



Fisheries and Aquaculture Newsletter

End of the Year 2016 Issue



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European Council

TACs and Quotas 2017

On 12 December 2016 the Agriculture and Fisheries Council reached a **political agreement** on a regulation concerning the 2017 catch limits for the main commercial fish stocks in the **Atlantic**, the **North Sea** and **international fisheries** in which EU vessels participate.

The agreement is based on the objective of achieving maximum sustainable yields (**MSYs**) by 2017 where possible, and by 2020 at the latest, while taking into account specific and fully justified socio-economic circumstances.

The number of fish stocks managed at MSY levels will increase next year to 44 and the positive trend concerning stocks within safe biological limits will be strengthened. The agreement also tackles the question of **choke species in mixed fisheries** by providing elements of flexibility.

Find the agreed TACs and quotas for 2017 [HERE](#).



European Commission

The Maritime Affairs and Fisheries department getting into top shape

Following a reshuffling just approved by the College of Commissioners, the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries will start the New Year with an entirely new set up that might very well sharpen its ability to make a difference both in the EU and abroad.

The department's structure had been unchanged since 2008 and had served the objectives of the time, notably the need to mainstream the maritime agenda into all Commission's policies. But the Commission is operating in a different context now.

While the recent fisheries reform has moved this policy towards a modern, decentralized system, new priorities have emerged for the Commission and in particular for Commissioner Vella in the areas of international ocean governance and the blue economy. The new setup of the Directorate General will reflect this change through several key features:

- There is a Directorate in charge of Maritime Policy and the Blue Economy
- The policies on Ocean Governance and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing are strongly and visibly anchored in the International Directorate
- The regionalised approach for the management of the Common Fisheries Policies and Structural Support is maintained
- The knowledge base within the Directorate General is improved through the creation of three 'Centres of Excellence' that will provide advice and support to the organisation on socio-economic matters, scientific advice, data collection and fisheries control.

You can consult the new chart [HERE](#).

Marine Expert Group (MEG) under the Birds and Habitats Directives

The latest meeting of the MEG 8 December 2016, lead by Directorate-General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs (DG MARE), focused on the following:

- The state of play of the **MARINE NATURA 2000 Designation Process** of the Sites of Community Importance (SCI) and Special Protection Areas (SPA).
- The organisation of a **regional workshop in the implementation of fish management under Natura 2000 in the Mediterranean (Croatia 2017)**.
- In the framework of the **Fisheries Management Measures in Natura 2000 Sites** there was a:
 - Presentation of an **overview of the situation in all coastal Member States (MS)** based on a circulated questionnaire. Since only 11 countries have so far provided feedback, the EC requested the rest of MS to contribute. Europeche urged the EC to continue the work so the information provided by this questionnaire is sufficient for the sector.
 - Discussion on the **scoping paper on fisheries management measures in Natura 2000 sites**.
 - Presentation on the **checklist for evaluating fisheries measures proposals** and the **draft non-paper on the establishment of fisheries conservation measures for Natura 2000 sites and MSFD-relevant measures under the Common Fisheries Policy**. The discussion on these topics involved the incorporation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) areas outside of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the implications for MS applying either Article 6 or Article 20, and finding the balance between environmental and socioeconomic aspects.
- There was also an update on the **activities under the MSFD**, and a briefing on the different activities and information documents produced including the **“Study on the socio-economic benefits of EU MPAs”** (Link [HERE](#)) and 3 pilot projects in the Mediterranean; the state of play with the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning

Directive and the CFP implementation (proposal for new technical measures regulation and data collection framework); the work on the marine component of the European red list of habitats; and the Transatlantic MPA Network .

Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives

On the 16th of December the EC published the 'Fitness Check' evaluation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives (the 'Nature Directives') and concluded that, within the framework of broader EU biodiversity policy, they remain highly relevant and are **fit for purpose**, so a **revision is not needed**. This issue comes after two years of long and difficult discussions with the environmental NGOs having campaigned against reopening these Directives for revision, afraid that these would weaken them. However, the **EU fishing sector** represented by Europeche has expressed its frustration at this decision as it is recognized that there is a need to 1) improve their implementation and coherence with broader socio-economic objectives, 2) increase the flexibility in the implementation process and stakeholder involvement, 3) reduce the prioritization of environmental over socio-economic factors, 4) increase incentives to the sector to take up costly environmental measures, 5) clarify legal concepts, and 6) increase the coherence of the Natura 2000 Directives with other European environmental laws. The EC will develop an Action Plan to correct the deficiencies encountered in the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives, to which the fishing sector is willing to participate in order to reduce unnecessary burden while maximizing nature protection. (See Europeche's press release on the issue [HERE](#)).



