

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0404/01

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to the Commission

Subject: European decision on an emergency recovery plan for cod stocks in the North Sea (14 February - 1 May)

Is the Commission aware that, in view of the opinion of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, the proposed measure will result not in a reduction in the pressure from fishing but only in a shift? Has the Commission carried out an estimate of the damage that will be done to fish stocks and ecosystems in the regions which will have to cope with greater pressure? If so, what will the damage be? If not, why not?

Was the Commission's choice of protection zone determined solely by the reported cod catches of a number of fishing fleets in 1999? Did the Commission also take account of the fact that this measure will protect only a small part of the historical spawning areas of cod? If so, why is the emergency measure limited only to the proposed fishing grounds? If not, why not?

The spawning season of cod in the Southern North Sea is between January and March (information from CEFAS). Does the Commission not think that the emergency plan for this zone is starting too late (14 February 2001) and going on too long (1 May 2001)?

The Dutch deputy minister, Mrs G.H. Faber, has put forward two alternatives: a temporary suspension of all cod-related fishing and a temporary halt to Dutch fishing, both of which would significantly reduce the pressure. Both alternatives have been rejected by the Commission. Why?

Does the Commission expect the emergency plan to form a key element in its long-term recovery plan?

Does the Commission regard it as politically acceptable for the fishing fleet of one Member State to be substantially disadvantaged compared with the fishing fleets of other Member States which, in terms of their quota, bear a greater responsibility for the cod catch?

Does the Commission believe that the Dutch fisheries sector should be eligible for compensatory measures, now that estimates of its losses are running at EUR 40 million? If so, in what way? If not, why not?