



# FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE NEWSLETTER

December 2016

Dear readers,

The launch of the Ocean Governance Communication launched by the European Commission was the highlight of this month. Important discussions took place at this month's Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament, including an exchange of views with the Commission on TACs and quotas for the Baltic Sea and a special hearing on MPAs. Also, the European Parliament Think Tank have released publications on the management of fishing fleets in the outermost regions, and on the long-term management plan for cod fisheries.

Several NGOs have been recently active in fisheries issues: two initiatives led by several NGOs regarding the 2017 TACs and quotas were launched also this month in preparation for the Council's meeting in mid December, Oceana published a study this month on the exploitation and status of European stocks; and a report commissioned by the PEW Charitable Trust on overfishing in North Western waters has also been released.

Lastly, please find information inside on the outcomes of the annual NEAFC and ICCAT meetings.

Finally, check out the list of upcoming events on fisheries issues for your interest.

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Director, EBC

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## • International Ocean Governance: EU's contribution for safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed oceans

The long waited Commission Communication on International Ocean Governance was finally launched on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, following the Commission's consultation that took place from June to October 2015. The Communication contains **14 actions grouped into 3 priority areas**, some of which are:

1. **Improving international ocean governance framework:**
  - a. Develop and enforce existing rules, and address legal gaps
  - b. Ensure implementation
  - c. Guidance on the exploration and exploitation of natural resources in areas under national jurisdiction (by 2018)
  - d. Reduce maritime security threats and risks
2. **Reducing human pressure on the oceans and creating the conditions for a sustainable blue economy:**
  - a. Strengthen ocean-related action to implement national and international commitments
  - b. Combat illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU)
  - c. Pilot project to monitor illegal fishing using satellite communications
  - d. Propose a strategy on plastics by 2017
  - e. Produce international guidelines on Maritime Spatial Planning by 2025 and expand Marine Protected Areas worldwide with funding under Horizon 2020 and LIFE programmes
3. **Strengthening international ocean research and data:**
  - a. Integral part of the EU's response to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 14 'to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources'
  - b. Promote safety and security, global maritime growth and global governance through bilateral, regional and multilateral partnerships

At the press conference, Commissioner Karmenu Vella called for an international cooperation to coordinate the sustainable exploitation of the marine environment and minimise the impacts of human activities; he added that sustainability can only exist if the international community works together. Specifically he stressed that *"today's Joint Communication aims at linking internal and external security dimensions of good ocean governance. It takes account of existing strategies notably the EU Maritime Security Strategy and regional strategies such as the Gulf of Guinea and the Indian Ocean, including the integrated arctic policy. These efforts are aimed at resulting in better shared international responsibility for our oceans."*

A Q&A followed where an attendee asked him what would be the outcome of the upcoming Oceans Day at COP22 in Marrakech on 12 November 2016, to which he replied that he is hopeful that he will achieve a formal confirmation of the Ocean action plan by states attending the meeting.

## • Fisheries Committee

The **Committee on Fisheries (PECH Committee)** of the European Parliament met on **the 9-10 of November at the European Parliament** for its monthly meeting. Highlights are:

- The **long-term plan for cod stocks and the fisheries exploiting those stocks**, and the **agreement between the European Union and the Kingdom of Norway** on reciprocal access to fishing in the Skagerrak for vessels flying the flag of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, were both **adopted**.
- There was agreement in simplifying the proposal on the **characteristics for fishing vessels**.
- There was agreement to ensure resources are sustainably managed and rights are respected on the **integrated EU policy for the Arctic**.
- The European Commission (EC) presented **delegated and implementing acts** it is currently working on, all of which were discussed during the Expert Group meeting in July and adopted in October.
- The exchange of views with the EC on **total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas for the Baltic Sea**, several members stressed their concerns on the decision of the Council to approve the plan disregarding the EC's proposal, and on the EC's support of such decision. (See next page for more information)
- The exchange of views with the EC on the **multi-annual plan for demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks** included discussion on the choke species effect, implementation and Brexit implications.
- The discussions on the proposal for the **conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures** focused on the implications for regionalization and synergies with the multiannual plans.
- The proposal for the management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Convention Area of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (**ICCAT**) focused on discussing the TACs and quotas proposed.
- There was agreement to accept decisions reached together with the Council and the EC during the trialogues on the '**specific conditions to fishing for deep-sea stocks in the North-East Atlantic, provisions for fishing in**

## **international waters of the North-East Atlantic and repeal of Regulation (EC) No 2347/2002'.**

- The **public hearing** on '**Marine protected areas: valuing marine biodiversity and ecosystems for the blue economy**' brought together scientists, policy advisors, civil servants, NGO's representatives and fisheries expert who all stressed their views on the issue. (See next page for more information).

