

Fisheries resources: recovery of the stocks of plaice and sole in the North Sea

2006/0002(CNS) - 28/08/2006

The committee adopted the report by Albert Jan MAAT (EPP-ED, NL) amending - under the consultation procedure - the proposed fisheries management plan for plaice and sole in the North Sea. MEPs criticised the Commission for not sufficiently involving the North Sea Regional Advisory Council (RAC) in its drafting of the proposal, and said that Community policy should be partly based on the latter's recommendations. The main amendments were as follows:

- in order to make regulations more predictable for the sector, the total allowable catches (TAC) should be set for a 3-year period to replace the Commission's yearly definition;
- the committee also voted for a minimum precautionary tonnage (230 000 tons for plaice, 35 000 tons for sole) to be the threshold for a management plan, instead of the percentage-based system proposed by the Commission that looked at the changes in stock from year to year for its indications;
- in line with the approach adopted for the cod recovery plan, the maximum number of days at sea should be decided for types of fishing in which plaice and cod are caught, either deliberately or as by-catch;
- as there may be Community fishing vessels which fall under both this regulation and the cod recovery regulation, the Council should have the option of clarifying which "days at sea" rules apply;
- lastly, the committee introduced a new Article 13a stipulating that the Commission should draw up an action plan for the development and use of low-impact fishing methods and gear.