



# Recommendation of the Council on Principles and Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of Plans for Rebuilding Fisheries

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## Background Information

The Recommendation on Principles and Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of Plans for Rebuilding Fisheries was adopted by the OECD Council on 16 April 2012 on the proposal of the Fisheries Committee. The Recommendation aimed to support the efforts of Adherents to implement the commitment to rebuild overfished and depleted fish stocks by addressing the economic aspects of fishing building. The Recommendation provided a set of principles and guidelines to consider when designing and implementing rebuilding plans whilst preserving the livelihoods that depend directly or indirectly on this activity. It built upon previous OECD work on market-based instruments and the political economy of reform, and draws as well from a number of case studies. Beyond setting out the role and use of economics in rebuilding, it discussed different instruments for rebuilding, and discusses issues related to how reform can take place (i.e. “making reform happen”). The Recommendation was abrogated on 12 July 2017, as it was no longer seen as relevant by many Adherents.

**THE COUNCIL,**

**HAVING REGARD** to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

**HAVING REGARD** to the Recommendation of the Council on the Design and Implementation of Decommissioning Schemes in the Fishing Sector [C(2008)78];

**AIMING** to support the efforts of Members and non-Members to implement the commitment to rebuild overfished and depleted fish stocks by addressing the economic aspects of fisheries rebuilding;

**WISHING** to contribute to the ongoing work of the Organisation on green growth as well as on food security;

**NOTING** that the concept of rebuilding fisheries is broader than rebuilding fish stocks and refers to programmes (government sponsored or otherwise) that seek to improve stock status while securing both the integrity of ecosystems and the livelihoods that depend, directly or indirectly, on fisheries;

**CONSIDERING** that an improved understanding of the economic, social and institutional issues underpinning successful rebuilding efforts will increase the likelihood that fisheries rebuilding plans will meet their objectives;

**RECOGNISING** the need for action at all levels to ensure the long-term sustainable use and management of fisheries resources and that rebuilding fisheries is potentially both economically and socially beneficial as:

- it leads to a sustainable fishery where the harvesting and processing capacity is commensurate with the productivity of healthy fish stocks, thereby sustaining fishing communities, generating employment, and preventing a waste of human and physical capital;
- can increase food security and contribute to Green Growth; and
- has positive environmental effects, including the rebuilding of target fish stocks, supporting biodiversity, and strengthening the resilience of the ecosystem as a whole;

**CONSIDERING** that the following Principles and Guidelines for the Design and Implementation of Plans for Rebuilding Fisheries (hereafter “the Principles and Guidelines”) are intended to provide policymakers with a set of practical and evidence-based principles and guidelines to consider when designing and implementing fisheries rebuilding plans;

**On the proposal of the Fisheries Committee:**

**I. RECOMMENDS** that, when designing and implementing plans for rebuilding fisheries, Members take due account of and implement the following Principles and Guidelines:

**A. Principles**

1. Fisheries should be managed in a sustainable and responsible way so as not to lead to a situation where rebuilding becomes necessary. Rebuilding plans should be based on social, biological and economic principles which should be incorporated throughout the design and implementation process in an integrated fashion, as opposed to sequentially or in isolation. Addressing risk and uncertainties should be explicitly incorporated into the rebuilding plan.

2. Efforts to rebuild fisheries should aim at restoring a sustainable fishery with a potential to generate profits and employment. Careful considerations of costs and benefits and their distribution is an important policy issue.

3. Efforts to rebuild fisheries should take into account relevant international fisheries instruments, as well as environmental and ecosystem considerations and the interactions between the fishing activity and other industries.

4. Rebuilding plans should be an integral part of a coherent broader fisheries management system. The management instruments employed should be consistent among themselves and consistent with instruments applied elsewhere in the management system.

5. Good governance, which implies inclusiveness, empowerment, transparency, flexibility and a predictable set of rules and processes for fisheries management, is a key element in ensuring success. Good governance acknowledges the tensions and balance between objectives of different stakeholders and contributes to resolving those tensions. Transparency helps to build trust and foster dialogue among stakeholders. The inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders (including different levels of government, environmental and scientific communities, industries and local communities) calls for a clear specification of each group's role in institutional structures and processes.

## **B. Guidelines**

1. Rebuilding plans should be based on a comprehensive assessment of ecological, economic and social conditions, the interplay between fishing activity and the fish stock, and the existing management and governance regime while accounting for uncertainty. New and existing research, data and analysis can contribute to this assessment.

2. Rebuilding plans should have well-defined objectives, targets, harvest control rules and assessment indicators which are clearly articulated and measurable. The rebuilding plans should provide estimates of the time pattern of likely economic benefits and costs with respect to catches, capacity, profitability, distribution of added catch value, employment, over the time of the recovery period and these variables should be monitored during implementation. The original estimates and the results of the monitoring should be provided to stakeholders throughout the process in a clear and transparent manner.

3. Rebuilding plans should take account of the full costs and benefits of designing, implementing, and monitoring the programme, and their distribution.

