



EU-Thailand Newsletter

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Fishermen see window of opportunity to advance their interests in wake of farmers' protests

Farmers' protests continue to produce headlines, now with a new threat of **fishermen joining the movement**. On 26 February in Madrid, and on 9 March in the north of France, farmers and fishermen organised **joint demonstrations against the 'Brussels diktats.'** Trade unions and representatives of Europe's fishing industry shared EU farmers' demands to **reduce the bureaucracy and environmental standards** imposed by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Fishermen in particular stand **against the Commission's Action Plan to protect and restore marine ecosystems** announced in February, which seeks to **ban bottom fishing in Marine Protected Areas by 2030**. If implemented, the fishing industry expects a **25% drop in seafood production**. They warn that **70% of seafood in EU is already imported from third countries**. Spanish fishermen protest in particular imports from **Morocco**, which would only increase further if **FTA negotiations** are resumed. Finally, the two groups demand a **rise in revenues** and a **reduction in fuel taxes**.

Farmers' protests have been **very successful at re-shaping the policy agenda ahead of the European elections**. One example is the **nuanced renovation of the trade liberalisation measures with Ukraine**. While the Commission already proposed in January safeguards for eggs, poultry, and sugar, MEPs have included a further ten products and product groups alongside lower thresholds triggering safeguards. The Commission also announced (15 March) a **package cutting red tape for farmers**, to be discussed by European leaders at the next European Council meeting (21-22 March). **Fishermen hope that they can ride the farmers' protest to their benefit**.