

Fishing in the North-East Atlantic: specific conditions for fishing for deep-sea stocks, provisions for fishing in international waters

2012/0179(COD) - 19/10/2016 - Council position

The Council adopted its position at first reading on a regulation establishing specific conditions for deep-sea stocks in the North-East Atlantic and provisions for fishing in international waters of the North-East Atlantic.

The draft regulation aims to **ensure the sustainable exploitation of deep sea stocks while reducing the environmental impact of these fisheries**. It also aims to continue improving the scientific knowledge about those stocks.

The EU deep sea fishing regime regulates which operators are allowed to target deep sea species and sets the conditions under which Member States can issue fishing authorisations for deep sea fisheries.

The main elements of the Council position are as follows:

Fishing authorisations: fishing activities targeting deep-sea species shall be subject to a fishing authorisation (the 'targeting fishing authorisation').

- **The targeting fishing authorisation** shall indicate the deep-sea species that the vessel is authorised to target.
- A fishing vessel carrying out a fishing activity shall be deemed to target deep-sea species if its communications about catches (in the logbook, landing declarations, sales notes or similar document) in a calendar year concerned contain at least 8 % of deep-sea species in any fishing trip
- **No fishing authorisation** shall be issued for the purpose of fishing with **bottom trawls at a depth below 800 metres**.

Strict conditions for exploratory fishing outside of established fished areas ("footprint"): in order to further enhance the protection of the marine environment, it is appropriate to allow targeted fishing activities only in those areas where deep-sea fishing activity has occurred during the reference period 2009-2011.

However, for the purpose of exploratory fisheries, it should be possible for vessels targeting deep-sea species to fish beyond the existing fishing area provided that, according to an impact assessment carried out in accordance with Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) guidelines, the extension of the fishing area does not pose a significant risk of a negative impact on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs).

Specific requirements for the protection of VMEs: the Council's position introduced special protection measures for vulnerable marine eco-systems which apply to **operations with bottom gears below a depth of 400 m**.

The fishing vessel shall **immediately cease fishing** in the area concerned. It shall resume operations only when reaching an alternative area at least five nautical miles from the area in which the encounter occurred.

The fishing vessel shall immediately **report** each encounter with VMEs to the competent national authorities who shall **notify** the Commission without delay.

In addition, a competent scientific advisory body shall be requested by the Commission to carry out an annual assessment of areas where VMEs are known to occur or are likely to occur.

Observer coverage: Member States shall establish a programme for observer coverage to ensure the collection of relevant, timely and accurate data on the catch and by-catch of deep-sea species and encounters with VMEs and other relevant information for the effective implementation of this Regulation. Vessels using bottom trawls or bottom set gillnets with a fishing authorisation to target deep-sea species shall be subject to **at least 20 % observer coverage**, excluding vessels that, for security reasons, are not suitable to receive an observer.

The Council's position also provides for **strengthened control measures** based on the system used by the management plans, as well as a detailed assessment of the Regulation's impact after four years.