



# BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

## POLICY AND REFERENCE DIVISION

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POLICY BACKGROUND

Revision of 15/76.

### FISHERIES POLICY

The patterns of commercial fisheries in European waters are being revolutionized, stimulated by the world-wide trend toward adoption of national 200-mile exclusive economic zones (EEZs). This trend has led the European Community to seek to re-define its Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and, on October 30, to declare its own 200-mile fishery limit to take effect from January 1, 1977.

The new CFP, which will determine the access of EEC member states fishing industries' within the Community's new fishing limit will also effect significant changes in European fisheries. Coupled with these developments is the increasingly urgent need for new and effective measures to conserve fish stocks.

These problems affect Britain more fundamentally than any other member-country of the European Community. Britain has the largest fishing fleet in the Community. Waters which would be in Britain's fisheries limit if it were not a Community member constitute half of the Community-wide 200-mile limit. And Britain stands to lose more of its fishing catch as a result of the declaration of 200-mile limits by third countries than any other Community member. In combination, these factors mean that the British fishing industry, which gives employment to more than 140,000 people and lands almost 1 million tons of fish annually could stand to lose most among the EEC members without revision of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Britain supports a Common Fisheries Policy in the Community and wishes to solve the new problems in a Community framework. Many British Government objectives are met in the EEC Foreign Ministers' October 30 agreement and proposals set out by the EEC Commission on September 23.

1. Britain welcomes the establishment of a joint 200-mile European Community fishing limit made up of the waters of member states, to protect European waters from over-fishing from third country fishing fleets;

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2. The October 30 declaration also announced agreement on outline mandates allowing the EEC Commission to open negotiations with third countries on fisheries. Framework agreements with third countries are urgently needed, particularly by Britain, to govern future fishing in third-country waters by British and Community fishing fleets, and to effect a limitation of fishing by third countries within the Community's new fishing limit;
3. Effective conservation and control policies, urged by Britain, to preserve and rebuild fish stocks were listed in the Commission's September 23 proposals;
4. However, a major British objective, revision of the Community's internal fisheries policy within its 200-mile zone has still to be negotiated, to allow Britain to retain an exclusive coastal zone of from 12 to 50 miles, with a system of quotas operating outside the coastal bands.

#### The European Community's Fishing Limit

The declaration of a Community 200-mile fishing limit from January 1, by the Community's Foreign Ministers follows the failure so far of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea to reach final agreement on 200-mile EEZ's for all countries with seaboard. Many other countries, including the United States, have already announced unilaterally their intention of declaring 200-mile fishing limits within the near future. This has made the Community's declaration all the more necessary in order to avoid the danger of third country fishing fleets, excluded from other fishing grounds, concentrating their activities in European waters to the detriment of European fishing industries and fish stocks.

For Britain, the likelihood of British long-distance fishing fleets soon being excluded from their traditional fishing grounds made the imposition of the Community limit imperative.

The Community declaration of October 30 only affects fisheries. Britain has accepted in principle the concept of EEZ's but only in the framework of an international convention on the Law of the Sea.

#### The Community: Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

The declaration of a 200-mile fishing limit for the European Community makes it necessary to revise the Community's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The existing CFP, negotiated by the original six member-states of the Community, provides for free access by Community fishing fleets to member states' coastal waters, except for reserved national coastal bands of six miles with extensions reserved to 12 miles in a few specific areas, including parts of Britain. (The CFP also covers marketing arrangements, support pricing and financial schemes for modernizing Community fleets and ports). The reserved coastal bands were due to be reviewed in 1982. Their abolition would have allowed member states' fleets to fish up to

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each others' shore lines. However, under the declaration of October 30 member-countries will retain permanent 12-mile bands with consideration for others' historic fishing rights within them.

The British Government had stated that the 12-mile coastal bands reserved for national fishing fleets fall far short of Britain's needs and would be "wholly unacceptable." Britain is asking for a reserved coastal band of not less than 12 miles and extending in places to 50 miles. Agreement to this has not yet been achieved in the Community, but the Foreign Ministers' declaration of October 30 leaves scope for further negotiations on the subject.

#### The British Case for Extended Coastal Bands

The British refusal to be satisfied with 12-mile coastal bands within the CFP stems from the fact that, at a time when it is about to have its access restricted to fishing areas outside Community waters (mainly off Iceland and Norway) which have traditionally provided one-third of British catches, it is also being asked to allow free access by other Community fishing fleets to waters around Britain which traditionally provide the other two-thirds of the catch. In short, Britain is being asked to make disproportionate sacrifices for the sake of the revised CFP, which are unacceptable to the British Government.

