

Multiannual plan for fish stocks in the western waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks

2018/0074(COD) - 23/03/2018 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: establish a management plan for demersal stocks, including deep-sea stocks, and their fisheries in the Western Waters.

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

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: [Regulation \(EU\) No 1380/2013](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council establishes the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The objectives of the CFP are, inter alia, to ensure that fishing and aquaculture are environmentally sustainable in the long term, to apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management, and to implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management.

For the achievement of the objectives of the CFP, a number of conservation measures are to be adopted as appropriate in any combination thereof, such as **multi-annual plans**, technical measures, fixing and allocation of fishing opportunities.

The fisheries of the Western Waters and adjacent areas are highly complex, involving vessels from at least seven coastal Member States, 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.

Council Regulations (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) 509/2007, (EC) No 1300/2008 and (EC) No 1342/2008 set out the rules for the exploitation of the northern stock of hake, hake and Norway lobster stocks in the Cantabrian Sea and by the Western Iberian Peninsula, sole in the Bay of Biscay, sole in the Western Channel, herring in the West of Scotland and cod in the Kattegat, the North Sea in the West of Scotland and the Irish Sea. These and other demersal stocks are taken in mixed fisheries. Therefore, it is appropriate to establish a single multi-annual plan taking into account such technical interactions.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: of the three legislative options examined, a **single multi-annual plan for mixed fisheries covering all Western Waters** has been chosen. This option received the highest scores on the following criteria: (i) effectiveness and efficiency; (ii) reduction of administrative burden; (iii) achievement of the overall main objectives of the CFP; (iv) providing a management framework that promotes stability and predictability.

CONTENT: in accordance with the overall ambition of the CFP on the conservation of fisheries resources and with specific regards to the Basic Regulation which require the development of multi-annual plans, the main elements of the plan are:

Scope: the scope of the plan is **demersal stocks, including deep-sea stocks, in the Western Waters** and the fisheries exploiting those stocks. The plan also covers implementation of the landing obligation and technical measures for all stocks and the fisheries exploiting those stocks in the Western Waters.

Objectives: the plan shall contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the common fisheries policy, in particular by applying the precautionary approach to fisheries management, and shall aim to ensure that exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels which can produce **maximum sustainable yield (MSY)**.

The plan shall contribute to: (i) the elimination of discards, by avoiding and reducing, as far as possible, unwanted catches, and to the implementation of the landing obligation for the species which are subject to catch limits and to which this Regulation applies; (ii) **implementing the ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management in order to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimised.

Targets: objectives and targets should be quantifiable. The proposed targets are expressed as fishing mortality ranges around FMSY as advised by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). These FMSY ranges allow for a maximum sustainable yield-based management for the stocks concerned, and appear to allow for adaptations in case of changes in the scientific advice, while at the same time preserving a high level of predictability.

Safeguard measures: safeguards and specific conservation measures are linked to the conservation reference points. Appropriate safeguard measures should be envisaged in case the stock size falls below these levels. Safeguard measures should include the reduction of fishing opportunities and specific conservation measures when scientific advice states that remedial measures are needed.

The plan provides for the periodic assessment of the impact on the stocks concerned, on the basis of scientific advice.