

Portuguese and Spanish sardine fishermen want a quota of 30,000 tons next year

The sardine fishing associations in Spain and Portugal demand that the catch quota be increased to 30,000 tons by 2020.

"The industry is no longer willing to be treated as it has been for the past three years. It is not willing to further reduce catches. We want fishing opportunities consistent with the abundance of the resource.

We deserve it because it is a way to compensate the sacrifices and efforts that fishermen and shipowners have had in recent years, efforts and sacrifices that are having a positive impact on the growth of resources," said Humberto Jorge, of the National Association of Fishing Producer Organizations of Cerco (ANOPCERCO).

On Thursday morning, at the fourth Iberian meeting of the sardine production sector, a document was written that will be sent to the governments of Portugal and Spain, in which shipowners and fishermen demand to be able to fish 30,000 tons of sardines next year.

This figure is based on the shared certainty that 2020 will be a year of abundant resources also because adult biomass is increasing, professionals explained.

"We have symptoms that excite us a lot and take us, together with our Spanish colleagues, to the Portuguese and Spanish governments to define fishing opportunities for 2020 according to abundance at sea, and allow the sector to survive and have an activity longer contrary to what happened in 2019", said Humberto Jorge.

The opinion that there will be sardines in abundance in the sea is shared by the Spanish associations. Andrés García, from the Association of Shipowners of Cerco de Galicia (ACERGA), said that "this is a perspective that goes far beyond the calculations of the ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) and the scientific councils."



"We cannot allow that when the biomass improves they let us fish less.. The industry will tend to disappear. The increase in the resource will be an improvement never seen. I have 50 years of sea and I never saw such a year of sardines.

So we have to demand the governments that increase quotas or run the risk of the total disappearance of the sector", said the manager of Acerga who represents professionals from several places in northern Portugal. Representatives of fishing associations from Andalusia, Spain also attended this meeting.

Regarding the "difficult" moment of the sector, Humberto Jorge regretted that "in the last five years" sardine fishing has "faced very violent reductions." He stressed that "one fifth of what was traditionally fished is caught now" which has had "a negative social and economic impact."

"Many people abandoned this type of fishing. 2019 had very regular discharges, but we only had 81 possible days of sardine fishing and we ran out of quota because the catch limits were extremely low.

Now what we demand is a sustainable amount because it does not compromise the recovery of resources and allows the industry to breathe in and out of a force vest that it has had for five consecutive years, "emphasized Humberto Jorge.

But, given the fact that the claim of 30,000 tons could go against the recommendations of ICES, the head of ANOPCERCO regretted that this body "has recommended zero catches in three consecutive years" and that it sees fishermen and shipowners as "the weakest link".

"If we do not compromise the future of the resource and use the exploitation rule, why does it not allow us to fish? It makes no sense that the resource is growing and imposes smaller fees every year. Sustainability cannot be based on a mathematical model," opined

ANOPCERCO also regretted that the demands of the European Union "create difficulties" for the sector, and noted that it wants "by 2020 all resources are at the maximum sustainable", an objective that





industry professionals consider "political" and that having "to be achieved at all costs" hurts fishing.

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