

Commission lifts “yellow card” from Thailand for its actions against illegal fishing

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The European Commission delists Thailand from the group of “warned countries” as recognition of its progress in tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Today the Commission acknowledges that Thailand has successfully addressed the shortcomings in its fisheries legal and administrative systems. For this reason it lifts the so-called “yellow card”, in place since April 2015, a warning from the EU that the country at the time was not sufficiently tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Today’s decision reverses the first step of a process that could have led to a complete import ban of marine fisheries products into the EU.

European Commissioner for environment, maritime affairs and fisheries Karmenu Vella said: *“Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing damages global fish stocks but it also hurts the people living from the sea, especially those already vulnerable to poverty. Fighting illegal fishing is therefore a priority for the EU. I am excited that today we have a new committed partner in this fight.”*

Since the yellow card was issued, the Commission and Thailand have engaged in a constructive process of cooperation and dialogue. This has resulted in a major upgrade of the Thai fisheries governance in accordance with the international commitments of the country.

Thailand has amended its fisheries legal framework in line with international law of the sea instruments. It has reinforced compliance with its obligations as a flag, port, coastal and market State, included clear definitions in its legislation and set up a deterrent regime of sanctions. Moreover, it has reinforced the mechanisms of control of the national fishing fleet and enhanced its monitoring, control and surveillance systems. This includes remote monitoring of fishing activities and a robust scheme of inspections at port.

With these measures, Thai authorities now have all the necessary policies in place to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Thailand plays a central role in the international supply chain for fisheries products. The highly developed Thai processing industry relies on raw materials from the Indian and Pacific Oceans. As party to the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization Port States Measures Agreement, Thailand has reinforced controls over landings of foreign fishing vessels in Thai ports and strengthened cooperation with flag States in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The reinforcement of the fisheries legal and administrative systems in Thailand could therefore trigger a multiplier effect in the global sustainability of fisheries resources.

The Commission also recognises the efforts demonstrated by Thailand to tackle human trafficking and to improve labour conditions in the fishing sector. While not part of the bilateral dialogue on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, the Commission and the European External Action Service have addressed with Thai authorities the serious human rights abuses and forced labour in the fishing industry. Thailand has recently announced the ratification of the International Labour Organisation’s Convention No. 188 on Work in Fishing (C188), the first country in Asia to do so.

The Commission congratulates the Thai Government on this commitment and stands ready to further support Thailand in its declared ambition to set an example for the region, not least through the EU-Thailand Labour Dialogue.

The Commission will continue to work closely with Thailand to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and to promote decent work conditions in the fishing industry.

Background

Thailand has been on the “yellow card” list since April 2015, a warning from the EU that the country at the time was not sufficiently tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The global value of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is estimated at 10-20 billion euros per year. Between 11 and 26 million tonnes of fish are caught illegally a year, corresponding to at least 15% of world catches. The EU is the world's biggest importer of fisheries products.

Fighting illegal fishing is part of the EU's commitment to ensure sustainable use of the sea and its resources, under the common fisheries policy. It is also an important pillar of the EU's ocean governance strategy, aiming to improve the international governance of the oceans.

The Commission's Decision is based on the EU's 'Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Regulation', which entered into force in 2010^[1]. This instrument ensures that only fisheries products that have been certified as legal can access the EU market. The prime objective of the EU's IUU process is to enter into dialogue and offer support to third countries. These dialogues often lead to new, committed partners in the fight against IUU fishing.

Since November 2012 the Commission has been in formal dialogues with 25 third countries (pre-identification or "yellow card"), which have been warned of the need to take effective action to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. When significant progress is observed, the Commission can end the dialogue (lifting the pre-identification status or "green card"). Only a few countries have not shown the necessary commitment to reforms until now. As a result fisheries products caught by vessels from these countries cannot be imported into the EU (identification and listing or "red card").

For more information

[MEMO on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing in general and in Thailand](#)

[Overview of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing procedures with third countries](#)

[1] Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

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