

Spanish and Portuguese fishermen exercise pressure to capture more sardine

The Spanish purse seine sector operating in the Gulf of Cádiz and the Northwest Cantabrian Sea as well as the Portuguese one will ask their respective governments to be allowed to capture "at least" 15,425 tonnes of Iberian sardine in the 2019 season.

This request is based on the implementation of a 10 per cent "precautionary fishing mortality" on biomass detected by researchers in November last year.

This was agreed at a meeting held on Tuesday in the Portuguese city of Peniche, explained to Europa Press the senior head of the Fishermen's Association of Punta Umbria (Huelva) and president of the Andalusian Federation of Unions, Manuel Fernández.

Fishermen emphasize that the latest scientific reports support an improvement in the biomass of the specimens over a year, so the sector intends to ask for further 3,400 tonnes as catch limit for this year. But they fear that the fisheries administrations will once again impose "an insufficient quota".

In a joint statement, Iberian purse seiners "celebrate the significant increase in sardine in the last three years", which they attribute to "the efforts developed by the sector".

In the opinion of the Portuguese and Spanish sector, the governments of both countries "should set the starting point" of 15,425 tonnes, a figure "likely to increase during 2019". Together with this, the purse seiners certify their "full trust in the management plan and stock recovery".

Fernandez said that as the Spanish and Portuguese fishing sectors can not participate in the meeting to be held on April 1 in Lisbon to analyze the situation of the fishing ground, they will concentrate on "lobbying to know which lines will mark the future of this gear".



The Andalusian association states that the Ministries of Fisheries of both countries maintain a "blocking situation" and "ignore" the petitions of the sector. In this regard, a few days ago, they complained that they have not been responded to requests for meetings from both countries so that "once and for all they are informed about the amount of fishing quota they may have available and the opening date of said fishery".

This situation, according to the fishermen, provokes a "tense uncertainty" in both countries, especially since the sardine fishermen from Portugal and Spain can not catch it since the end of September last year.

At the meeting held in Peniche there were representatives, among others, of the Association of Purse Shipowners from Galicia (ACERGA), from the purse seiners of the Gulf of Cadiz and Asturias and the National Federation of Fishermen's Associations (FNCP). On behalf of Portugal, ten organizations attended, eight of which are integrated into the National Association of Purse Seine Fishing Producers Organizations (ANOPCERCO).

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