

# Multiannual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish

2018/0109(COD) - 24/04/2018 - Legislative proposal

**PURPOSE:** to establish general rules for the implementation by the Union of the multi-annual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish.

**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:** during the 2016 ICCAT Annual Meeting held in Vilamoura (Portugal), the contracting parties and cooperating non-contracting parties, entities or fishing entities to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) took a decisive step to address the alarming situation of Mediterranean swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) by adopting a 15-year recovery plan in the ICCAT Recommendation 16-05.

The recommendation lays down rules for the **conservation, management and control of the Mediterranean stock of swordfish** as to achieve a biomass corresponding to a maximum sustainable yield by 2031 with at least 60% probability of achieving that objective.

ICCAT Recommendation 16-05 obliges to discard swordfish on board vessels, including in sport and recreational fisheries that exceed the allocated quota of the vessel, and/or the maximum level of permitted by-catches. Mediterranean swordfish caught on board vessels that are below the minimum conservation reference size will also have to be discarded, with the exception of a given by-catch limit established by Member States in their annual fishing plans.

The purpose of this proposal is to **transpose ICCAT Recommendation 16-05 into EU law** to allow the Union to comply with its international obligations and to provide operators with legal certainty regarding rules and obligations.

**CONTENT:** the proposal for a Regulation lays down general rules for the implementation by the Union of the **multiannual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*)** recommended by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), starting from 2017 and continuing through 2031.

The general rules cover management, technical conservation measures, catch control measures and management measures in recreational fisheries.

By way of derogation of [Regulation \(EU\) No 1380/2013](#) on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the objective of this Regulation is to **achieve a biomass of swordfish in the Mediterranean corresponding to the maximum sustainable yield by 2031, with at least 60% probability of achieving that objective.**

The measures adopted by ICCAT Recommendation 16-05, which are transposed by this Regulation, are more restrictive or more precise than those measures already in force to allow the recovery of the stock. The main differences could be summarized as follows:

- **minimum conservation reference size:** the proposal prohibits to target, retain on board, tranship, land, transport, store, sell or display or offer for sale catches and by-catches of swordfish, including in recreational fisheries: (a) measuring less than 100 cm Lower Jaw to Fork Length (LJFL); or (b) weighing less than 11.4 kg of round weight, or 10.2 kg of gilled and gutted weight;
- **maximum number of hooks:** the proposal sets the maximum number of hooks that may be set or taken on board vessels targeting Mediterranean swordfish at 2 500;
- **closed seasons:** Mediterranean swordfish shall not be caught, either as targeted species or as bycatch, retained on board, transhipped or landed during the period from 1 January to 31 March of each year. In order to protect Mediterranean swordfish, a closure period shall apply to longline vessels targeting Mediterranean albacore (*Thunnus alalunga*) from the 1 October to 30 November of each year;
- **TAC definition and quota allocation:** these have already been transposed in 2017 and are now included in [Council Regulation \(EU\) 2018/120](#) fixing for 2018 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters. Therefore, it is not necessary to include the transposition of the fishing opportunities in this proposal.

The recovery plan takes into account the specificities of the different types of gear and fishing techniques. When implementing the recovery plan, the Union and Member States should endeavour to promote coastal fishing activities and the use of fishing gear and techniques which are selective and have a reduced environmental impact, including gear and techniques used in traditional and artisanal fisheries, thereby contributing to a fair standard of living for local economies.