In volume of catch Britain will lose more than other Community countries from the new 200-mile limits of third countries. In 1973, Britain derived 350,000 tons of fish, one-third of the total catch, from waters mainly off Iceland and Norway which will lie outside the Community's 200-mile limit. West Germany is second with 280,000 tons from such areas. Unless compensated for elsewhere, this loss of catch will cause severe damage to British long-distance fishing fleets which have already suffered from reductions in the catch off Iceland.

A comparison between the waters which would be in a British national 200-mile limit and those of the new Community limit shows how much Britain is being asked to contribute to the CFP. The British area will provide 50 percent of the waters and 55-60 percent of the fish stocks of the Community waters. These waters provide 64 percent of Britain's annual catch, whereas the other Community waters, to which the British fleet would gain access, only provide 0.3 percent of the British catch.

It is to protect the British fishing industry from rapid and unacceptable damage that the Government require reserved coastal bands in the CFP of up to 50 miles. As Mr. Crosland told the House of Commons on October 20: "I can conceive no circumstances in which this Government will accept 12 miles."

#### Quotas

The European Commission has also proposed a system of quotas for both Community and non-member states' fishing fleets to govern their catches from waters beyond the reserved coastal bands within the Community limit. This would have the dual purpose of promoting conservation of fish stocks and giving priority to local fishing fleets. The British Government welcomes this proposal on both grounds but is concerned about the problem of enforcement. As Mr. Crosland said on October 20:

"Clearly quotas will have some part to play but they must be quotas properly enforced and not largely ignored as are the present ones."

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Existing quota systems, such as the arrangements of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, have proved unsatisfactory and ineffective.

#### Relations with Third Countries on Fisheries

The British Government is anxious to see early progress in negotiations on fisheries with interested countries which are not members of the European Community. The Government believes that these negotiations can most effectively be carried out by the Community acting jointly rather than by individual countries. Mr. Crosland told the House of Commons on September 24:

"The Community needs to act as one if at all possible because it is in the common interest of all member states to ensure that resources are conserved."

Negotiations with third countries are essential to Britain because of the British long-distance fishing fleet.

Most urgent is the need for the Community to reach a reciprocal agreement with Iceland, since Britain's bilateral agreement with Iceland expires on December 1. The Foreign Ministers' declaration of October 30 now opens the way for such negotiations.

But negotiations with other countries are also needed. As Mr. Crosland told the House of Commons on October 20:

"It is of the highest urgency for the whole of this country not merely to get an agreement with Iceland before December 1 ... but also to get agreements with the United States, Canada, Norway, the Eastern European countries and the rest... It is now for the Community to get on with the job of negotiating with non-members what access, if any, they will be allowed in Community waters, and in return for what concessions on their part."

The need for agreements with third countries is urgent not only to prevent a hiatus in international agreements but also to stop the increasing damage being caused to European fish stocks by the fishing fleets of other countries, notably the USSR, Poland and East Germany.

Mainly by using indiscriminate trawling methods and giant factory ships the East Europeans have greatly increased their catches from European and North Atlantic waters. The European Commission reports that in the period 1964-74 the total North Atlantic catch increased by 25 percent, but that within this growth rate, Community catches have not increased so fast while East European catches have increased by 50 percent. The catches by the USSR in 1974 from waters within the Community limit were 403,000 tons, by Poland 66,000 tons and by East Germany 55,000 tons. In addition, Norway took 459,000 tons. The problem for Britain is particularly severe off the coast of Devon and Cornwall, where the Soviet catch of mackerel has risen in five years from about 6,000 tons per year to nearly 30,000 tons per year.

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The approach of the Community to the negotiations with third parties will of course vary from country to country. With the USSR, Norway and Iceland negotiations will be for reciprocal rights of access. The Community will also seek access agreements with countries such as the U.S. and Canada which do not traditionally fish in European waters. They will seek to phase out fishing by countries such as Poland, Finland, Sweden and Spain in whose waters Community fishermen have little interest.

### Conservation

The European Commission has spoken in its report of the,

"disastrous state of fish stocks ... and the inability of the International Commissions to ensure their effective protection and to promote their replenishment."

Herring stocks in the North East Atlantic are one-third the size they should be. British research laboratories show stocks of North Sea herring and Dover sole to be endangered and Norwegian scientists are similarly worried about cod, haddock, capelin and mackerel. The OECD has reported that catches in 1975 fell in nearly half its member countries. It also pointed out that OECD fishing fleets have increased by 54 percent in 7 years but the catches by only 11 percent.

The remedy has to lie in new and effective quota systems to reduce catches and restrict the new fishing methods such as vacuuming the seabed. Indeed, scientists have recommended a total ban on herring fishing in the North East Atlantic. Controls can be implemented on fishing methods, equipment, number of vessels, catch quotas and landings.

For the future, Britain is encouraging research on fish farming and the introduction of ignored but plentiful species of fish such as blue whiting.

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