

**Question for written answer E-001312/2023  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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**Subject:** Preserving crab fisheries in the North Sea

In its package of measures aiming to 'improve the sustainability and resilience of the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector', the Commission presented an action plan for the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries. This action plan contains a ban on bottom trawling in FFH areas, which serve to protect the seabed habitat types in question, from April 2024. The aim is to gradually roll this ban out to all marine protected areas by 2030. In the German North Sea, most of the coastal waters and large areas in the exclusive economic zone are designated as Natura 2000 sites. The remaining North German fishing areas already face significant constraints on account of expanding offshore wind farms. As a result, a total ban on bottom trawling would signal the end of crab fishing in northern Germany.

1. Given that the Marine Stewardship Council has classified bottom trawling as a sustainable practice, owing to its small and reversible impact on the seabed, how does the Commission justify banning it completely?
2. How does the Commission plan to prevent increasing dependence on imports of crab and fish from third countries, especially as the EU already imports 70 % of its seafood consumption?
3. How does the Commission plan to promote the preservation of crab fishing, a traditional and identity-shaping skill, in northern Germany?

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