Multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks

2014/0285(COD) - 06/10/2014 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the Council and the European Parliament.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: at the World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg in 2002, the Union and its Member States committed themselves to act against the continued decline of many fish stocks.

Cod, herring and sprat are the subject of important fisheries in the Baltic Sea. They are also important components of the Baltic ecosystem and there are also strong biological interactions between them. Scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea ('ICES') has indicated that the current exploitation rates for some of these stocks are **not consistent with achieving maximum sustainable yield**.

A management plan for the Baltic Sea cod stocks has been in place since 2007 but the stocks of herring and sprat are not yet subject to a management plan. This hinders the sustainable management of these fisheries, and does not provide stability of fishing opportunities for the fishermen operating in these fisheries.

In addition, Member States and stakeholders have expressed support for the development and implementation of management plans for the key Baltic stocks.

In order to increase predictability for fishermen and to ensure high, stable and sustainable catches, the proposal is the first multiannual plan adopted in accordance with the new Common Fisheries Policy which entered into force in January 2014.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: three options were analysed from biological, environmental and economic-social aspects. The option with most beneficial impact has been then developed into the present multiannual plan:

- **to ensure sustainable fisheries at MSY level by 2015** for the stocks concerned is to achieve biological and environmental benefits. The probable reduction in the overall amount of fishing would also imply a reduction in emissions from vessel engines;
- **as for the economic-social impact**, bringing the herring and sprat stocks under a management plan would provide a systematic basis for setting annual TACs in a way which would provide the pelagic sector with predictability of catches which would help support business planning and stability of supply;
- the abolishment of fishing effort system and of requirement of single area fishing will **simplify the legal framework and reduce administrative burden** on Member State and industry.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes, in the framework of the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), a **multiannual fisheries management plan for the Baltic Sea that applies to cod, herring and sprat stocks**. This plan replaces the management plan in place for the two Baltic cod stocks.

The plan will ensure the **sustainable exploitation of these Baltic Sea stocks**, and provide stability of fishing opportunities, while ensuring that management is based on the most up to date scientific information on interactions within and between the stocks and with other aspects of the ecosystem and environment.

In accordance with the overall ambition of the CFP on the conservation of fisheries resources, the main elements of the plan are:

- **objectives and targets** (Achieve levels of fishing mortality consistent with the principle of maximum sustainable yield);
- **conservation reference points** expressed in spawning biomass levels and specific conservation measures;
- provisions related to the **landing obligation**;
- framework of technical measures;
- periodic evaluation of the plan based on scientific advice.

The plan does not include annual limits on fishing effort. It establishes **regional cooperation** in respect of adopting technical measures, provisions for the landing obligation and specific conservation measures for the by catches in the fisheries for the stocks concerned.

DELEGATED ACTS: the proposal contains provisions empowering the Commission to adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 290 of the treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.