DG MARE presented a study on the **EU fish market** that showed how fish consumption, consumer prices, and community production in the EU are increasing, and also how the EU's self-sufficient rate is also improving. There was also a presentation by Policy Department B of the European Parliament on a study entitled '**Seafood Industry Integration in the EU**' where it was shown that there are differences on the level of integration among different countries.

### **Exchange of views with the Commission on total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas for the Baltic Sea:**

The president of the Committee **Alain Cadec** highlighted that the Council approved the TACs and quotas for next year on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October disregarding the EC's proposal based on ICES advice. He stressed that TACs and quotas have to respect what is stated in the multiannual plan, and expressed his disappointment on the absence of the Council at the meeting. **MEPs** also showed **concerns about the scientific advice upon which Council has based its decision and how the EC has accepted those**, and there was a **general disappointment that the Council was not present to defend its position**.

Some of the **specific questions** posed were: 1. how does the Council justify not taking the EC proposal based on ICES advice?, and with what scientific argument did it do so?; 2. Do the TACs and quotas proposed for the Baltic respect the multiannual plan and Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)?; how the EC expects to combine maximum fishing mortality of both recreational and commercial fishing in 2017, and how this will reflect a recovery of the stock above MSY; 2) how fishing mortality resulting from agreed TACs for the Baltic cod complies with the legislation; and 3) given that the politically agreed TAC for the Eastern Baltic cod exceed ICES advice, does the EC consider ICES advice too precautionary?

It was also questioned if the EC had withdrawing the Council's proposal, and there were suggestions to initiate a legal procedure, request a meeting or send a letter to the Council to discuss the issue. It was also stressed that, ultimately, the Committee will need to decide whether Council's opinion on this proposal is needed or not. The existing concern of the sector and NGOs was also brought into discussion.

In response, the **EC** stated that the Council followed most of the proposal and in some cases even exceeded the TACs and quotas proposed. In its opinion, the Council's proposals are still compatible with the objective of bringing stocks above the limit value, added that ICES also agrees that its approach is questionable for stocks that increase yearly making it too precautionary, and stressed its belief that NGOs often do not



understand calculations done by EC and that Council advice is public and accessible. The EC ensured that the proposal is based on accurate scientific advice, it is in line with the multiannual plan for the Baltic and will ensure the sustainability of the stocks and fishing to reach MSY. Furthermore, the EC stressed that it is important for the EU to show support to the fishing sector after this strong cut, and indicated that MS are already doing a good job in controlling catches.

**Alain Cadec** closed up this exchange of views stating there is a clear disagreement on the management plan and that the Committee does not share the EC's analysis, and is therefore not satisfied with what the EC has noted.

### **Public hearing on 'Marine protected areas: valuing marine biodiversity and ecosystems for the blue economy':**

The **EC** viewed MPAs as cost-effective and nature-based solutions with potential for job creation, blue economy, growth and social benefits (e.g. cultural, spiritual and recreational). In its opinion, they can be used as a socio-economic tool that ensures fisheries protection, food security, contributes to Climate Change mitigation and adaptation if they are properly conceived, designed and managed. The EC stated to be already working on a study on stakeholder involvement and participation for management.

In line with the EC's position, the speakers **Prof. Dr. Emmanuel Goncalves** (MARE and ISPA, Portugal), **Prof. Dr. Henning Von Nordheim** (responsible for international protection at the BFN, Germany) and **Dr. Samantha Burgess** (WWF European Policy Officer) expressed their support to MPAs creation and adequate implementation. They agreed on the need and benefits of MPAs in general and for blue economy in particular, and criticized that the current coverage in Europe is not sufficient. Prof. Von Nordheim called to stop suspicions amongst conservationists and fishermen, and Prof. Goncalves called to replicate existing examples of good cooperation. Prof. Goncalves also stressed that MS have the responsibility for ocean conservation and should take action. Dr. Burgess stated that local community engagement is critical, and that existing regulation such as the MSFD, CFP, MSP, etc. offer opportunities to manage things properly.

