



## EU FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Fisheries management under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is based on the need to ensure environmentally sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources and the long-term viability of the sector. With a view to achieving this objective, the European Union has adopted legislation on access to EU waters, the allocation and use of resources, total allowable catches, fishing effort limitation and technical measures.

### LEGAL BASIS

Articles 38 to 43 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

### OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to ensure the long-term viability of the sector through the sustainable exploitation of resources.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

#### A. Rules governing access to waters and resources

As a general rule, all registered EU fishing vessels have equal access to waters and resources throughout the Union. A number of temporary exceptions to this rule are in place but will expire by the end of 2022. These are:

##### 1. Access restrictions within the 12-mile zone

Within a coastal zone of 12 miles maximum, Member States may limit access to the following three groups of vessels and fisheries:

- To vessels traditionally fishing in those waters from adjacent ports;
- To vessels identified under existing neighbourhood relations;
- To vessels related to fisheries as listed in Annex I of the CFP Basic Regulation.

##### 2. Access restrictions within the 100-mile zone of outermost regions

In waters of up to 100 miles from the baseline of the coasts of the EU's outermost regions, access can be restricted to the following groups of vessels:

- To vessels registered in the ports of those territories;
- To vessels traditionally fishing in those waters.



## **B. The maximum sustainable yield objective**

Conserving resources by adjusting fishing capacity to fishing opportunities is one of the priorities of the CFP. To achieve sustainable exploitation, fish stocks need to be managed in accordance with the principle of maximum sustainable yield (MSY). To this end, CFP decisions are based on the best scientific advice available and apply the precautionary approach, whereby the absence of sufficient scientific information may not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take steps to conserve species. Sustainable exploitation also requires the gradual introduction of an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management.

## **C. Fishing opportunities**

Annually, the EU allocates fishing opportunities for most of its commercial species, expressed as total allowable catches (TACs). On the basis of scientific assessments by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee on Fisheries (STECF), the Commission submits its proposals on TACs to the Council by the end of each year. In recent years, under the arrangements for multiannual management plans, catch limits have been more stable, thus enabling fishermen to plan their activities better.

## **D. The principle of relative stability**

Fishing opportunities are allocated among the Member States in such a way as to ensure the relative stability of the fishing activities of each Member State for each stock concerned. This principle of relative stability, which is based in particular on historical catch levels, requires the maintenance of a fixed percentage of authorised fishing effort for the main commercial species for each Member State. Fishing effort needs to be generally stable in the long term, in view of the importance of ensuring that fishing can continue, particularly in regions that have long been heavily dependent on fisheries.

## **E. Better adjustment of fishing capacities**

In line with the CFP objective of sustainable exploitation, the adjustment between fishing opportunities and fishing capacities is improving. This is mainly a result of improved status of important fisheries stocks with an increasing number of stocks at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), but is also due to a decrease in the EU fishing fleet capacity. Therefore, the economic performance of most of the EU fishing fleets has increased over the last few years. The gross value added (GVA) was estimated at EUR 3.7 billion in 2014, increasing to up to EUR 4.5 billion in 2017. The estimated gross profit increased from EUR 1.6 billion in 2014 to EUR 2.0 billion in 2017.

## **F. New regulation on technical measures**

Technical measures are tools to support the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy. In general, they seek to prevent catches of juveniles, non-commercial species and other marine animals. In light of the need of a new approach to increase the effectiveness of technical measures, on 20 June 2019 the European Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) No 2019/1241 on the conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures. It updates and consolidates the existing definitions of fishing gear and fishing operations, and seeks for a clearer and more uniform interpretation and implementation of technical



rules. This regulation lays down technical measures corresponding to taking and landing of marine biological resources, operation of fishing gears and the interaction of fishing activities with marine ecosystems.

## 1. Common technical measures

The regulation establishes common technical measures that apply across all Union waters and where relevant, to recreational fisheries:

- Prohibition of destructive fishing gear or methods which use explosives, poison, stupefying substances, electric current, pneumatic hammers or other percussive instruments, towed devices and grabs for harvesting red coral or other type of corals and coral-like species and certain spear-guns;
- General restrictions on the use of towed gear, static nets and driftnets;
- General prohibition on fishing for sensitive species;
- Prohibition on deploying specific fishing gear within sensitive habitats including vulnerable marine ecosystems;
- Establishment of minimum conservation reference size (MCRS), i.e. the minimum size for species that may be retained on board and/or landed;
- Measures to reduce discarding such as the development of pilot projects to explore methods for reducing unwanted catches.

