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

2018/0050(COD) - 04/04/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 461 votes to 62 with 101 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multi-annual plan for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea.

Parliament's position adopted at first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure amends the Commission proposal as follows:

Objectives of the plan

The Regulation establishes a multiannual plan for the conservation and sustainable exploitation of demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea. It applies to hake, red mullet, deep-water rose shrimp, Norway lobster, blue and red shrimp and giant red shrimp.

The plan will:

- be based on a fishing effort regime and aim to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the common fisheries policy (CFP), in particular by applying the precautionary approach to fisheries management;

- ensure that exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels which can produce maximum sustainable yield (MSY);

- contribute to the elimination of discards and to the implementation of the landing obligation;

- implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in order to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem and on vulnerable habitats and protected species are minimised.

The target fishing mortality to achieve MSY shall be achieved on a progressive, incremental basis by 2020 where possible, and by 1 January 2025 at the latest, for the stocks concerned, and shall be maintained thereafter.

Fishing effort regime

For the first year of implementation of the plan, except for geographical sub-areas in which the fishing effort has already been reduced by more than 20 % during the baseline period (2012-2017), the maximum allowable fishing effort shall be reduced by 10 % compared to the baseline. For the second to the fifth year of the implementation of the plan, the maximum allowable fishing effort shall be reduced by a maximum of 30 %.

Where the best available scientific advice shows significant catches of a particular stock with fishing gear other than trawls, maximum allowable fishing effort may be set for such particular gear on the basis of such scientific advice.

Where a Member State allows vessels flying its flag to fish with trawls, it shall ensure that such fishing is limited to a maximum of 15 hours per fishing day, five fishing days per week or equivalent. Member States may grant a derogation of up to 18 hours per fishing day to take into account the transit time between port and the fishing ground.

Recreational fisheries

Where scientific advice indicates that recreational fishing is having a significant impact on the fishing mortality of a particular stock, the Council may set non-discriminatory limits for recreational fishermen.

When setting the limits, the Council shall refer to transparent and objective criteria, including those of an environmental, social and economic nature. The criteria used may include, in particular, the impact of recreational fishing on the environment, the societal importance of that activity and its contribution to the economy in coastal areas.

Closure areas

The amended text states that the use of trawls in the western Mediterranean Sea shall be prohibited within six nautical miles from the coast except in areas deeper than the 100 m isobath during three months each year and, where appropriate, consecutively, on the basis of the best available scientific advice. Member States may establish other closure areas, provided that a reduction of at least 20 % of catches of juvenile hake in each geographical subarea is achieved.

Permanent cessation

The amended text provides that the Regulation on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) should be amended so that fleet segments covered by the new rules can benefit from compensation in case of permanent cessation of activities fishing.

Participative management

In accordance with the principles of good, Member States may promote participative management systems at local level in order to achieve the objectives of the plan. No later than five years after the entry into force of the Regulation and every three years thereafter, the Commission should report to the European Parliament and the Council on the results and the impact of the plan on the stocks concerned and on the fisheries exploiting these stocks.