Contrarily, **Mr. Wouter Van Broekhoven** (Science and Policy advisor at VisNed, Netherlands) stressed MPAs are useful for protecting features but not so much for protecting the resources, and that MPAs can be used for conservation depending on what it is intended to preserve. He also criticized the lack of information on the impacts of MPAs to specific parts of the fishing industry and ecosystems, and stated that more evidences are needed to promote MPAs to fishermen.

Similarly, **Dr. Serge Michel Garcia** (Chair of Fisheries Expert Group of IUCN) criticized political interests behind setting up MPA that lead to cheap and fast designation, are usually not effective enough, underplay social and economic issues, are not efficient for threats other than overfishing, and are difficult to achieve. International targets are, in his opinion, not relevant at local level, and

careful analyses have to be done to ensure stakeholder' participation and food security of local communities. In his view, the benefits of MPAs for fisheries management are sometimes difficult to demonstrate and vary, they tend to cause social disruption, and violations of rights are common. However, he agreed that MPAs can be useful when no other management instrument is in place, when implemented case by case, and governance is linked to human rights.

**MEPs** stressed the need to get the right balance to achieve sustainable fishing and consider local communities; questioned the issues in communicating the benefits of MPAs to fishermen; agreed on the poor management of MPAs; argued the need of MPAs when a management plan already exists; stressed the importance of MPAs for the future of CFP policy; indicated the need to have stakeholders on board; and highlighted the importance of observation and monitoring to gather scientific data.

More information on the programme and presentations [here](#)

## • European Parliament Think Tank

The European Parliamentary Research Service is the European Parliament's in-house research department and Think Tank. Its mission is to assist Members in their parliamentary work by providing them with independent, objective and authoritative analysis of, and research on, policy issues relating to the European Union. It is also designed to increase Members and EP committees' capacity to scrutinise and oversee the European Commission and other EU executive bodies.

More information [here](#).

**Following are briefings, studies and fact sheets published this month:**

### **Research for PECH Committee - The Management of Fishing Fleets in Outermost Regions**

Outermost Regions (ORs) fishing fleets are mostly composed of small-scale vessels targeting inshore and offshore resources. Over the past decade, modernisation of ORs fishing fleets has been unevenly achieved across regions. ORs fleets are subject to the same management measures than those applied to all Union fleets. Nevertheless, EMFF takes into account ORs specific handicaps through increased intensity of public aid and a specific compensation scheme of additional costs. Several options are discussed to support the much needed ORs fleet modernisation, including a derogatory regime for fleet management and a revision of capacity ceilings. Read it [here](#).

### **Long-term management plan for cod fisheries**

In 2012, the Council decided on a number of measures amending a fisheries management plan covering several stocks of cod in European seas. This Council-only regulation was annulled by the Court of Justice, and the European Parliament is now to adopt a new regulation, founded on the appropriate 'co-decision' legal basis, in order to adjust this fisheries management plan. Read it [here](#).

## • Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC)

The 19th **Meeting of Working Group 2 (Regional Fisheries Organizations and North Atlantic Agreements)** of the LDAC took place this month in London to discuss

- North Atlantic Fisheries bilateral agreements, for which the European Commission gave a presentation on the state of negotiations
- The EU Proposal on management for snow crab fishery
- The outcomes of meetings, ways forward and updates of the North West Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO) and North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC).
- An update and reflections of the Working Group 5 (Horizontal Issues) on the Fishing Authorisation Regulation (FAR)
- The organisation of a Joint PelAC-LDAC Conference on implementation of External Dimension of CFP: EBAFM for Northern Atlantic stocks.

The position on the Snow Crab in the Svalbard area, together with the opinion on Improving the Implementation of the IUU Regulation were adopted by the Executive Committee on the 23 November.

## NGOs

## •Exploitation and Status of European Stocks

A study by Oceana, "Exploitation and Status of European Stocks", was published this month.