## 2. Regionalisation of technical measures

The regulation sets up a framework to adapt the technical measures to the regional specificities of fisheries. The regionalisation process should be achieved through a bottom-up approach, by which Member States, cooperating closely with the industry in local advisory councils, can submit joint recommendations for the following technical measures:

- Size-selective and species-selective gear;
- Prohibition or restriction of fishing activities in certain zones and periods;
- Establishment of minimum conservation reference size (MCRS), i.e. the minimum size for species that may be retained on board and/or landed;
- Creation of real-time closures to ensure the protection of sensitive species or aggregations of juveniles, spawning fish or shellfish species;
- The use of innovative fishing gear;
- Conservation measures;
- Temporary discard plans;
- Defining pilot projects that develop a system of full documentation of catches and discards based on measurable objectives and targets.

## G. Multiannual management plans

Multiannual management plans seek to keep the volume of stocks within safe biological limits for different sea basins of the Union. These plans lay down maximum catches



and a range of technical measures, taking due account of the characteristics of each stock and the fisheries in which it is found (species targeted, gear used, status of target stocks) and the economic impact the measures will have on the fisheries concerned.

#### H. Multiannual stock recovery plans

Multiannual stock recovery plans are implemented for fish stocks that are at risk. They are based on scientific advice and provide for fishing effort restrictions, such as limits on the number of days vessels are at sea. They ensure that the impact of fishing activities on marine ecosystems is kept at sustainable levels.

## ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has played a decisive role in shaping legislation in the field of fisheries management since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. The following are a selection of the most recent and most important achievements:

On 6 July 2016, Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) No 2016/1139 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea<sup>[1]</sup>. This new regional approach takes account of the strong biological interactions that exist. It establishes a multi-species fisheries plan taking into account the dynamics of this basin area between the stocks of cod, herring and sprat, and also the by-catch for those stocks, namely the Baltic stocks of plaice, flounder, turbot and brill.

On 14 September 2016, Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) No 2016/1627 on a multiannual recovery plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean<sup>[2]</sup>. The plan takes into account the specificities of the different types of gear and fishing techniques, and promotes the use of selective gear with a reduced environmental impact, thereby contributing to a fair standard of living for local communities.

On 22 November 2016, Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) No 2016/2094 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1342/2008 establishing a long-term plan for cod stocks and the fisheries exploiting those stocks<sup>[3]</sup>. The aim of revising the plan was to ensure exploitation that restores and maintains cod stocks above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield.

On 4 July 2018, Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) No 2018/973 establishing a multiannual plan for demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks<sup>[4]</sup>, specifying details of the implementation of the landing obligation in the North Sea. The plan includes the exploitation of a list of demersal stocks in the North Sea, and, where those stocks extend beyond it, in its adjacent waters.

On 13 November 2018, Parliament adopted a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual

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[1]OJ L 191, 15.7.2016, p. 1.

[2]OJ L 252, 16.9.2016, p. 1.

[3]OJ L 330, 3.12.2016, p. 1.

[4]OJ L 179, 16.7.2018, p. 1.



plan for small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks<sup>[5]</sup>.

On 19 March 2019, Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) No 2019/472 establishing a multiannual plan for stocks fished in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks<sup>[6]</sup>.

On 20 June 2019, Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) No 2019/1022 establishing a multiannual plan for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea<sup>[7]</sup>.

On 20 June 2019, Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) No 2019/1154 on a multiannual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish<sup>[8]</sup>.

On 20 June 2019, Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) No 2019/1241 on the conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures<sup>[9]</sup>.

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[5] [Texts adopted, TA\(2018\)0445.](#)

[6] [OJ L 83, 25.3.2019, p. 1.](#)

[7] [OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 1.](#)

[8] [OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 1.](#)

[9] [OJ L 198, 25.7.2019, p. 105.](#)

