one hand and to reduce the number of fishing vessels on the other.

Establishing a maximum allowable catch which does not threaten the renewal of fish stocks in the future aims at calculating the catch in an annual perspective rather than long-term planning. The initial lower limits are to result in greater resources. There will be more catches per vessel, hence increased profitability. The pressure on fishing for smaller, less profitable fish will diminish and thus the wastage will be reduced. Easier availability of resources will cut fishing time and fuel expenses.

³ The volume of additional catch on the EU waters is estimated at 25%.

Making decisions concerning the Common Fisheries Policy

Excessive centralisation of fishery management at the level of the European Union diminishes its effectiveness. For this reason, more powers should be granted to the regions and the parties concerned. According to the reform, the priorities concerning the Common Fisheries Policy are to be established at the EU level, while the regions will have the freedom to decide by what means those priorities should be achieved.

Regionalisation of fishery management should increase its effectiveness, mainly due to: reducing decision-making costs, accelerating the legislative process, establishing means which allow the achievement of strategic objectives to a far greater extent, involving the sector in the fishery management process, and a stricter enforcement of the law.

Additional catch

The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy includes limiting the additional catch. This is to be implemented through an increase in the selectivity of fishing equipment and limiting access to the fishing grounds (with large numbers of young fish or with many species of fish within one fishing ground). In the case of the additional catch, if it consists of fish with a high survival rate, they will be released back into the water; the remaining fish will be delivered ashore and will be either used for industrial purposes or marketed on regular commercial terms.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF SEA FISHING IN POLAND

Fishing effort and the volume of resources

Tables 1 and 2 contain information on the fishing effort and Polish marine fishing. As far as the fishing effort (measured by the number of fishing vessels) is concerned, in 2012 it decreased by 43.5% (Table 1). Medium-sized fishing vessels accounted for the smallest number of vessels withdrawn from operation. The total number of the vessels was reduced by 32.3%. The smallest fishing vessels were reduced by 40.6%. The biggest vessels were most often withdrawn from operation: their number was reduced by 75.3%.

Table 2 contains data on catches. In 2012, the fishing quotas for the main species of fish were reduced by 13.9%, with actual catches – by 28.5%. The catch limits allocated to Poland were therefore not exploited. The decline in catch was smaller than the reduction in the number of fishing vessels, which shows an increase in the number of catches per fishing vessel.

Table 1. The number of fishing vessels in Polish Baltic fishery graded by length (metres) in 2003 and 2012

Number of fishing vessels											
2003				2012				2012/2003			
<12	12–24	>24	total	<12	12–24	>24	total	<12	12–24	>24	total
991	235	174	1400	589	159	43	791	-40,6	-32,3	-75,3	-43,5

Source: Own work on the basis of the fishing vessel register.

Table 2. Catch quotas (thousands of tonnes) and catches (thousands of tonnes) of the main species of fish by the Polish fishing fleet in 2003–2012

Years		Species of fish			
		cod	herring	sprat	total
2003	catch quotas	16.0	28.7	80.1	124.8
	catch	16.1	30.1	84.1	130.3
	%	101	105	105	104
2012	catch quotas	21.9	19.5	66.1	107.5
	catch	10.9	24.6	61.2	96.7
	%	49.8	126.2	92.6	90.0
2012/ 2003	catch quotas	+36.9	-32.1	-17.5	-13.9
	catch	-32.3	-18.3	-27.2	-25.8
	%	-50.2	+20.2	-11.8	-13.5

Source: Own work on the basis of: 1. Sea Fishery Information System (SIRM), 2. Morska Gospodarka Morska, publications from 2003–2011, National Marine Fisheries Research Institute – Department of Fisheries Economics, 3. Wiadomości Rybackie, publications from 2003–2012.

As far as species are concerned, the fishing limits for cod were raised by 36.9%, and the catches were smaller by 32.3% – meaning that Poland used less than a half of the available fishing limit. At the same time, the decline in catch was smaller than the reduction in the number of fishing vessels, demonstrating an increase in the number of catches per fishing vessel.

