# Multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks

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The Committee on Fisheries adopted the report by Ulrike RODUST (S&D, DE) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing a multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks and repealing Council Regulation (EC) 676/2007 and Council Regulation (EC) 1342/2008.

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

Purpose and scope: the Regulation establishes a multiannual plan for the demersal stocks in waters of Union waters of ICES zones IIa, IIIa and IV (North Sea) and the fisheries, including recreational fisheries, exploiting those stocks.

Demersal stocks shall cover those roundfish, flatfish and cartilaginous fish species, Norway lobster (Nephrops Norvegicus) and Northern prawn (Pandalus borealis) that live at or near the bottom of the water column.

Members recalled that the aim of this plan should be to help achieve the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), in particular to restore and maintain fish stocks at biomass levels above those to achieve maximum sustainable yield (MSY). The plan shall contribute to:

- the implementation of the landing obligation for demersal stocks subject to catch limits;
- the implementation and achievement of the socio-economic aspects of the CFP and contributing to the implementation of the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management by minimising the negative effects of fishing on the marine ecosystem;
- the achievement of good environmental status and favourable conservation status for habitats and species.

All actions taken under the plan should be based on the best available scientific advice.

Prohibited species: group 6 in the Commission proposal refers to the list of prohibited species as they currently appear in Article 12 of Council Regulation (EU) 2017/127. Members suggested referring to a less flexible list by specifying the definition of prohibited species.

Targeted objectives: in line with the provisions of the Baltic Sea Management Plan, Members proposed:

- fishing opportunities be fixed in such a way as to ensure that there is less than a 5 % probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below the limit spawning stock biomass reference point (Blim);
- that the Commission may urgently submit a proposal to revise the fishing mortality ranges set out in Annex I if it considers, on the basis of the best scientific advice available, that these ranges are no longer in line with the objectives of the plan.

Measures of the multiannual plan based on the precautionary approach must guarantee a degree of conservation of the relevant stocks that is at least comparable to exploitation rates in accordance with the maximum sustainable yield.

Fishing opportunities: when allocating the fishing opportunities available to them, Member States should take account of transparent and objective criteria. In the case of joint management of stocks shared with third countries, Member States should allow the exchange of fishing opportunities.

Impact of recreational fishing: a new provision shall provide for the review of available data on recreational fishery catches to determine their potential impact on the stocks of regulated species.

Technical measures: Members suggested that a specific chapter should be created to allow technical measures to be put in place in general. The Commission may adopt delegated acts in respect of:

- specifications of characteristics of fishing gears and rules governing their use, to ensure or improve selectivity, to reduce unwanted catches or to minimise the negative impact on the ecosystem;
- limitations or prohibitions on the use of certain fishing gears and on fishing activities, in certain areas or periods to protect spawning fish, fish below the minimum conservation reference size or non-target fish species, or to minimise the negative impact on the ecosystem;
- the fixing of minimum conservation reference sizes for any of the stocks to which this Regulation applies, to ensure the protection of juveniles of marine organisms.

The Commission shall be empowered to establish biologically sensitive protected areas.