

Fishery resources: recovery of cod stocks, long-term plan

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The Council held a **policy debate** on the proposal for a Regulation concerning the revision of the cod stocks recovery plan. The Council said that work should continue at COREPER level with a view to an agreement in November 2008.

The discussion centred on key features of the proposal:

Geographical scope of the revised plan: the proposed geographical distribution includes the Kattegat, the Skagerrak, the North Sea, the eastern Channel, the west of Scotland, the Irish Sea and the Celtic Sea.

Fishing mortality reduction rates: TACs are currently set by the Council each year at levels corresponding to a 25% reduction in the fishing mortality rate for stocks below the minimum level, a 15% reduction for stocks below the precautionary level and a 10% reduction for stocks above the precautionary level.

Limiting of fishing effort (reference period, definition of effort groups, conditions for excluding gear not fishing for cod): fishing effort is limited by ceilings expressed in kW-days, by effort groups (i.e. by gear groupings) and by Member State. The reference period used for the first year of application of the revised plan is the average effort in kW-days over 2005, 2006 and 2007. The effort ceilings are set by the Council each year on the basis of fishing mortality reduction rates identical to those applied for calculating the TACs, for effort groups which contribute to 80% of cod catches.

Discards and selectivity: the Member States are encouraged to reduce discards and promote selectivity.

In 2004, the Council adopted a Regulation aimed at restoring cod stocks – by 2014 at the latest – to the precautionary levels recommended by the experts. The present measures for attaining this objective should be reviewed in the light of the most recent scientific data.

On 2 and 3 October the Community will begin consultations with Norway on the joint management of North Sea stock. The Commission has promised to take the Council's contributions into account in the course of these consultations.