

New EU plan to promote sustainable fisheries in western waters

Today the European Commission proposed a multi-annual plan for fish stocks in the western waters, concerning the fleet of Belgium, Germany, France, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and the UK in the Atlantic Ocean. The proposal aims at restoring and maintaining stocks at sustainable levels, while ensuring social and economic viability for the fishermen operating in the region.

Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella said: "Today's proposal for a multi-annual plan for the western waters aims to sustain our quest for social, economic and environmental sustainability in the long term in this very important sea basin. With an increasing number of stocks in western waters fished sustainably, we have seen incomes for fishermen and their families increase. This plan will enable us to continue the positive development towards sustainable fisheries, with solutions that are adapted to the specific need of the fishermen."

The plan covers demersal fish stocks, i.e. fish that live and feed at the bottom of the seabed. These species bring a significant income to the fisheries sector. In 2018, the fishing opportunities for western waters are set at more than 400 000 tonnes under the EU's Common Fisheries Policy.

Thanks to joint EU efforts over recent years, many of the fish stocks in western waters are already today fished sustainably. For these stocks, the multi-annual plan will enable regional management organisations to recommend measures tailored to their particular fisheries, thus underpinning continued sustainability. For other stocks, the plan will support recovery to ensure that even more stocks will be sustainably fished in the coming years.

The main elements of the proposal include:

- Simplifying fisheries management under one main regulatory framework, and repealing current plans in place for sole in the Western channel and Bay of Biscay, northern hake and southern hake and Iberian Nephrops.
- while fully respecting the 2020 objective of Fmsy the plan will allow a certain flexibility in setting the fishing opportunities, where such a flexibility is needed in order to manage for example mixed fisheries. This flexibility, known as 'ranges of Fmsy', is proposed as the management method for

the most commercially important demersal stocks - the target stocks: e.g. northern and southern hake, cod, haddock and whiting in the Celtic Sea, sole in the Bay of Biscay

- Following the precautionary approach for bycatch stocks, taking into account mixed fisheries
- Allowing provisions for the landing obligation and technical conservation measures to be put forward by the South Western Waters Advisory Council and the South Western Waters MS Group for their particular fisheries as well as by the North Western Waters Advisory Council and the North Western Waters MS Group for the fisheries that concern them most

Today's proposal will facilitate the achievement of the twin objectives of the Common fisheries policy: of reaching Fmsy in 2020 and the full implementation of the landing obligation by 2019.

The Commission's proposal is now submitted for discussion to the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

Background

Today's multi-annual plan is the fifth proposal adopted in line with the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), after the Baltic Sea, North Sea, Adriatic Sea and Western Mediterranean. Under the CFP, multi-annual plans should contribute to achieving fishing at sustainable levels. They should also contain measures to implement the landing obligation, technical measures, as well as safeguards for remedial action where needed.

The Western Waters plan covers fisheries for demersal species from the north and west of Scotland over the Gulf of Cadiz down to Madeira in the South. According to the Annual Economic Report (AER) of 2016[1] more than 48 000 fishermen, and 18 000 vessels are active in western waters, including both the demersal and the pelagic sector.

The proposal has been subject to a thorough impact assessment and is based on the best available scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). The North Western and South Western Waters Advisory Councils and all other stakeholders were extensively consulted through a 4-month public consultation in 2015. 28 responses were received in total.

Lien article : https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/new-eu-plan-promote-sustainable-fisheries-western-waters_fr