

Multiannual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish

2018/0109(COD) - 12/07/2019 - Final act

PURPOSE: to establish general rules for the implementation by the Union of a multi-annual recovery programme for the Mediterranean swordfish stock.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Regulation (EU) 2019/1154 of the European Parliament and of the Council on a multiannual recovery plan for Mediterranean swordfish and amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 and Regulation (EU) 2017/2107 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT: this Regulation lays down general rules for the implementation by the Union of a multiannual recovery plan for swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) in the Mediterranean Sea ('Mediterranean swordfish') adopted by ICCAT, starting from 2017 and continuing until 2031.

Subject matter and scope

The Regulation transposes ICCAT Recommendation 16-05 into EU law in order to enable the Union to fulfil its international obligations and to provide operators with legal certainty as regards rules and obligations.

By way of derogation from the basic Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the objective of the Regulation is to achieve a biomass of Mediterranean swordfish corresponding to MSY by 2031, with at least a 60 % probability of achieving that objective.

The Regulation shall apply to Union fishing vessels and Union vessels engaged in recreational fishing which catch Mediterranean swordfish or tranship or carry on board, including outside the ICCAT Convention area, Mediterranean swordfish; or tranship or carry on board, including outside the ICCAT Convention area, Mediterranean swordfish. It shall also apply to third country fishing vessels, and third country vessels engaged in recreational fisheries, which operate in Union waters and which catch Mediterranean swordfish.

The main elements of the new Regulation are as follows:

Fishing effort

Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the fishing effort of fishing vessels flying its flag is commensurate with the fishing opportunities for Mediterranean swordfish available to that Member State. The carrying-over of any unused quota for Mediterranean swordfish shall be prohibited

Each Member State shall make provision for by-catch of swordfish within its Mediterranean swordfish quota and shall inform the Commission thereof when transmitting its annual fishing plan. Such provision shall ensure that all dead Mediterranean swordfish are deducted from the quota.

A capacity limitation by fishing gear type for fishing vessels shall apply for the duration of the recovery plan set out in this Regulation.

Closure periods

Mediterranean swordfish shall not be caught, either as targeted species or as by-catch, retained on board, transhipped or landed during the closure period. The closure period shall be 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 1 October to 30 November of each year.

Minimum conservation reference size for Mediterranean swordfish

The Regulation prohibits the catch, retention on board, transshipment, landing, transport, storage, sale, display or offer for sale of catches and by-catches of swordfish measuring less than 100 cm lower jaw to fork length (LJFL); or weighing less than 11.4 kg of live weight, or 10.2 kg of gilled and gutted weight.

Maximum number of hooks

The Regulation sets the maximum number of hooks that may be set by or carried on board fishing vessels targeting Mediterranean swordfish shall be fixed at 2 500 hooks. A replacement set of 2 500 rigged hooks shall be allowed on board fishing vessels for trips longer than two days provided that it is duly lashed and stowed in lower decks so that it may not readily be used.

The hook size shall not be smaller than 7 cm in height.

The length of the pelagic longlines shall not exceed 30 nautical miles (55.56 km).

Recreational fisheries

Each Member State allowing recreational fishing for Mediterranean swordfish shall make provision for a recreational fisheries quota within its national quota and shall inform the Commission thereof when transmitting its annual fishing plan. Only 'rod and line' vessels shall be authorised to catch Mediterranean swordfish in recreational fisheries.

Member States shall ensure that vessels flying their flag that engage in recreational fishing for Mediterranean swordfish are included in the information on authorised vessels. Vessels not included in this information shall not be allowed to fish for Mediterranean swordfish.

Fishing gears

When implementing the ICCAT recovery plan, the Union and Member States should endeavour to promote coastal fishing activities and the research on and use of fishing gear and techniques which are selective, so as to reduce by-catches of vulnerable species, and which 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.

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