European Parliament

Fisheries Committee

The **Committee on Fisheries (PECH Committee)** met on the 5th of December at the **European Parliament** for its monthly meeting. Highlights were:

- The following draft reports were **adopted**: **1)** 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 (See "EP backs the ban on deep-sea fishing" below for more information); **2)** Sustainable management of external fishing fleets; **3)** Characteristics for fishing vessels (recast); **and 4)** An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic.
- There was a general feeling of satisfaction regarding the recently signed "**Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Government of the Cook Islands**", and the potential benefits this will bring to the EU as it ensures

the presence of European boats in the regions, and ideally to the Cook Island's development strategy, improvement of sovereignty and technical autonomy.

- The “**Discharge 2015: General budget of the EU - European Commission**” was **granted**. MEPs agreed not pushing to attract more funds to fisheries and the EC welcomed the support.
- The “**report on the ICCAT mission by the Committee on Fisheries to Vilamoura, Portugal, from 15 to 19 November 2016**” focused on discussing the main agreements achieved. MEPs highlighted the positive discussions that led to reach those agreements, but some also questioned the role of the Committee as mere observers and others expressed their concerns on the TACs adopted for Mediterranean swordfish. The **EC** stressed its gratefulness that the Committee participated on the event, justified the strong measures taken, and complimented ICCAT as an organization.

EP backs the ban on deep-sea fishing

The European Parliament in its Plenary approved on the 13 December the Regulation establishing new rules for fishing in the North-East Atlantic. The new rules will set a depth limit of 800 metres, beneath which it will be illegal to fish. This will help protect the fragile vulnerable marine ecosystems of the deep sea bed.

The regulation also lays down separate rules to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) at depths below 400 metres. If a catch exceeds set amounts of VME indicator species, then the vessel will have to stop fishing immediately and resume only when it has moved at least five nautical miles away from where it encountered a VME.

Stronger transparency safeguards were inserted, by including obligations to provide public information on EU vessels targeting deep-sea species and to report all catches (fish and vulnerable ecosystems).

EU member states will also be required to provide information on the location of vulnerable ecosystems (impact assessments) and the EU Commission will assess this data annually and adapt the footprint area accordingly (using implementing acts).

The technical measures regulation: what future for the regionalization of fisheries in Europe?

This roundtable on the report “**Conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures**” was organised by Blue Fish Europe and MEP Gabriel Mato, rapporteur for the European Parliament (EP), took place on **Tuesday 29 November**. The main points raised were:

- **MEP Gabriel Mato** informed that the final report will be presented in February-March next year, and stressed the importance of keeping simplification and regionalization as key

aspects. He also stated that things can be done well if the focus is maintained on achieving sustainability, both environment and socio-economic aspects are equally considered, dialogue with the sector is consistent, new objectives not included in other documents are developed, flexibility is ensured, and regionalization comes from a consensus.

- **The Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE)** of the European Commission (EC) provided an overview of the development process of the proposal and highlighted some of the issues encountered along the way. It informed that the Council General Approach will take place at the beginning of 2017 and indicated it is confident that there will be an agreement.

- Representatives of the fisheries sector including **Blue Fish Europe**, **ARVI Regional Fisheries Committee of Brittany**, and the **Fishing Alliance of Italian Cooperatives** agreed that not enough attention is paid to ensure fishing is economically and socially viable in the proposal. They stressed that technical measures should protect the fishermen, be coherent with the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), allow flexibility to the regionalization process, avoid unilateralism, and incorporate the three pillars of sustainability and the reality of the fisheries sector. The measures, in their opinion, would be difficult to implement.

- **Pieke Molenaar**, Scientist at **Wageningen Marine Research** in the Netherlands, explained the work he carries out together with fishermen in designing and testing new selective fishing gear and stated that it is essential to increase flexibility in the new technical measures towards innovative gears.

During the short questions and answers session, the NGO **Seas at Risk** requested representatives of the fisheries sector to indicate where they consider that the socioeconomic aspects were not taken seriously enough. The organization **Life Platform** asked why no more attention is paid to pulse trawling when it is proven that it is harmful to marine organisms. The **EC** stated that pulse trawling has been studied extensively, more than any other gear, and scientists say there are enough evidences to show that this is a selective gear if provision and control are adequate. Finally, the **fisheries sector** stated that, with these technical measures, jobs will be lost in the short term.