4. The design of rebuilding plans should take into account the characteristics of the fishery, such as fleet composition, the biological characteristics of the resource and whether the resources are managed at a local, national, regional or multilateral level.

5. In rebuilding plans, appropriate monitoring, control and surveillance instruments are necessary for successful implementation and should be designed and implemented for operational effectiveness, but should also address administrative simplicity and cost effectiveness.

6. Stakeholders have an important role to play in many stages of the rebuilding process to ensure a common understanding of the state of the fishery. Such engagement will help in the development of clear, transparent policies that provide managers and stakeholders with a degree of predictability with respect to process and expected changes in policy variables, and may therefore help build support for rebuilding.

7. Fisheries rebuilding plans should be communicated to the general public and results of their implementation reported in a timely fashion.

8. Rebuilding often implies incurring short-term costs in the interest of generating long-term benefits; weighing these costs and benefits is an important undertaking. The distribution of cost and benefits among stakeholders is a key policy consideration and will significantly influence stakeholders' support for a plan. Rebuilding plans should therefore: clearly articulate expected costs, benefits, and their distribution in the short and long term; seek to ensure that those stakeholders who bear the costs of rebuilding will receive some of the benefits; and should be designed to allow stakeholders to better recognise and value the expected long-term benefits of rebuilding efforts.

9. Rebuilding plans should account for the interaction between central and local authorities as well as a broad range of stakeholder groups. Decisions taken at the local level influence decisions taken at higher levels, and vice versa. This interaction should be addressed in the rebuilding plan and in the governance system more broadly.

10. The implications of risk and uncertainties, and means to address them and where possible reduce them, should be explicitly incorporated into the rebuilding plans. Rebuilding plans should be robust and adaptive to variability and unexpected changes in the environment, industry or the economy. The design of rebuilding plans should include mechanisms to monitor progress and anticipate actions to be taken if rebuilding is not advancing. It is important to have a mechanism to assess and communicate to the stakeholders and policy makers the biological and economic risks associated with various components of the rebuilding plan. Mechanisms that take uncertainty and risk explicitly into account and reduce possible negative effects should be used.

11. Rebuilding fisheries usually requires the concurrent use of multiple management measures. Measures may include input/output controls as well as various technical measures. Generally, output controls are effective in restraining catches but can be costly to enforce and monitor. Input controls are often less effective in restraining catches but may be cheaper and easier to implement.

12. Rebuilding requires a modification of fishing mortality to increase stock sizes and improve stock structures, and the management instruments in use should be effective in this regard.

13. When a rebuilding plan concerns a species found in a multispecies, multi-gear fishery, specific management measures should be applied due to the interactions between the gears and fisheries, and the possible effects that this particular rebuilding initiative may have on other species and fisheries should be addressed.

14. Rebuilding plans should take account of by-catch and discards, and include measures to reduce these where possible.

15. Habitat conservation and enhancement can be an important part of rebuilding plans.

16. The pace of rebuilding is an important aspect of a rebuilding plan. A moratorium or a sharp reduction in effort or catch can result in idled human and physical capital with accompanying waste and lost know-how and markets. Higher net present value of fishery output will normally be achieved by reduced but positive harvest levels, although this may require a longer time period to achieve the targets. In many cases a gradual or incremental implementation of the rebuilding plan can be useful as it may help to increase social acceptability, prevent abrupt economic and social harm, and ease the financial and political pressures on governments. However, this gradual approach must be balanced against the possibility of significant and potentially irreversible damage to the fish stock and/or the ecosystem if harvest continues.

17. Retraining programmes, well-designed decommissioning schemes<sup>1</sup> and other flanking measures may help stakeholders to adapt to the changes in the fishery. Such measures may also engender stakeholder support for the rebuilding plan.

18. Harvest control rules or similar measures, where applicable, are central to rebuilding fisheries. They specify predetermined management actions, especially those related to allowable harvest levels, according to the difference between the current stock size and structure and target stock objectives. The use of such rules also allows for discussing and agreeing on specific trajectories, taking into account possible social and economic impacts and uncertainties.

19. Experience shows that there are various types of individual and collective rights-based management instruments that may be useful to consider under different conditions by creating incentives for industry self-adaptation. Well designed rights-based management systems may be effective if the objective is to reduce fishing effort, while at the same time securing profits for fishers in the longer term. Challenges associated with rights-based management can be addressed through specific safeguarding measures.

20. An integral part of a rebuilding plan is to decide on how the fishery shall be managed after the rebuilding period. Such a post rebuilding plan should ideally secure a sustainable fishery and prevent back-sliding.

**II. INVITES** non-Members to take due account of and adhere to this Recommendation.

**III. INSTRUCTS** the Fisheries Committee to monitor the implementation of this Recommendation and report to the Council within three years from its adoption and as appropriate thereafter.

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<sup>1</sup> See, *inter alia*, the Recommendation of the Council on the Design and Implementation of Decommissioning Schemes in the Fishing Sector, [C(2008)78] and *Reducing Fishing Capacity: Best Practices for Decommissioning Schemes* (OECD, 2009).

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