Conservation of fishery resources: cod and hake, stock recovery

2001/0299(CNS) - 11/12/2001 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To establish measures for the recovery of cod and hake stocks in the North Sea and off the west coast of Scotland. CONTENT: A Report by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea warned last year that the cod and hake stock in the North Sea and west of Scotland are at serious risk of collapse. Cod stocks in the Kattegat and the Irish Sea are also declining rapidly. Urgent action is needed and the Commission is therefore proposing a Council Regulation to combat the decline in stock and ensure the survival of cod and hake in these maritime regions. The proposed Regulation contains the following elements: - the setting of biological targets for the recovery of the stocks concerned. Under this scheme the Council would be required to set quantitive targets for the adult populations of cod and hake. When the targets have been reached the stock concerned will be removed from the recovery plan. - a procedure for setting annual total allowable catches (TACs) for these stocks. Under this scheme the TAC would be set annually and give a high probability that the biomass will increase by 30% in the case of cod and 15% in the case of hake. - a system for limiting fishing effort (that is, the time spent by a fishing vessel at sea) in respect of all fishing vessels likely to catch cod and/or hake. Under this scheme, "available kilowatt-days" would be distributed by each Member State among the fishing vessels concerned. - the establishment of special conditions for the monitoring and control of vessels engaged in these fisheries. This scheme imposes monitoring conditions and obligations for vessels over 15m long. - amendment of the rules for Community financial aid to the fisheries sector. This scheme aims to stimulate structural change in the fishing fleets concerned, such as offering additional incentives for the scrapping of fishing vessels engaged in the fishing of cod and hake stock. - a procedure by which the Commission, upon request of a Member State, may decide to close fishing grounds temporarily. The maximum duration of any closure would be two months and the geographical area would be limited. This measure is deemed necessary in the case where there is an unpredictable accumulation of juvenile cod or hake. - an adjustment to the rules for the common organisation of the market. This measure aims to extend the responsibility of Producer Organisation to draw up fishing plans for those concerned. It will be accompanied by a Council Regulation aimed at laying down technical measures for fishing to protect juvenile fish in which all recent improvements in selectivity currently contained in Commission Regulation and a number of new elements of relevance to cod and/or hake recovery will be included. Lastly, the Commission will carry out an assessment of these measures, in conjunction with the Member States, in order to assess the effectiveness of the proposals, within 18 months of adoption by the Council.