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:

EU-Norway agreement on fishing in the Skagerrak

The EU-Norway agreement on the Skagerrak, allowing fishing vessels from Denmark, Norway and Sweden to fish in each other's waters, has been updated. The new agreement, aimed at bringing fisheries management in the Skagerrak into line with international principles of coastal state jurisdiction, was signed in January 2015 and has been applied provisionally pending its entry into force. Parliament's consent is necessary for the conclusion of this agreement.

Read it [HERE](#).

Deep-sea fisheries in the north-east Atlantic

Deep-sea species and marine ecosystems are particularly sensitive to human activities. The European Parliament is now to finalise the adoption of a regulation aimed at sustainable deep-sea fishing activities, while freezing their zonal footprint and protecting vulnerable deep-sea ecosystems. This regulation is the outcome of lengthy negotiations between the EP and the Council, after both institutions rejected a 2012 Commission proposal to put a definitive end to the use of bottom trawls and bottom set nets in deep-sea fisheries in the north-east Atlantic.

Read it [HERE](#).

Illegal fishing in south-east Asia

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a scourge of south-east Asia's vital fisheries sector, costing billions of euros, harming biodiversity and facilitating transnational crime. The countries of the region are starting to work together on improving the situation.

Read it [HERE](#).



Advisory Councils

Pelagic Advisory Council: recommendation on by-catch problems in pelagic fisheries under the landing obligation

The Executive Committee of the PELAC has unanimously endorsed a recommendation regarding the use of footnotes to mitigate bycatch problems in pelagic fisheries.

On a letter addressed to Aguiar Machado, Director General of DG MARE, the Pelagic AC recommends using footnotes to transitionally solve the problem of reporting and counting small by-catches in pelagic fisheries in a situation where the landing obligation is in place, thereby avoiding potential conflicts between fleet segments. The use of footnotes should

be viewed as a temporary solution to the problem of by-catches in absence of an updated discard or management plan that would solve this problem in another manner.

Concretely, the Pelagic AC has edited the footnotes in the proposed TAC and Quota Regulation for 2017 allowing pelagic fishermen to cover minor by-catches through the target quota of their fisheries.

These edits are listed in the original document you can find [HERE](#).

North Western Waters Advisory Council

Recommendations on the report of the NWW MS Control Expert Group: 'Recommended measures to achieve compliance with the landing obligation indemersal fisheries in North Western EU Waters'

The Control Expert Group (CEG) of the North Western Waters Member States (NWW MS) has prepared a report 'Recommended measures to achieve compliance with the landing obligation in demersal fisheries in North Western EU Waters' ([LINK](#)) with their recommendations to ensure compliance with the Landing Obligation. The NWWAC discussed the report at a meeting in Edinburgh (7 th July 2016), and an initial response was sent to the CEG ([LINK](#)). A specific Focus Group was then established to examine the report in detail and provide additional feedback.

You can find the final recommendations of the NWWAC on the report of the NWW MS Control Expert Group [HERE](#).

NWWAC Advice on Nephrops Management

Following previous advices from the fishing industry through the NWWAC regarding a seasonal closure for the porcupine stock, closure that was accepted by the Commission and was implemented by means of the annual TAC and Quota Regulation, please find [HERE](#) their last piece of advice on the issue for 2017.

TAC proposal 2017 – NWWAC Management Strategy for sole in the Eastern Channel

In a letter addressed to Aguiar Machado, the NWWAC express the interest of its members in seeing whether a provision of socio-economic stability could be added to the strategy for TAC setting by constraining inter-annual variations in the TAC in the case where TAC proposal would be a drastic reduction.

You can find the original letter [HERE](#).

North Sea Advisory Council

Removing the TAC for Dab and Flounder

The NSAC has made available its views on removing the TAC for Dab and Flounder from its proposal for TACs and Quotas for 2017. On this occasion a consensus agreement has not been reached. The paper is a majority paper with a minority view presented by members of the "Other Interests Group" of NSAC members.

You can read the full paper [HERE](#).

Long Distance Advisory Council

Improving implementation of the EU regulation to fight against Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing

The Executive Committee of the LDAC approved this opinion, which stresses the need for harmonization in the application of the Regulation across all Member States, the modernization of the control system and a better cooperation with third Countries, among others.

You can read the opinion [HERE](#).

