

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000327/24
to the Commission**

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(1 February 2024)

Subject: Concerns within Alicante's fishing sector

On 22 January 2024 I had the opportunity to meet with the Santa Pola Fishermen's Guild. The head of the guild, José López Chacopino, explained to me the needs and concerns of the fishing sector and the issues with the EU rules.

In relation to the biological rest periods, in accordance with Article 6 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1022, it was conveyed that these rest periods do not seem to benefit the regeneration of smaller species. The multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the Mediterranean, established by this regulation, applies only to certain species — such as blue and red shrimp — the fishing of which has been restricted since 2022 with the imposition of maximum catch limits.

1. How is the Commission dealing with this undesirable effect of biological rest periods for blue and red shrimp and other small species which, owing to the food pyramid, are reported to be benefitting the regeneration of larger species such as bluefin tuna, and what solutions does the Commission propose?
2. What is the scientific advice concerning these species in the Mediterranean? Does the Commission see an increase in total allowable catches (TACs) for bluefin tuna as a solution to the proliferation of this species and its undesirable effects on other species such as blue and red shrimp?

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Answer given by Mr Sinkevičius on behalf of the European Commission
(18 March 2024)

There are no biological rest periods envisaged in Article 6 of the multi-annual plan (MAP) for demersal stocks in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the MAP is focusing on the most important demersal stocks for the fisheries.

The Commission is undoubtedly highly attuned to the complexity of the fishery sector in the Mediterranean Sea, including any possible impacts on the ecosystem of the imbalance in biomass for certain species.

For the fisheries targeting deep-water shrimps (blue and red shrimp and giant red shrimp), the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) advised that there is still a high level of overfishing and the state of the stocks has not sufficiently changed to achieve the maximum sustainable yield objective for the last four years.

The increased presence of bluefin tuna (BFT) in the Mediterranean is a sign of the success of the rebuilding plan established by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) up to 2017, which saw the stock status move from a dire situation in 2007 to a significant improvement within 10 years.

As the situation has moved from a recovery to a management plan for the stock, based on the BFT management procedure adopted in 2022, the current BFT total allowable catch (TAC) will remain stable until the end of 2025.

Any future decision on a bluefin tuna TAC adjustment, will be taken in order to achieve the objectives of the ICCAT BFT management procedure, and in line with the Common Fisheries Policy objectives.
