

Common fisheries policy (CFP)

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The Commission presents a Communication setting out the basic principles with respect to setting of fishing opportunities for 2015.

These will be set for the first time under the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), with the objective of progressively restoring and maintaining populations of fish stocks above biomass levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (MSY). The MSY objective is to be achieved by 2015 where possible and on a progressive, incremental basis at the latest by 2020 for all stocks. This objective will also contribute to achieving good environmental status by 2020 as provided for by the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) and the [CFP](#).

In accordance with the requirements of the CFP Regulation the Communication discusses progress on achieving maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and on the situation of fish stocks.

The key findings on the state of fish stocks are as follows:

Atlantic waters, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea: overfishing has reduced in the European Atlantic waters, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea.

For the stocks with MSY assessments, overfishing has gone down from 94% of the stocks in 2003, to 63% in 2009 and to 41% in 2012. An increasing proportion of the stocks have been assessed.

The number of stocks that, according to available estimates, are fished at levels corresponding to MSY has gone up from only 2 in 2003, to 13 in 2009 and to 27 in 2012.

The number of stocks with full MSY assessments increased from 34 in 2005 to 35 in 2009 and to 46 in 2014. Significant progress has been made in the number of stocks with quantitative advice from 59 in 2003 to 71 in 2014, as a result of the introduction of new methods by ICES in 2013.

Mediterranean and Black seas: the levels of exploitation are well beyond MSY targets. Out of 97 stocks, 91% were overfished. European hake, red mullet and deep-water rose shrimp are the most commonly overfished demersal stocks. Sardine and anchovy are the two common overfished small pelagic stocks. Effective actions to phase out overfishing must be taken swiftly.

The report notes number of stocks assessed rose from 29 in 2007 to 104 in 2012. Despite this, knowledge is still limited as the total number of stocks commercially exploited is considerably higher.

In the Black Sea the status of 7 stocks is known and 5 of them are overexploited. Of TAC managed stocks, turbot is overfished and European sprat has been exploited sustainably since 2007.

Fishing opportunities: the Commission's proposals will be based on bringing the impact of the fishing fleets on the stocks (fishing mortality) in the shortest feasible time-frame to the levels required to allow the stocks to rebuild to biomass levels that produce maximum sustainable yield. When that has been achieved the Commission will, as appropriate, propose measures to enable further rebuilding.

2015 will also be the year in which the landing obligation for certain fisheries comes into force. Fishing opportunities for stocks falling under the landing obligation are to be fixed taking into account the change to fishing opportunities that reflect catches rather than landings, on the understanding that that should not jeopardise the MSY objective or result in an increase of fishing mortality in the fishery.

The Commission will base its proposals for the fishing opportunities on the best available scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) on achieving MSY.

For stocks where such advice is not available, the Commission proposals will apply the precautionary approach.

Member States, Advisory Councils and stakeholders are invited to reflect on the orientations set out and to provide recommendations and suggestions to the Commission in order to ensure that the 2015 fishing opportunities help in attaining the objectives of new CFP.