

WRITTEN QUESTION P-6305/08  
by Carmen Fraga Estévez (PPE-DE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Consequences of the elimination of the 15% margin of tolerance for swordfish catches

The Commission's decision to eliminate, in Regulation (EC) no 520/2007<sup>1</sup> laying down technical measures for the conservation of certain stocks of highly migratory species and repealing Regulation (EC) no 973/2001, the 15% margin of tolerance for catches of under 125 cm or 25 kg for swordfish caught in the Atlantic, despite its being accepted by ICCAT, is proving more disastrous with every day that passes.

Not only is the serious prejudice it causes being suffered exclusively by the Community fleet, despite the favourable biological situation of stocks and obliging them to discard fish, but this decision is also having a very negative effect on the gathering of the requisite scientific information for knowledge and ongoing assessment of the stocks.

The leading scientific experts on swordfish population dynamics have described the fish formerly caught and landed under this 15% margin of tolerance as essential to the carrying out of solid, reliable evaluations.

More specifically, the ICCAT/SCRS 2008 Report states that 'unfortunately, there is little information with which to judge the most recent recruitment levels'. The phrase 'most recent' inevitably reflects the disappearance of the margin of tolerance.

Given that neither the favourable situation with regard to stocks, nor the ICCAT recommendations, justify the Commission's decision, and given that in addition to the gratuitous prejudice it is causing to the fleet, we now need to add the harm that is being done to gathering the data necessary for carrying out scientific assessments, has the Commission considered reviewing the amendment of Regulation (EC) no 520/2007, with a view to restoring the 15% margin of tolerance for catches under 125 cm or 25 kg for swordfish caught in the Atlantic?

---

<sup>1</sup> OJ L 123, 12.5.2007, p. 3.