

Long-term plan for cod stocks and the fisheries exploiting those stocks: management

2012/0236(COD) - 11/06/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 592 votes to 71, with 15 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1342/2008 of 18 December 2008 establishing a long-term plan for cod stocks and the fisheries exploiting those stocks.

The European Parliament's position adopted at first reading according to the ordinary legislative procedure amends the Commission's proposal as follows:

Incentive measures: Members consider that other measures than automatic reduction of TAC and fishing effort are useful in order to obtain the targets set in this plan. Thus, Member States should give priority to the development and promotion of measures and incentives that aim to avoid unwanted catches. Financial support should be provided for the use of selective gear measures.

Time at sea: an amendment seeks to allow the development of alternative methods of accounting for time at sea (i.e. soak time for gill netters, etc.) that may better incentivise cod avoidance behaviour. Member States should calculate days present within an area in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 establishing a Community fisheries control system.

Procedure for setting TACs: the Council may decide on an alternative TAC level when scientific advice indicates that that level would be more appropriate to meet the objectives of the plan.

Another proposed amendment should help to **avoid automatic reductions in the absence of reliable scientific information**.

Implementation of a gradual elimination of discards: a new article stipulates that in order to obtain sustainable fishing mortality rates, based on scientific advice, a gradual elimination of discards should be implemented. Selective gears and other measures for this purpose should be introduced by Member States **with financial support from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**. Member States should consult the relevant Regional Advisory Council as well as ICES and/or STEFC and relevant stakeholders on the measures to be adopted.

Exclusion from the fishing effort regime in certain areas, certain depths or using certain gear: Members consider partial exemption from effort would be appropriate in a mixed fisheries context where vessels often have quota to catch cod.

Furthermore, **once STEFC approve a gear or area**, submitted by a Member State, it should become available for use by all Member States.

Adjustment of the baseline used to calculate the maximum allowable fishing effort: in order to ensure the continued innovation of gear selectivity the baseline should be altered annually.

Exclusion of vessels participating in trials: the Commission proposal stipulates that the transfers of quotas of cod to vessels outside the fishing effort management system or from these vessels are forbidden.

According to Parliament, the risk related to discarding of cod by vessels not participating in trials of fully documented fisheries is has not been proven. As a result, Parliament considers that it is not appropriate to present proposal in the absence of scientific data.

Member States' obligations: the Commission's proposal provided that where the scientific data indicate that more than 10% of the total cod catches for a particular effort group consist of discards, the Member State concerned shall take immediate measures to minimise cod discards. Parliament, for its part, considers that such measures should be taken where the scientific data indicate that, for a particular gear, large volumes of cod are discarded throughout the management period.

Transfer of the fishing effort: the objective of the existing measure is to ensure that the constant effort of the different types of gear is maintained. Now, by changing gear group, a vessel could see the volume of its effort reduced. This is why Members propose introducing the possibility for such vessels to transfer their fishing effort without being discouraged from doing so and penalised.