MEDAC - Registered Office Via XX Settembre, 20 - c/o MASAF - 00187 Rome (Italy) - Tax identification number 97534810581 - Association registered with the Prefecture of Rome as a legal entity n.1224/2017

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MEDAC contribution to the EMFF ex post evaluation

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) has played an important role in supporting the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the European Union (EU) since 2007. However, several critical issues have emerged from practical application over the years.

The critical issues emerged and repeatedly reported in the MEDAC meetings are the following:

Bureaucratic complexity: the process of applying for EMFF funds has often been complex, lengthy and costly, depending on the administrative structures of the different Member States. In several cases, fishers have given up on applying for funds.

Ineffectiveness and lack of liquidity: in some cases, the lack of liquidity of companies to meet the guarantees on EMFF advances have prevented them from joining projects. This has been evident in the measures for Producer Organizations, for the financing of Production and Marketing Plans.

Impact of the "Control regulation" (Reg.1224/09): The stringent rules provided for by the fisheries control's regulation have been an additional obstacle to take advantage of EMFF funds: this caused also the exclusion from funding or its recovery in case of lack of points on the license. Although the control activities are needed, the MEDAC deemed not appropriate excessive provisions, such as the possible ex post recovery of the funding granted if a new serious infringement is committed within 5 years of the last payment. In fact, sometime this provision discouraged participation in tenders. Moreover, it happened that such infringements were not always intentional.

Complexity: Some measures did not have the 'pull' or success expected because of overly complex implementation provisions or commitments that were too heavy in relation to the financial contribution.

Limited resources towards technological innovation: in EMFF programming period there has been a limited promotion of innovation in fishing, such as new fishing gears, efficient engines and robotic systems. In this regard, the "*MEDAC Contribution on EMFAF strategies*" (ref. 295/2021) suggested some strategies not achieved: "*It is proposed to replace engines with a coordinated plan to achieve zero CO2 emissions, using self-produced fuels such as hydrogen. This is particularly important in the Mediterranean, where many coastal communities depend on fishing. However, there are financial limits that need to be considered. It is suggested that lump sum funding be provided for pilot projects that develop technologies applicable to the fisheries sector. It is also important to test new alternative engines that could be applied on a larger number of vessels. In essence, the goal is to find innovative solutions to make fishing more sustainable and reduce harmful emissions*."

info@med-ac.eu
+39 06.46.65.21.12 T

med-ac.eu
Via XX Settembre, 20
00187 Roma (Italy)

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On the other hand, MEDAC pointed out several times that EMFF payments for temporary closures were of the utmost importance, as they were increasingly necessary for the implementation of new MAPs that limit the fishing days of fishing vessels.
Furthermore, during the last MEDAC meeting of the WG1 held in Athens (June 2024) it was reported that despite the economic aid provided following the fallout from the war in Ukraine, the drop in prices and demand thwarted the intervention with huge losses for companies and workers in the sector. Support for the increase in the cost of fuel seemed too low.