



EBFA welcomes Commissioner Kadis' sensitive approach on bottom trawling

- **Coexistence of protected areas and bottom trawling should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and not based on general assumptions**

Brussels, 4 March 2025

The European Bottom Fishing Alliance (EBFA) welcomes Commissioner Kadis' balanced approach to bottom trawling within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). In his recent remarks¹, the Commissioner emphasized the importance of a science-based strategy to balance biodiversity conservation with sustainable fishing practices. EBFA is particularly encouraged by his focus on tailored assessments and case-by-case evaluations, ensuring that decisions are driven by evidence rather than broad assumptions. This rational approach, long advocated by EBFA, can prevent disproportionate fishing area closures under current and new environmental legislation such as the Nature Restoration Law.

As part of the EU's broader commitment to the Oceans Pact and in line with the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) objectives, Commissioner Kadis highlighted key priorities that align with the EBFA's values: solid science, effective monitoring, enforcement and the provision of essential support to Member States. The Commission's future plans to help Member States design and implement effective protected areas are a crucial step in ensuring biodiversity conservation while facilitating sustainable fisheries.

In his statement, Commissioner Kadis emphasized the crucial distinction between the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, which is non-legally binding, and the Nature Restoration Law, which carries binding commitments. This differentiation is important, as it allows for a departure from previous unrealistic non-binding targets, such as a gradual phase out of active bottom fishing by 2030 or a complete closure of 10% of the EU's seas to fishing. According to EBFA, these targets lacked endorsement from the international community and related UN conventions.

The Commissioner further clarified that bottom trawling in MPAs should be considered based on an impact assessment for each specific area. He stated: *'As a biologist, it depends on where the bottom trawling occurs and whether it has a negative impact on the targeted species, ecosystems and habitats in a particular area. When there is evidence of an impact, bottom trawling should not be allowed. However, when an impact assessment shows that there is no significant harm—for instance, in Natura 2000 areas that permit compatible activities—then bottom trawling should be allowed to continue.'*

Iván López, chair of EBFA, stated: *'We commend Commissioner Kadis for taking a nuanced approach that balances the needs of biodiversity protection, sustainable fishing, coastal development and food autonomy. When properly managed and regulated, as it is the case in Europe, bottom trawling can coexist with biodiversity conservation objectives. Not all protected areas are designated as strictly no-take or fully protected zones. In many cases, regulated*

bottom trawling is permitted within specific zones of MPAs where it does not conflict with conservation goals, and these allowances are based on extensive scientific assessments. For instance, some MPAs are design to protect birds that are not impacted by bottom trawling gears.'

EBFA calls for this rational approach to be upheld in the upcoming Oceans Pact and UNOC, instead of resorting to emotional campaigns and blanket bans that would only accelerate the decline of the fleet and increase dependence on imports from unsustainable sources like Russia or China.

EBFA stands ready to collaborate with the European Commission and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies that prioritize scientific evidence, sustainability, and the protection of our shared marine heritage.

About EBFA

The European Bottom Fishing Alliance (EBFA) is a fishing industry coalition of 20 000 fishermen and women representing 7 000 vessels from 14 European coastal countries. EBFA advocates for policies that promote sustainable fisheries practices and the long-term health of marine ecosystems. EBFA works with industry stakeholders, governments, and environmental groups to ensure that bottom fishing activities are conducted in a manner that respects environmental conservation and supports coastal communities.

Press contact

Daniel Voces, Secretary of EBFA, info@bottomfishingalliance.eu +32 489268107

¹ <https://www.politico.eu/event/walking-the-talk-on-the-european-oceans-pact/>