

Multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks

2016/0238(COD) - 03/08/2016 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish a multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks.

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

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

BACKGROUND: in the framework of the common fisheries policy established by [Regulation \(EU\) 1380/2013](#), multi-annual plans should contribute to achieving fishing at sustainable levels (Maximum Sustainable Yield). The fisheries of the North Sea and adjacent areas are highly **complex**, involving vessels from at least **seven coastal Member States**, as well as Norway, using a wide variety of different fishing gears to target a **wide range of different fish** and shellfish species. A key issue is that many of the most important demersal stocks (i.e. those that live on or near the bottom of the sea) are caught in mixed fisheries. The proposal presented by the Commission establishes a plan taking into account such mixed fisheries interactions.

The Basic Regulation aims at solving the problems of overfishing and discarding fish. However, without additional legislation, the Basic Regulation could lead to under-utilisation of quota in the North Sea mixed fisheries and would not allow any exemptions from the landing obligation to be adopted after the three year discard plans have expired. Hence, if no appropriate measures are taken, the Basic Regulation might have negative economic and social consequences for the fishing industry in the coming years.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: the preferred choice (**a single mixed fishery multi-annual plan for North Sea demersal fisheries**), wherein FMSY (maximum rate of fishing mortality) is achieved by 2020 at the latest and stocks are rebuilt to within precautionary levels quickly is judged to be more effective than Option 1 (to manage using the Basic Regulation) to achieve the objectives of the initiative.

CONTENT: the proposal aims to establish a multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks in order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the CFP set out in Regulation 1380/2013. The plan will:

- ensure the sustainable exploitation of these stocks, by ensuring that they are exploited according to the principles of maximum sustainable yield and of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management;
- provide stability of fishing opportunities, while ensuring that management is based on the most up to date scientific information on stocks, mixed fisheries and other aspects of the ecosystem and environment;
- facilitate the introduction of the landing obligation.

The proposal aims to replace the current [plan for cod](#), as well as the plan for [plaice and sole](#) by bringing all multi-annual plans for the different demersal stocks into one regulation.

The plan will apply to all Union fishing vessels irrespective to their overall length in fishing in the North Sea as this is in conformity with the rules of the CFP and is in line with the effect of the vessels on the fish stocks concerned. The proposed plan:

- requires the EU to **set catch limits** that restore and maintain fish stocks above levels that can produce the [Maximum Sustainable Yield](#) (MSY);
- defines **ranges within which catch limits can be set**. Fishing opportunities in the higher part of the ranges will only be possible under clearly defined conditions and in line with the MSY approach;
- establishes **safeguard measures for biomass** based on the precautionary approach laid out in the Basic Regulation;
- obliges the EU to take swift action when the **sustainability** of any demersal North Sea fish stock is threatened;
- establishes the necessary framework for implementing **regionalisation** within the North Sea and provides for regional cooperation among Member States regarding the adoption of measures on the landing obligation and specific conservation measures for certain stocks;
- adopt thresholds above which catches of demersal stocks should only be landed in **designated ports**;
- does not include annual limits on fishing effort (the numbers of days at sea).

There will be **periodic evaluation** (every five years) of the impact of the plan on the stock concerned based on scientific advice.