

Multi-annual plan for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea

2018/0050(COD) - 08/03/2018 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish a multiannual plan for fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea.

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

BACKGROUND: the western Mediterranean is one of the most developed sub-regions in terms of fisheries in the Mediterranean. It accounts for around 31 % of its total landing (EUR 1.35 billion out of a total of EUR 4.76 billion) and around 19 % of the officially reported Mediterranean fishing fleet.

Demersal fisheries are highly sought after by fishermen due to their high commercial value. Demersal fisheries in the Mediterranean are **highly complex and involve many species of fish and crustaceans**. The main demersal species caught in the western Mediterranean are hake, red mullet, giant red shrimp, deep-water rose shrimp, blue and red shrimp and Norway lobster.

The main gear used for demersal species are trawl nets, which have the largest catch and fleet power, but passive gears such as trammel nets, gillnets, traps and longlines are also important.

Demersal fisheries in the western Mediterranean are currently managed through national management plans adopted under [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1967/2006](#) (the 'MedReg'). Spain, France and Italy have adopted plans in accordance with this Regulation. These plans have proved **ineffective in achieving the objectives** set by the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries ("STECF") has shown that the exploitation of most demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean **far exceeds the levels required to reach maximum sustainable yield (MSY)**: more than 80% assessed stocks are overfished in this sub-region. In addition, the biomass of some of these stocks is close to the limit reference point, indicating that there is a high probability of collapse.

The Commission therefore considers it appropriate to establish a multiannual plan for the conservation and sustainable exploitation of demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: taking into account all the evidence collected and analysed through the impact assessment process, the preferred option is a multi-annual plan at EU level. The reasons for this are as follows:

- the multi-annual plan would have more positive environmental impacts. In particular, the probability of achieving fishing mortality targets for all stocks would be around 36 %;
- around 70 % of the assessed stocks would recover to spawning stock biomass (SSB) levels above the precautionary reference point;
- socio-economic performance is expected to improve across all fleets by 2025;
- a multi-annual plan would be streamlined (a single regulatory framework), stable (it considers the long-term perspective) and transparent (the three Member States concerned would jointly bring fishing mortalities to sustainable levels).

CONTENT: the proposal for a Regulation aims to address the high levels of overfishing and the ineffective regulatory framework by introducing for the first time a multi-annual plan at EU level. Its aim is to achieve the objectives of the [CFP Regulation](#) in western Mediterranean demersal fisheries, namely with regards to ensure that fishing activities are environmentally sustainable in the long term and managed in a way that secure economic, social and employment benefits.

The plan will also facilitate implementation of the **landing obligation** and enable a regionalised approach, whereby the Member States concerned would be involved in the design of management measures.

The proposal applies to the stocks driving demersal fisheries (i.e. hake, red mullet, deep-water rose shrimp, blue and red shrimp, giant red shrimp and Norway lobster), by-catch stocks and other demersal stocks for which sufficient data are not available. It also applies to commercial and recreational fisheries exploiting those stocks in the western Mediterranean.

The proposal:

- lays down quantifiable targets for fishing mortality which should be achieved by 2020 at the latest. The ranges would allow for MSY-based management of the stocks concerned, while providing some flexibility in the context of mixed fisheries;
- introduces, for each stock, a **limit reference point** (or biomass limit, BLIM) at which the stock would be in serious danger of collapse and a precautionary reference point (or biomass precautionary, BPA) as a safety margin;
- introduces **safeguard measures** to allow a stock to recover in the event of the precautionary or limit reference points being exceeded;
- introduces a **fishing effort regime** at EU level for all trawls in the areas and vessels length categories in Annex I;
- sets a spatio-temporal closure prohibiting trawls from operating within the 100 m isobath from 1 May to 31 July each year. This would reserve the coastal zone for more **selective gears** in order to protect nursery areas and sensitive habitats, and enhance the social sustainability of small-scale fisheries;
- introduces **regionalisation provisions** as required to extend and/or amend exemptions for species with demonstrated high survival rates and *de minimis* exemptions;
- establishes **regional cooperation** among Member States with a view to adopting provisions for the landing obligation and specific conservation measures, including technical measures, for certain stocks;
- introduces **scientific monitoring** to assess progress towards maximum sustainable yield for the stocks driving demersal fisheries and, where possible, by-catch stocks.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION: the proposal has no impact on the Union budget.

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.