



## Commission sets direction for sustainable fisheries and launches consultations on the 2019 fishing opportunities

**The European Commission has taken stock of the implementation of EU's Common Fisheries Policy and launched the process of agreeing fishing opportunities for 2019.**

The Communication reaffirms the Commission's commitment to promoting fisheries that are both environmentally sustainable and economically viable. The Communication is now open for consultation and comments from the public.

Commissioner Karmenu Vella, responsible for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: "Restoring the health of our seas and oceans is not a choice, it's an imperative, and the EU must continue to lead by example. The laudable efforts of our fishermen over the last decade are starting to pay off: Many of our fish stocks, though far from all, are returning to sustainable levels. Yet, now is not a time for complacency. 2019 will be a crucial year for achieving our shared objectives. Working hand-in-hand - fishermen, industry, civil society and authorities – let us keep up the efforts and keep our ambitions high for our ocean. I look forward to working closely with all parties."

The EU's Common Fisheries Policy sets the objective of reaching maximum sustain-able yield (MSY) as soon as possible and by 2020 at the latest. MSY contributes to the sus-tainable conservation of the stocks and allows for maximisation of fish supply from fishing. This in turn contributes to securing a profitable EU fishing industry and thriving coastal areas for the future – and to achieving good environmental status in European seas by 2020. Recent years have seen significant progress towards the CFP objectives, notably in northern and western waters, where overfishing has decreased considerably, whilst biomass has increased and in 2016 on average was nearly 39% above 2003 levels.

By contrast, moving towards sustainable exploitation in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas remains challenging. This is largely due to the multispecies nature of fisheries, the fact that several fish stocks are shared with third countries and the low number of fish stocks assessed yearly by scientific bodies. While a small number of stocks are being exploited at sustainable levels – for example, deep-sea pink shrimp and red mullet in the south and central Tyrrhenian Sea – the average biomass in the Mediterranean does not show any improvement since 2003. Nonetheless, important efforts are deployed to reverse the situation, both at the EU level and with our international partners. These



initiatives give way to cautious optimism. Only last week, Black Sea countries signed up to the Sofia Declaration with an ambitious 10-year action plan on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. This followed on from the 2017 Medfish4ever declaration, which commits countries around the Mediterranean to restore fish stocks in this important basin.

Over recent years, EU Fleet has also registered significant improvement in its overall economic performance, with record net profits of EUR 1.3 billion in 2016. Average salaries and labour productivity have also increased. The overall improvement in profitability coincides with an increase in the number of stocks fished at rates consistent with the objective of achieving MSY and an associated increase in the biomass of these stocks. This confirms that sustainable fisheries address not only environmental but also social and economic concerns.

From 2019, the landing obligation – i.e. the requirement for EU vessels to avoid discards and bring to harbour all catches – must be fully phased in. This will be a key achievement in pursuing sustainable EU fisheries and important progress has been made. For pelagic fisheries and fisheries in the Baltic and Black Sea, the landing obligation is already fully implemented. For demersal fisheries, there has been an overall increase of the scope of the landing obligation in volume from 35% to 44% since 2017. In the Mediterranean, around 66 % of the total landings are currently under the landing obligation. In the Black Sea, since 2017, the landing obligation covers all catches of the species subject to TAC, i.e. sprat and turbot. But additional efforts will be needed to reach the agreed 2019 deadline. The EU stands ready to support fishermen in this process, including through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). Likewise, the Commission's recent proposal to improve the EU's fisheries control system will among other things, facilitate the implementation of the landing obligation.

## Background

In its annual Communication on fishing opportunities, the Commission sets out the rationale for the proposals on fishing opportunities for the following year. A state of play on the implementation of the CFP is now added to the Communication.

Via an online public consultation, the Commission asks for input to Member States; Advisory Councils, which include the fishing industry and NGOs; and interested citizens and organisations. In the autumn, the Commission will then table its proposals for 2019 fishing opportunities in EU waters in the Atlantic (including deep-sea stocks) and in the North and Baltic Seas. The fishing opportunities in the Baltic and North Seas will be proposed in accordance with the relevant plans.



The Commission's proposals are based on independent scientific advice provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and other independent bodies, as well as the economic analysis provided by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). The Council of Fisheries Ministers of the European Union ultimately agrees on the allocation of fishing opportunities.

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