



## Questions and Answers on Fishing Opportunities in the EU for 2016

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#### What are fishing opportunities? How are they set?

Fishing opportunities, otherwise known as Total Allowable Catches (TAC), are decided on a yearly basis by Member States represented by their Fisheries Ministers (in the Council of Ministers), and are based on proposals from the European Commission. During autumn 2015 the Council of Ministers and the European Commission will set the level of TACs for most of the important commercial fish stocks and sea areas, excluding the Mediterranean Sea. These will apply from 1 January 2016.

TACs are subsequently divided up among Member States according to long-term pre-agreed percentage shares called quotas. Quotas are administered by Member States, who then share out their national quotas among their fishing vessels or groups of fishing vessels. Each quota share represents a right to catch and to land a certain amount of fish within the calendar year. In some fisheries there are accompanying limits on the numbers of days vessels can spend fishing, taking into account how powerful each vessel is.

#### What is new this year?

The reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) came into force on 1 January 2014. The new Policy fixes an objective of reaching Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) exploitation rates by 2015 where possible, and by 2020 at the latest.

The MSY rate is the amount of fishing that will deliver the highest long-term catch from a stock, so any fishing above that level is wasteful, harmful and ultimately unprofitable for the fishermen.

What is new this year is that for the first time, the TAC for plaice has been set in line with the MSY approach, bringing the total number of Baltic stocks covered by MSY to 7 (out of 10).

#### Where does the scientific advice come from?

Scientists working in Member States take samples of fish from commercial landings and from discarded fishing stocks, and use research vessels to sample the amounts of fish in the sea at different places and different times of year. From this data, they can work out how much sustainable catch can be taken in the next year. Because the fish migrate and mix across different sea areas, scientists need to share their data and work together in international scientific committees. Recommendations are passed to the European Commission, who uses them to make proposals on TACs each year.

The Commission's proposals are notably based on scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) and other independent bodies.

#### Timetable

Fishing opportunities for the Baltic were proposed by the Commission on 2 September ([IP/15/5563](#)) and will be discussed/adopted by Fisheries Ministers in the Council of Ministers on 22-23 October. For stocks in the Black Sea, the proposals are scheduled for September/October and are scheduled for adoption by the Fisheries Ministers in the Council of Ministers in December. The largest package covering the Atlantic, North Sea and other areas is scheduled to be proposed by the Commission in October and adopted in December.

#### For further information

- Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), with link to Regulation:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/index_en.htm)
- TACs and quotas (with link to the proposal):  
[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing\\_rules/tacs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/tacs/index_en.htm)
- Scientific advice on managing fish stocks:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing\\_rules/scientific\\_advice/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/scientific_advice/index_en.htm)

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