According to the press release: ***"Fish catches in European waters could increase by 57% if fish stocks were exploited sustainably and based on scientific advice, according to a new research released by Oceana today. The study was led by renowned fisheries expert Dr. Rainer Froese at the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research in Kiel in Germany and provides the most comprehensive overview so far of overfishing in European fish stocks, analysing 397 stocks compared to around 150 monitored by the European Commission. The new study shows that the status of the EU fisheries is far from being in good condition, with 85% of stocks in an unhealthy state and only 12% fulfilling the commitments of the Common Fisheries Policy".***

For more information:

- Read [here](#) the press release by Oceana
- Check out [here](#) the campaign
- Watch [here](#) the video prepared for this study
- Read [here](#) the factsheet
- Read [here](#) the study



According to the Executive Summary of the study:

"Stock assessments are presented for 397 stocks in 14 European ecoregions, from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. Surplus production modelling was used to estimate fisheries reference points in a maximum sustainable yield (MSY) framework. Fishing pressure and biomass were estimated from 2000 to the last year with available data (2013-2015). Results are presented by ecoregion and by main functional groups (benthic fish & invertebrates, large predators, pelagic plankton feeders). Cumulative biomass of exploited species was well below the level that can produce MSY in all ecoregions. Fishing pressure has decreased in some ecoregions but not in others. Barents Sea and Norwegian Sea have the highest percentage (> 60%) of sustainably exploited stocks that are capable of producing MSY and which thus fulfill the goals of the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union.

In contrast, in most ecoregions of the Mediterranean fewer than 20% of the stocks are exploited sustainably or are capable of producing MSY. Especially large predators have low biomass and were subject to strong overfishing in all ecoregions. In the last year with available data, 64% of the 397 stocks were subject to ongoing overfishing and 51% of the stocks were outside of safe biological limits, potentially suffering from impaired reproduction. Only 12% of the stocks fulfilled the requirement of the Common Fisheries Policy of Europe as being not subject to overexploitation and having a biomass above the level that can produce maximum sustainable yields. Biomass in the ecoregions of the Mediterranean and Black Sea was on average less than half (44%) of the level that can produce MSY, whereas in the northern ecoregions (Barents Sea to Iberian coastal) biomass was about  $\frac{3}{4}$  (73%) of that level. Rebuilding of biomass above the MSY level would require only a few years in most stocks, depending on the depletion level of the stocks and how far exploitation is reduced below the MSY-level during the rebuilding phase. For example, exploitation at half the MSY-level would rebuild most stocks in the northern ecoregions in 1-5 years whereas in the more depleted Mediterranean rebuilding of stocks would take 2-7 years.

Total catches across all stocks and regions were 8.8 million tonnes whereas the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) was estimated at 15.4 million tonnes. Because of trophic interactions it is not possible to achieve MSY simultaneously for all stocks, but after rebuilding of the stocks and assuming a precautionary target of 90% of MSY, substantial increases in catches could be possible. These potential increases differ widely between ecoregions, from 25% in the Baltic Sea to over 200% in some Mediterranean ecoregions. **Across all stocks and ecoregions, potential increases in catch of over 50% could be possible.** Independent assessments of exploitation status were available for 93 (23%) of the examined stocks. A comparison of these exploitation estimates with the results of this study showed good agreement, with **82% of the stocks having the same classification of being overfished or sustainably exploited.** For the stocks with different classifications, this study tended to underestimate exploitation."

## • PEW: Overfishing in North Western waters

A report published by [Poseidon Aquatic Resource Management Ltd](#) which was commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts as part of its ongoing campaign to address overfishing in the waters of north-western Europe, was released this month.

According to the executive summary:

**Many European Union (EU) fish stocks have been, and continue to be, fished above sustainable levels.** Since 2014, the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has included a legally binding commitment to fish at sustainable levels – the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) – by 2015 where possible and for all stocks by 2020. Exploiting fish stocks at rates equal to or lower than MSY allows them to recover to healthy levels, able to provide food for consumers while also maintaining important ecosystem and marine food web functions. This report aims to highlight examples where fisheries management has worked to end overfishing, and showcase the resulting benefits, using a case study approach that focuses on five fish stocks:

- haddock in the North Sea,
- plaice in the Eastern English Channel,
- horse mackerel in Atlantic Iberian waters,
- herring in the North Sea, and
- nephrops in Skagerrak and Kattegat.

These examples show that well-managed fisheries lead to healthy fish stocks and result in a cascade of positive outcomes, including increased income to fishers and reduced impacts on the wider environment. Other benefits relate to improved efficiency: as fish stocks recover from overfishing, the time and fishing effort required to catch the same amount of fish (catch per unit effort [CPUE]) reduces. For example, the Portuguese fleet targeting horse mackerel fished 5% fewer days at sea in 2015 compared to 2010, but shows a significantly improved CPUE (+93%) as the horse mackerel stock improved.

