

North Sea fisheries: MEPs back EU plan to sustain stocks of demersal species

- Clearer rules on how EU ministers set Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and quotas
- Quotas based on best available scientific advice
- Improve cooperation among member states

A new EU multiannual plan to prevent overfishing of demersal species and thus offer North Sea fishing communities more security was approved by MEPs on Tuesday.

The second multiannual fisheries plan under the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) - approved by 520 votes to 131, with 9 abstentions - will regulate the management of fishing for demersal species (those living near the bottom of the sea), which account for 70% of catches in the [North Sea \(zones IIa, IIIa and IV\)](#).

The complexity of North Sea mixed fisheries makes it impossible to target and catch only one species and the plan is tailored to reflect this, partly by covering different stocks. The long-term sustainable exploitation of these stocks should guarantee the security of fishing stocks and the livelihoods of fishing communities.

The new rules will:

- set the ranges (minimum-maximum) within which EU ministers can set the yearly Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and quotas,
- allow new scientific evidence to be quickly taken on board when fixing quotas,
- suspend and/or reduce fishing for one particular stock when scientific advice indicates a stock is in danger, and
- base all measures on the “best available scientific advice”.

Cooperation among member states

Countries that are directly affected by an issue will be able to team up and table joint recommendations, e.g. if there is an abrupt change in the situation of a stock. The EU Commission will then draft “delegated acts”, based on these joint recommendations, to tackle the problem.

Agreements with non-EU countries

MEPs added a new article stating that “where stocks of common interest are also exploited by third countries, the Union shall engage with those third countries with a view to ensuring that these stocks are managed in a sustainable manner”.

Quote

[Ulrike Rodust \(S&D, DE\)](#) said: “It was important to establish a basis for managing the North Sea fisheries, given the Brexit negotiations. This basis was possible only through compromises – both between the political groups within this House and between the Parliament and the Council. Regarding relations with third countries, the plan now stipulates that in agreements on stocks of common interest, Common Fisheries Policy rules should take precedence. This already applies to stocks shared with Norway, but will soon apply to those shared with the UK, too.”

Next steps

The regulation will enter into force on the twentieth day following its publication in the EU Official Journal.

Background

North Sea demersal fishing (85% over 70% of catches in this area), involves several thousand vessels from the seven bordering member states (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom). 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 governs the management of fish stocks in a given area to prevent overfishing and ensure stocks are sustainable. Fishing mortality rates provide a basis for setting 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 exploitation restores and maintains “harvested species above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield (MSY)”.

Further information

[Adopted text will soon be available here \(29.05.2018\)](#)

[Recording of the debate \(28.05.2018\)](#)

[Profile of rapporteur Ulrike Rodust \(S&D, DE\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Short EP briefing note on the Multiannual plan for North Sea fisheries \(May 2018\)](#)

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

[Free photos, video and audio material](#)

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