

Brussels accepts Spanish-Portuguese proposal for sardine fishery management

The Governments of Spain and Portugal have put forward to the European Commission their proposal for management of the Atlantic sardine fishery this year.

At a meeting with Director General of the Fisheries Commission, João Aguiar Machado, Secretary General of Fisheries under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment, Andres Hermida and Portuguese Secretary of State for Fisheries, Jose Apolinario, they highlighted the poor stock status of Atlantic sardines and the need to continue putting in place adequate management measures.

They also explained the Commission the difficulties of the direct application of the "rule of exploitation," due to the serious socio-economic impact that could result from such a drastic reduction in the levels of landings.

The joint Spanish-Portuguese proposal, which has been accepted by the Commission, is to apply the "precautionary considerations" contained in the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea's (ICES) report itself of July. This report recommended limiting landings to 14,000 tonnes, avoiding putting at risk the recovery of the stock as well as the encouraging results of the last Portuguese campaign.

Both representatives detailed the Commission the ideas for the management of the sardine fishery between the two countries this year:

- The maximum volume of landings for both countries will be 14,000 tonnes, according to the scenario of ICES's "precautionary considerations".
- Conducting Spanish and Portuguese spring surveys that could allow the reassessing of the stock state for 2016 and the revision of the figure increase.
- As a precautionary limit, both countries agree to limit catches through 31 July at 10,000 tonnes, which would allow, if an increase in the level of landings were not possible, ensuring the season in the second half of the year.
- The fishing season for Atlantic sardine will begin on 1 March and will end on 30 November for the fleets of both countries.

In the area of Spain, the first step will be the review of Ministerial Order 1512/2014, of 30 July, establishing a management plan for sardine (*Sardina pilchardus*) of the Iberian waters (VIIIc and IXa), to adapt the exploitation rule to this new scenario.

In addition, all management measures, such as the establishment of a monthly catch limit for Cantabrian, Northwest and Gulf of Cadiz respectively, with a similar management format to that of 2015 will be reflected in the corresponding resolution by the General Secretariat of Fisheries, by which the rules for management of the Iberian sardine fishery are established.

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