



**Commission fishing opportunities for 2016 see cuts for major stocks**

The European Commission has today proposed recommendations on fishing opportunities for the Atlantic and the North Sea for 2016. The proposal sees the quota for 35 stocks unchanged or increased and 28 stocks reduced. This will also be the first time we will see quota uplift which aims to compensate fishermen for any extra fish they will have to land under the second phase of the landing obligation which will enter into force in January 2016. These so-called 'top-ups' will be proposed later this month. The proposal only includes figures for about half of the TACs since negotiations with third countries and RFMOs are still ongoing.

The proposal sees an increase in species such as megrim, by almost 27% in the North Sea and almost 19% in the West of Scotland and an increase by 27% for Northern Spain in horse mackerel. These stocks are already fished at MSY levels and so are considered sustainably fished. Quotas for anchovy, cod and spur dog remain unchanged from last year's figures.

The Commission has also proposed cuts for many major stocks claiming that these stocks have not greatly improved. Whitefish and flatfish in the Celtic Sea and English Channel have seen cuts in cod and haddock by up to almost 30% and 27% respectively. The sole fishery in the Irish sea has a proposed cut of a massive 100% which would effectively close the fishery. Despite the positive development of stocks such as anglerfish and megrim in south western waters, the Commission has proposed a harsh reduction of 26.4%. The Commission has also unilaterally proposed a complete ban on the fishing of sea bass from 1st January to 30th June and a limitation to 1000kg per vessel per month in some areas only from 1st July.

President of Europêche, Javier Garat emphasised that fishermen are already under pressure, stating: *"Fishing opportunities for 2016 will be set against the backdrop of the most challenging phase of the discard ban, that of demersal fisheries, which will come into force in a matter of weeks. I am pleased to see that the Commission will propose quota uplift to help fishermen adapt to this radical change and we hope that this will be adequate. The Commission must guarantee the full use of this and other flexibility measures (such as deminimis for northern hake) to allow our fishermen to achieve the core objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy which aims for stocks to reach MSY levels by 2020 at the latest. It is important that the Commission does not confuse this long-term objective with a short term goal, since the sector needs time to adapt. Any significant cut in quota will affect the long term profitability of the sector. These recommendations are solely based on the long-term MSY objective. During December Council, Ministers will have the responsibility to ensure good management of stocks and maintain a viable sector."*

The Commission has proposed an automatic cut of 20% for stocks such as skates and rays, where data is insufficient. Garat continues: *"Any significant cut in quota of more than 15% is socially and economically intolerable and will affect the long term profitability of the sector. We therefore urge that opportunities be better adapted to the state of the stocks given that scientific knowledge is constantly improving. TACs for data poor stocks have been decimated over the last few years and this simply cannot be translated into significant cuts, especially when the issue is not about collecting more data but in fact processing this data. Furthermore, with the discard ban for demersal looming, fishermen are making even greater efforts to be more selective so that juveniles are not caught and stocks can replenish. Commissioner Vella should turn words into action and show the fishing sector that he really takes into account the socioeconomic consequences of the Commission proposals"*.

The Fisheries Council will decide the final quota allocations during the Council meeting starting 14th December.

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