In the case of herring, the limit was reduced by 32.1% and catches by only 18.3%, which shows that the limit was actually used and exceeded. Taking into account the number of fishing vessels withdrawn from operation, there has been a substantial increase in catches per vessel specialising in fishing for herring.

Fishing limits for sprat were reduced by 17.5%, and the actual catches by 27.7%, so the use of the fishing limit decreased. However, taking into account the high percentage of fishing vessels specialising in fishing for sprat which were withdrawn from operation, there was an increase in catches per vessel.

Making decisions concerning the Common Fisheries Policy

The Polish fishing sector, particularly the fishermen, often accuse the European Union of issuing legal acts which are unrealistic and do not take into account the specificity and variety of the fishing grounds located in the Southern part of the Baltic Sea basin and in Polish lagoons. Moreover, the legal acts do not fit the dynamic nature of the sector and are incomprehensible to the average person (Ruciński 2005).

The inefficiency of the legislative process is a disappointment to the fishing industry. Since the postulates of the sector are not featured in the regulations, it can be reasonably suspected that the laws are not strictly enforced. Since the fishing sector is aware of having little impact on the law-making process, it is less engaged in solving the major problems facing sea fishing.

Additional catch

The volume of additional catch in Polish sea fishing is marginal and amounts to only a few percent (Radtke 2006). Nevertheless, since the fish resources are decreasing, any amount of stock is valuable. The resources need to be protected and well-managed. This applies in particular to the most desired species in Polish sea fishing, which is cod. Due to insufficient selectivity of fishing tools, undersized specimens are caught and under the present legal situation they cannot be exploited. Since the survival rate is low for this species, the additional catch is disposed of when the fish have already died.⁴ Standard-sized fish, on the other hand, cannot be unloaded at the port if the fishermen do not have the necessary fishing limit.

The additional catch of cod in Polish sea fishing causes a decrease in the volume of resources, especially of young fish. As a consequence, the future stock of this species is reduced. This increases both time and fuel consumption, and puts additional pressure on fishing for an already limited species of fish. Not only does the additional catch contribute to the waste of resources, but it also diminishes the profitability of fishing.

THE PREDICTED CHANGES IN POLISH SEA FISHING AFTER THE REFORM

Fishing effort and the volume of resources

In Polish sea fishing, similarly to other EU member countries, there is a problem of an excessive fishing effort in relation to the available resources. This would mainly apply to the fishing vessels specialising in fishing for cod, which is a limited species. However, in the years 2003–2012 the number of fishing vessels was substantially reduced (Table 1). As regards the cod resources, after a reduction resulting from overfishing, in the recent years there has been a growth in the cod population. The main reason for this was the implementation of a long-term recovery plan for the Eastern stock of cod by the EU in 2008. The plan is based on the maximum allowable catch. The fact that the catch limit for cod was used to an extent of less than 50% in 2012 may suggest that the aforementioned tendencies contributed to the situation, ie. reduction in the number of fishing vessels while increasing the cod stock (Agurre Fortunic 2012). Yet, the Polish fishing effort allowed greater catches than in 2012. One of the main causes of low catches in 2012 was improper distribution of fishing quotas between fishing vessels, and the owners' reluctance to sell them⁵. Excessive fishing quotas for smaller vessels could not possibly be used up completely. For bigger vessels, the allocated quotas were too small to achieve positive financial results, since selling prices for cod were relatively low (Romanowski 2012). Owners of bigger vessels specialising in

⁴ Even if the law allowed the fishermen to keep the additional catch of non-standard sized cod, they have no motivation to unload it in the port. The catch is economically less valuable, which further reduces the already low profitability of fishing.

