

PRESS RELEASE

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NO TO MERGER - DISTINCTIVENESS OF FISHERIES SECTOR MUST BE RECOGNISED

SNP Euro-MP Ian Hudghton today called on the Council of Ministers not to go ahead with merging the Fisheries and Agriculture Councils. Speaking today at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Mr Hudghton stressed:

“The surprise decision taken at the recent European Council meeting in Seville to merge the Fisheries and Agriculture Councils has served another blow to the EU’s fishing industry and must be reconsidered. The distinctive needs and requirements of fisheries and the fishing industry cannot be left to play second fiddle to agriculture. A cursory glance at a map of Europe is enough to explain why some states are particularly interested in Fisheries, while others play scant regard. Land-locked countries such as Luxembourg and Austria have little interest in fisheries. What’s more, it is highly likely that even fishing countries will put agriculture first given its relative weight economically, with fisheries merely being tagged to the end of the Agriculture Council meetings.

“Fisheries is a special case when it comes to its regulation and cannot be put in the same category as agriculture. Geography, history, sea-bed topography, politics, biology and the laws of nature have all played a part in creating the highly fragmented mosaic of the Common Fisheries Policy. The very subject of the regulation in fisheries is very different from what is regulated under the Common Agriculture Policy – fish by their very nature know no boundaries. This distinctiveness has moreover been realised through the de facto regionalisation of the CFP, various derogations from the Treaty and by the development of the *acquis communautaire*.”

Mr Hudghton went on to appeal to fellow MEPs and the European Commission to ensure that the special nature of fisheries be recognised and protected, and that the Directorate General of Fisheries in the European Commission not be merged with Agriculture:

“The European Parliament has also witnessed a number of attempts to merge the Fisheries Committee with the Agriculture Committee. These attempts have all failed. I, along with a number of colleagues, have fought the fisheries corner hard to ensure that there is a forum which allows the distinctiveness of the fisheries sector to be appreciated and understood. I urge fellow MEPs to continue to uphold the

independence of the Fisheries Committee, and not be influenced by the illogical actions of the Council.

“Finally, I call on the European Commission not to follow in the Council’s footsteps. The Commissioner for Agriculture and Fisheries may be one and the same for the life of the present Commission, but this is not always the case. It is vital that fisheries is given due recognition and that the proper financial, specialist human and scientific resources are allocated to ensure its effective regulation.”

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