

Multiannual plan for fish stocks in the western waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted the report by Alain CADEC (EPP, FR) on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual plan for fish stocks in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 establishing a multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea, and repealing Regulations (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007 and (EC) No 1300/2008.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission's proposal as follows.

Subject matter: this draft Regulation shall apply to by-catches caught in the Western Waters when fishing for the demersal stocks and shall ensure that exploitation of **all living marine biological resources** restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield. Members considered that the maximum sustainable yield exploitation rate shall be achieved gradually for all stocks, and by 2020 at the latest, and shall be maintained thereafter.

The Regulation shall also:

- specify details for the implementation of measures to minimise the impact of the fisheries on the marine environment, in particular the incidental catches of protected species, in Union waters of the Western Waters for all fisheries fishing in those waters. The Commission may adopt implementing acts laying down a sea basin analysis, and the format and timetables for the submission and approval of management measures;
- provide for technical measures for **commercial and recreational fisheries** applicable in the Western Waters in respect of any demersal stock.

Objectives: in addition to pursuing environmental sustainability, the plan shall be managed in a manner consistent with the objectives of generating economic, social and employment benefits, while contributing to the availability of food products.

The plan shall:

- contribute to the elimination of discards, by avoiding and reducing, as far as possible, including by the use of innovative selective fishing gear and techniques, unwanted catches, and to the implementation, as far as possible, of the landing obligation for the species which are subject to catch limits and to which this Regulation applies;
- implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in order to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem, and in particular on **vulnerable habitats and protected species**, including marine mammals and seabirds.

Technical measures – closed seasons/areas for the fishing of sea bass: commercial and recreational fishing of sea bass shall be prohibited in western waters and in the ICES divisions 4b and 4c between 1 February and 30 April. It shall be prohibited for vessels to retain on board, transship, relocate, land or conserve sea bass caught on shores in those areas.

It shall also be prohibited for Union fishing vessels to fish sea bass in ICES divisions 7b, 7c, 7j and 7k, and in waters of ICES divisions 7a and 7g that are more than 12 nautical miles from the baseline under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom.

Fishing opportunities: the amended text stipulates that for the fish stocks and species, which are subject, at Union level and for the purpose of conserving resources, to fishing bans established on an annual basis in the context of decisions on fishing opportunities or seasonal fishing bans, the Council may nevertheless establish **exceptional fishing opportunities** for some fisheries so that account can be taken of the limited or unavoidable nature of such catches in view of the particular socioeconomic importance of these fisheries. Those exceptional fishing opportunities shall be limited and shall not significantly outweigh the impact of the relevant temporary ban on fishing on the conservation of the stock. Members recommended a **three-year period** for achievement of the maximum sustainable yield, thus limiting the social and economic effects by spreading the effort over several fishing seasons.

Recreational fisheries: Member States shall take account of **fishing mortality** in recreational fisheries when allocating the fishing opportunities they have so that the total fishing mortality target is not exceeded. When scientific advice indicates that recreational fishing is having a significant impact on the fishing mortality of a stock, the Council may establish non-discriminatory individual fishing opportunities for recreational fishermen.

Marking recreational catches: specimens of sea bass, cod, pollack and sole caught in the areas and stocks shall be marked when kept by a recreational fisherman. The marking shall be carried out immediately after the capture and killing of the fish, either on the shore or on board if the fishing activity is carried out on a boat. However, specimens brought on board a recreational fishing vessel and kept alive and in good condition before being released shall not be marked.

Follow-up and advance notice of modifications to scientific advice: each year by 1 April, the Commission shall inform the European Parliament of the best available scientific advice that served as a basis for Council decisions on the determination of fishing opportunities under this Regulation between 1 February of the previous year and 31 January of the current year.

The Commission shall also inform Parliament, prior to the Council decision, of situations that may lead to significant changes in fishing opportunities (deviation of more than 20% from the new TAC corresponding to the new FMSY point value).

It shall, likewise, inform the European Parliament, as soon as possible and in any case before the adoption of a new Council decision, of cases where scientific advice relating to the different breeding stock biomass reference levels justifies recourse to **safeguard measures**.