⁵ The Polish law allows the transfer of fishing quotas. It requires the consent of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

pelagic fish (sprat, herring) did not fish for cod. They were not, however, willing to dispose of their fishing quotas for fear of having them revoked in the future. The introduction of transferable fishing licenses, accounted for in the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, would certainly increase cod fishing. It would require changes in the methods of allocating fishing quotas to fishing vessels. The proposed amendment to the law regulating sea fishing meets the expectations of the fishing sector (Bierngarski 2013). The size of the fishing quotas will depend on the actual catch size from recent years. Another factor which will contribute to more effective management of fishing quotas is the association of fishermen in e.g. producer organisations (Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi 2013)⁶. Marketing of fishing quotas is easier and faster in such structures. The aforementioned legal act will motivate fishermen to a higher degree of activity. One of its provisions makes the possibility of allocating fishing quotas dependent on membership in a renowned producer organisation. Their relatively small number may be problematic, so increasing this number should definitely be considered.

Making decisions concerning the Common Fisheries Policy

The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy offers the Polish fishing industry an opportunity to solve real problems related to sea fishing. The problems concerning the Baltic Sea basin can be discussed in the forum of the already existing Baltfish project. The group brings together countries, including Poland, with access to the reservoir. This, of course, does not exclude the option of establishing new organisations. Decisions made within the organisations would then apply to all of their signatories, after having been accepted by the European Commission. The problems concerning individual fisheries could be solved within the already existing producer organisations. In this case, the decisions would also have to be accepted by the European Commission.

Additional catch

Limiting the additional catch of cod in Polish sea fishing will improve the condition of cod resources in the future. As a result, fishing for cod will become more effective and more profitable.

The possibility of utilising the additional catch will give an additional source of income for fishermen. It will probably be smaller than the income from the sale of fish without defects, but the improvement in resources resulting from the limitation of additional catch will surely balance out the losses in income. Consumers and the industry will benefit from the rational use of the additional catch. The wastage of resources, of which there is no social acceptance, will be effectively limited.

⁶ As of 9 April 2013, there were twelve recognised producer organisations in Poland.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Common Fisheries Policy in its present shape and form does not solve the main problems of sea fishing. The fishing effort is too big in relation to the increasingly overfished fishing grounds, too many decisions are taken at EU level, and the additional catch is too large and wasted.

2. The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy is to reduce the number of fishing vessels while simultaneously rebuilding the resources through the introduction of transferable fishing licenses and a maximum allowable catch. The introduction of transferable licenses, through a more flexible management of fishing quotas, makes it possible for some fishermen to increase their catches and for others, to withdraw from the industry. Fishing grounds will be reconstructed thanks to switching from one-year to long-term periods of resource management. This will be implemented through establishing the volume of catch per year which will allow the fish stock to rebuild in the future. The above mentioned mechanisms aim at improving the profitability of fishing and limiting the EU subsidies which consume billions of Euros.

3. Decentralization is supposed to increase the role of individual regions in the decision making process related to individual sea basins or fisheries. The regions are to select particular means for the realisation of objectives set out at EU level. The decentralisation should increase the effectiveness of fishing management, mainly through solving the problems of individual sea basins and fisheries, taking into account their specificity and variety.

4. The reformed Common Fisheries Policy should limit the additional catch or utilise it, should it occur. This will be possible thanks to using more selective fishing tools and temporary closure of fisheries. The additional catch may be used for industrial or consumption purposes. Achieving these objectives will increase the fish stocks and eliminate wastefulness.

5. In Polish sea fishing, after the reduction of the fishing effort, the problem is the unused fishing limits for cods. The cod stock has grown in the recent years, as a result of implementing a long-term plan of rebuilding this particular species of fish. The increase in fishing for cod may be attributed to a more effective management of fishing quotas, that is in applying the new instrument of the Common Fisheries Policy.

6. The possibility of the Polish sea sector influencing law-making will undoubtedly increase its involvement in solving the emerging issues. It will also diminish the distrust in the decisions of the EU, which often do not fit the specificity of the Polish maritime economy. The decisions concerning the Baltic Sea may be taken in the forum of the already existing Baltfish project, while the issues of individual fisheries may be solved within the existing producer organisations.

7. The additional catch in the Polish sea sector is of minor importance. It applies mostly to cod, the most overfished species of fish. Limiting the additional catch might increase its

stock and, as a result, the profitability of fishing for cod. The possibility of actually using the additional catch might constitute an additional source of income for the fishermen, and it would eliminate wastefulness.

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