The improved CPUE made possible due to recovered stocks means more efficient fishing, which helps to reduce the environmental impacts of fishing. As the fishing gear is in the water for less time, there is less impact on seabed habitats and bycatch species. This can also be seen in the case of Danish and Swedish fleets targeting improving nephrops stocks in the Skagerrak and Kattegat, which have been able to reduce both their fishing ‘footprint’ on the seabed and their bycatch of cod, thereby contributing to the Kattegat cod stock’s recovery from overfishing. Other environmental benefits are also identified in the report, including the fact that, as less fuel is used due to improved CPUE, atmospheric emissions from fishing vessels are reduced. Bringing stocks to sustainable levels has made fleets more profitable as greater catching efficiency reduces operating costs. For example, the profitability of Scottish demersal trawlers fishing for North Sea haddock more than doubled from 2009 to 2015. While other factors – particularly lower fuel prices – had a significant impact, the good status of the haddock stock meant that more fish could be caught faster and with reduced operating costs.

Improved fleet profitability generates a range of social benefits, including increased incomes for fishers and related positive consequences for dependent coastal communities. Less tangible benefits have also been reported by the fishing industry, such as the improved reputation and access to markets that stem from being able to show that the industry is landing fish from a sustainable source. The case studies presented in this report clearly show that ending overfishing, and so

*delivering on the CFP's objective to fish at sustainable levels, creates a wealth of benefits.*

You can find the full report [here](#).

## • TACs: NGOs in action

As every year, December is a month of utmost importance for the fisheries world since the Council decides on the yearly TACs. Two initiatives from several NGOs regarding the 2017 TACs and quotas were launched this month in preparation for the Council's meeting in mid December:

- **Deep sea fish stocks** (adopted by the Council on the 15<sup>th</sup> November); Seas At Risk and the Fisheries Secretariat have published a set of recommendations and annex (see files attached) regarding the Commission proposal for a Council Regulation fixing for 2017 and 2018 the fishing opportunities for Union fishing vessels for certain deep-sea fish stocks (COM(2016)643). [Find here the press release](#)
- **Atlantic and North Sea stocks** (to be adopted by the Council on the 12-13<sup>th</sup> December); NGOs have submitted a joint letter (see file attached) asking the Slovak EU Council Presidency to live stream the exchange of views on Fishing Opportunities for 2017 at the upcoming AgriFish Council meeting. [Find here the press release](#).

**RFMOs**

## • Outcomes of the annual NEAFC and ICCAT meetings

The two Regional Fisheries Management organizations, North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), held their annual meetings in November.

### **NEAFC**

The 35TH Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) was held in London from 14 to 18 November 2016 where conservation and management measures for the year 2017 were adopted for a number of fish stocks. These include blue whiting, herring, mackerel, redfish in the Irminger Sea and Rockall haddock. At this Annual Meeting, the “NEAFC approach to conservation and management of deep-sea species and categorization of deep-sea species/stocks” was adopted.

You can read the official press release [here](#).

## **ICCAT**

During its Annual Meeting ICCAT approved 19 new Recommendations and 5 Resolutions, covering a number of relevant issues related to species such as: bluefin, albacore, yellowfin, and bigeye tunas, as well as swordfish, sharks and sailfish stocks. For some of these species, it was the first time ICCAT adopted catch limits for the Mediterranean swordfish and the Atlantic blue shark.

You can read the official press release [here](#).

## **Upcoming Events**

### **1. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, 5 DECEMBER, BRUSSELS**

More information [here](#)

### **2. EUROPEAN COUNCIL, AGRIFISH MEETING, 12-13 DECEMBER, BRUSSELS**

### **3. INTER-AC MEETING, 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, BRUSSELS**

### **4. MSFD- GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS, 6 DECEMBER, BRUSSELS**

More information [here](#)

### **5. FEDERATION OF EUROPEAN AQUACULTURE PRODUCES' ANNUAL EVENT: AQUACULTURE IN MOTION 2016**

More information [here](#)

### **6. GOVERNING OUR HIGH SEAS: WHY NOW?, 1 DECEMBER, LONDON, UK**

More information [here](#)

### **7. 13<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, 4-17 DECEMBER, CANCUN, MEXICO.** Fisheries and Oceans are high on the agenda and EBCD is actively involved in it.

More information [here](#)



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