



Norway sets own mackerel quota for northeast Atlantic after coastal states fail to reach agreement

Norway has set its own unilateral quota for northeast Atlantic mackerel for 2021 after the coastal states failed to reach an agreement -- a continuation of an impasse that led to the fishery losing its Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) eco-label last year.

Norway's Ministry for Trade, Industry and Fisheries set the mackerel quota at 298,299 metric tons for 2021, a nearly 40 percent rise over last year's mackerel quota of 213,880 metric tons.

Norway Fisheries Minister Odd Emil Ingebrigtsen blamed Brexit in part for the failure to reach a deal, noting that the UK's role as an independent coastal state made an agreement impossible.

"This agreement has been very important in securing responsible management of the stock, as well as providing stability and predictability for all parties involved," Ingebrigtsen said.

The original parties to the coastal state agreement, which expired at the end of 2020, were Norway, the European Union, and the Faroe Islands, referred to collectively as the "Coastal States" by the negotiating parties.

MSC certificate loss

The failure to reach agreements between the countries has had its consequences. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) suspended the certification of the North East Atlantic mackerel fishery in 2019.





The suspension affected all four certificates for fisheries across eight countries.

Ingebrigtsen said Norway would continue to seek out agreements among all the countries on quotas for shared stocks in the future.

Negotiations concerning the management of mackerel stocks from 2022 and onwards are scheduled to resume during the fall.

The Norwegian quota for 2021 amounts to 35 percent of the agreed total allowable catch quota (TAC) for mackerel, which the coastal state agreed at 853,000 metric tons.

That quota level was based on assessments of how much of the mackerel stock is in waters under Norwegian jurisdiction during the year, Ingebrigtsen said.

There have been substantial changes in the migration pattern and spatial distribution of the Northeast Atlantic mackerel during the last years towards a more north-eastern distribution, leading to a substantial increase in mackerel biomass in Norway since the initial harvesting agreement was put in place in 2014.

Until last year, there was an annual agreement in which Norway had a share of 22.5 percent of the total quota.

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