
North Sea fisheries: ensuring sustainable stocks and livelihoods

The plan to tackle overfishing and provide more secure livelihoods for North Sea fishermen was backed by MEPs on Thursday.

The second multiannual fisheries plan under the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) would apply to demersal species (those living near the sea floor), which make up 70% of catches in the [North Sea \(zones IIa, IIIa and IV\)](#).

The plan is tailored to the complexity of North Sea mixed fisheries,.

Ensuring that these stocks are exploited sustainably in the long run should guarantee the security of fishing opportunities and livelihoods.

The new rules would inter alia:

- set the ranges (minimum-maximum) within which the Council can set the yearly Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and quotas
- base all measures on the best available scientific advice as reviewed by the International Council of Exploration of the Sea (ICES) or the Scientific, Technical & Economic Committee for Fisheries (STEF)
- suspend the targeted fishery for one particular stock and reduce fishing opportunities when scientific advice indicates a stock is in danger
- cover also recreational fisheries

MEPs want an evaluation of the plan by the Commission three years after its entry into force and every five years thereafter.

Agreements with third countries

MEPs added a new article to the plan to ensure that “the stocks managed jointly with third countries and the total fishing opportunities would not exceed the ranges set in the plan” and that “future bilateral agreements with third countries would take account of the plan”.

Quote

The rapporteur [Ulrike Rodust \(S&D, DE\)](#) said: “With North Sea fisheries in the Brexit limbo, I am relieved that we can at last enter negotiations with the Council.”

Next steps

The mandate was adopted by 378 votes to 232, with 19 abstentions. MEPs will now start negotiations with the Council.

Quick facts

North Sea demersal fishing employs several thousand vessels from at least seven EU member states (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK). Demersal catches were worth more than €850 million in 2012, with the highest total value of landings by species for sole, followed by plaice, Norway lobster (also called Nephrops), cod, saithe, haddock, turbot, anglerfish, whiting and lemon sole.

A multiannual management plan is the instrument for managing the fish stocks in a certain area. The fishing mortality rates are an essential part of it. They provide a basis for the setting of the Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and quotas. The norm set out in Article 2, paragraph 2 of the

Basic Regulation for the Common Fisheries Policy is that the exploitation restores and maintains "harvested species above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY)".

The first multiannual fisheries plan under the new CFP was the [Baltic Sea plan](#) officially adopted in July 2016.

Who is involved

[Rapporteur Rodust Ulrike](#)

[Adopted text will soon be available here \(14.09.2017\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[EP briefing on the multiannual plan for North Sea demersal fisheries \(October 2016\)](#)

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