

## UE, Cuts proposed for deep-sea fisheries

The European Commission has today proposed fishing opportunities for deep-sea fish stocks in EU and international waters in the North-East Atlantic for 2015-2016.

In line with scientific advice, the Commission proposes an increase of total allowable catches (TACs) for four stocks, a decrease for nine stocks, and a *status quo* for five stocks as compared to 2014. For four stocks, mainly deep-sea sharks, the proposal does not yet contain a figure, because scientific advice will be delivered later this month.

European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Maria Damanaki, said: "Deep sea ecosystems and fish stocks are particularly vulnerable to human activities, such as fishing, and need appropriate protection. Hence, sustainable management is the only way we can ensure the future of deep-sea fisheries. It is good news that the scientific advice allows for increases for a number of these stocks, but unfortunately the situation is bleak for most other stocks. We look forward to continuing working with the Member States to improve the knowledge on these stocks, and to work towards sustainable deep-sea fisheries."

For the important stock of roundnose grenadiers West of the British Isles, scientific advice on how to achieve maximum sustainable yield is available. Based on this, the Commission proposes a moderate cut for this stock (-12 per cent), which should allow it to be fished at sustainable levels in 2015. For 2016 a small increase will be possible (+2 per cent).

For four stocks of greater forkbeard, the Commission proposes 10 per cent increases.

For a number of other stocks, data is limited and a precautionary approach implies significant cuts to protect the stocks. This is especially the case for red seabream in the areas West of Portugal and around the Azores. The scientific advice for the area West Portugal even calls for the development of a recovery plan.

The Commission's proposals are based on scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES). However, available data for most deep-sea stocks are insufficient to allow scientists to fully assess the stock status, either in terms of number of fish or fishing mortality.

Fishing for deep-sea species has been regulated by the European Union since 2003. Deep-sea fisheries account for about 1 per cent of fish landed from the North-East Atlantic. The catches – and related jobs - have been declining for years due to depleted stocks.

The poor state of key deep-sea stocks and the lack of scientific data clearly demonstrates that a better management framework for deep-sea fisheries, as proposed by the Commission in 2012, remains highly necessary.

Source : <http://fis.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?l=e&ndb=1&id=71804> (03/10/2014)