

Multiannual plan for North Sea fisheries

During the May II plenary, Parliament is expected to vote on a provisional agreement with the Council on a multiannual plan to manage the North Sea fisheries targeting demersal species (i.e. those living close to the sea bed). The plan, aiming to secure the long-term sustainability of the North Sea fisheries, bases its management measures on the best available scientific advice, and introduces new rules on how the Council sets the annual total allowable catches (TACs) for the stocks concerned.

Background

Demersal fisheries in the North Sea represent over 70 % of the EU catches in this area, with a total value of more than €850 million (2012). The main stock in terms of landing value are sole, plaice, Norway lobster, cod, saithe, haddock, turbot, anglerfish and whiting. Demersal fisheries involve several thousand vessels from at least seven coastal Member States (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom), and also from Norway. They are highly complex, using a wide variety of fishing gear and, as their catches most often consist of a mix of different species, are defined as 'mixed fisheries'.

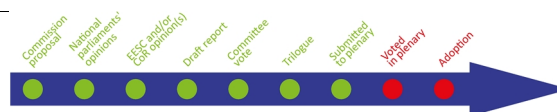
European Commission proposal

On 3 August 2016, the Commission put forward a [proposal](#) for a multiannual plan managing demersal fisheries in EU waters of the North Sea and some adjacent areas. The plan aims to ensure that stocks are exploited sustainably, by maintaining them above levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY – i.e. the highest amount of fish that can be taken from a stock without affecting its reproduction). The plan is also intended to provide stability of fishing opportunities, to ensure that management is based on the most up-to-date scientific information on stocks, and to facilitate the introduction of the landing obligation. The proposed plan introduces target fishing mortality ranges consistent with achieving MSY (F_{MSY}) for specific stocks – cod, haddock, saithe, whiting, plaice, sole and Norway lobster. It also contains safeguard measures based on biomass levels, to restore stocks when they fall below safe biological limits. The plan supports regional cooperation between the Member States concerned, which may submit joint recommendations for technical measures.

European Parliament position

The Parliament voted on its [amendments](#) to the proposal in plenary on 14 September 2017. After four trilogues (between October and December 2017), the Parliament and the Council reached a [provisional agreement](#) on 8 December 2017. The text, approved by the PECH committee on 24 April 2018, will be subject to a plenary vote during the May II session. The Parliament positions included in the text include adding anglerfish and northern prawn to the stocks managed based on fishing mortality ranges, and taking recreational fisheries with a significant impact on stocks into account when setting fishing opportunities. Parliament also requested that measures in the plan be taken on the basis of the best available scientific advice, and that stocks shared with third countries – Norway, but also the UK in the future – be managed jointly in line with the objectives of the common fisheries policy. Of particular note is the definition of the ranges of F_{MSY} (i.e. the lower and upper values between which all levels of fishing mortality would result in MSY in the long term), forming the basis for the annual setting of TACs, which will be based on the best available scientific advice, and thus regularly updated in accordance with the most recent scientific data.

First-reading report [2016/0238\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: PECH; Rapporteur: Ulrike Rodust (S&D, Germany). For further information see our '[EU Legislation in progress](#)' briefing.



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