

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

2018/0074(COD) - 25/10/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, partial vote at 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 437 votes to 103, with 11 abstentions, **amendments** to the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual plan for fish stocks in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 establishing a multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea, and repealing Regulations (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007 and (EC) No 1300/2008.

The matter was referred back to the committee responsible for interinstitutional negotiations.

The main amendments to the Commission proposal adopted in plenary concern the following points:

Subject matter: the Regulation shall establish a multiannual plan for **demersal stocks** in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks. It shall also apply to by-catches caught in the Western Waters when fishing for the demersal stocks and shall ensure that exploitation of all living marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield.

The Regulation shall also:

- specify details for the implementation of measures to **minimise the impact of the fisheries on the marine environment**, in particular the incidental catches of protected species, in Union waters of the Western Waters for all fisheries fishing in those waters;
- provide for technical measures for **commercial and recreational fisheries** applicable in the Western Waters in respect of any demersal stock.

Objectives: in addition to pursuing environmental sustainability, the plan shall be managed in a manner consistent with the objectives of generating **economic, social and employment benefits**, while contributing to the availability of food products.

The plan shall:

- **contribute to the elimination of discards**, by avoiding and reducing, as far as possible, including by the use of innovative selective fishing gear and techniques, unwanted catches, and to the implementation, as far as possible, of the landing obligation for the species which are subject to catch limits and to which this Regulation applies;
- implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in order to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem, and in particular on **vulnerable habitats and protected species**, including marine mammals and seabirds.

Measures under the plan shall be taken on the basis of the **best available scientific advice**. Such advice shall be critically reviewed by scientific bodies such as the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) or the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF), and shall be made public at the latest when these measures are proposed by the Commission.

Closed seasons/areas for the fishing of sea bass: commercial and recreational fishing of sea bass shall be prohibited in western waters and in the ICES divisions 4b and 4c between 1 February and 30 April. It shall be prohibited for vessels to retain on board, tranship, relocate, land or conserve sea bass caught on shores in those areas.

It shall also be prohibited for Union fishing vessels to fish sea bass in ICES divisions 7b, 7c, 7j and 7k, and in waters of ICES divisions 7a and 7g that are more than 12 nautical miles from the baseline under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom.

Recreational fisheries: Member States shall take account of fishing mortality in recreational fisheries when allocating the fishing opportunities they have so that the total fishing mortality target is not exceeded. When scientific advice indicates that recreational fishing is having a significant impact on the fishing mortality of a stock, the Council may establish non-discriminatory individual fishing opportunities for recreational fishermen.

Marking recreational catches: specimens of sea bass, cod, pollack and sole caught in the areas and stocks shall be marked when kept by a recreational fisherman. The marking shall be carried out immediately after the capture and killing of the fish, either on the shore or on board if the fishing activity is carried out on a boat. However, specimens brought on board a recreational fishing vessel and kept alive and in good condition before being released shall not be marked.

The landing obligation shall not apply to recreational fishing.

Artisanal and coastal fishing in the outermost regions: this Regulation shall take into account the constraints related to the size of artisanal and coastal fishing vessels used in the outermost regions. The landing of by-catches, in so far as it does not exacerbate the impact on spawning stock biomass, shall accordingly be permitted.

Follow-up and advance notice of modifications to scientific advice: each year by 1 April, the Commission shall inform the European Parliament of the best available scientific advice that served as a basis for Council decisions on the determination of fishing opportunities under this Regulation between 1 February of the previous year and 31 January of the current year.

The Commission shall also inform Parliament, prior to the Council decision, of situations that may lead to significant changes in fishing opportunities (deviation of more than 20% from the new TAC corresponding to the new FMSY point value).

It shall, likewise, inform the European Parliament, as soon as possible and in any case before the adoption of a new Council decision, of cases where scientific advice relating to the different breeding stock biomass reference levels justifies recourse to safeguard measures.