EU Long Distance Advisory Council position on Snow Crab in Svalbard

Following discussions held at the LDAC Working Group 2 meeting in London on 15th November 2016 between all relevant actors, the LDAC encourages the Commission to make a strong statement to the EU Council of Ministers and Norway of its intention to let the EU fishing fleets exercise their rights for exploitation of snow crab in the Svalbard FPZ.

You can read the full paper [HERE](#).

RAC	DATE	PLACE	TYPE	Main issues
BS AC	15/12/2016	Copenhagen	WG	Technical measures
BS AC	31/01/2017	Warsaw	ExCom	
NS AC	07/02/2017	Paris	WG	Demersal
PEL AC	28/02/2017	The Hague	WG I and II, ExCom	
NS AC	08/03/2017	The Hague	Ex Com	
BS AC	09/03/2016	Hamburg	BSAC-BALTFISH-EFCA Workshop	Implementation of the Landing Obligation



Aquaculture

Aquaculture in motion

Under the theme 'Farmed in Europe', on the 7th of December in Brussels, the Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP) presented the fifth edition of its annual event 'Aquaculture in motion', co-organised with the European Feed Manufacturers' Federation (FEFAC).

The panellists made presentations that not only stressed the importance of aquaculture as a contributor to sustainable jobs and economic growth but also highlighted the conditions for assuring long-term development in Europe.

Additionally, European Aquaculture was stressed as a priority but clear actions are needed to make things happen. Also, FEFAC underlined the role and developments of

compound feeds in contributing to improving the efficiency and sustainability of aquaculture.

The conference focused on technical considerations on fish farming processes in Europe demonstrating fish farming to be the most efficient animal production sector - in respect of feeds, protein retention, edible yield and water use.

Other speakers gave the views of the farmers on the trends in the European markets for seafood since, with the increase of the world population foreseen by 2050, aquaculture might well be the answer to responding to rising seafood needs and demands.

Finally the importance of the social and economic aspects of aquaculture in society was discussed and the importance of the sector in providing jobs in remote areas, helping to create and reinforce local communities was highlighted.

From the European Commission's side, its representatives spoke about the new Unit for aquaculture within the Directorate General for Fisheries & Maritime Affairs of the European Commission (DG MARE) and underlined the role of aquaculture in the Blue Growth Agenda, emphasising its high potential for sustainable jobs and growth. In addition the Communication officer within DG MARE, updated the audience on the progress of the 'Farmed in the EU' campaign, supported by the results obtained with the school kits circulated amongst teachers throughout Europe.

"Actions vs. Strategies – what is needed?" was the last focal point of the conference where the views of the farmers were presented. The need for the European Banks to help finance the professional aquaculture sector and for the European Commission to facilitate achieving a 'level playing field' was greatly emphasized and the important and essential role of Research and Innovation for the sector was acknowledged.

Before the closure of the conference, the moderator summarised the evidence that more efforts are needed to increase aquaculture growth in Europe. The EU must focus on the sector that can provide the answer to reduce the important trade deficit and maintain the current standards for seafood.

All presentations can be seen here: <http://feap.info/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=722>



The United Nations (UN) adopts two new resolutions

Adopting two resolutions related to the conservation and management of the Earth's oceans, the General Assembly of the United Nations today proclaimed 2 May World Tuna Day, spotlighting the vital socioeconomic importance of the widely consumed fish to peoples around the globe.

By the terms of the text, which was introduced by the representative of Palau on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States, and adopted without a vote, the 193-member body committed to raise global awareness of tuna's critical role in the food security and economic livelihoods of many countries and of the serious threats facing its long-term sustainability.

A second resolution, on sustainable fisheries, was also adopted without a vote and was introduced by the representative of Norway. By its terms, the Assembly called upon Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 14 on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and maritime resources. The Assembly also called on Member States to apply a "precautionary approach" to the conservation, management and exploitation of fish stocks and to take into account the risks and impacts of climate change.

The Assembly postponed action on a related resolution, titled "Oceans and the Law of the Sea", pending consideration by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary). That draft was introduced by the representative of South Africa today.

Find more information [HERE](#).

Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 13th Meeting, Cancun, Mexico 4-17 December 2016

The UN Biodiversity Conference was held in Cancun for two weeks in December. Prior to the COP there was a high level segment focused on "Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-being" in the areas of fisheries, agriculture and forestry (see the Cancun Declaration [HERE](#)). Marine issues were high on the agenda with the Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), indicators for measuring progress for the Aichi Targets, marine spatial planning, marine debris, and others. EBCD actively participated and organized several side events. A full report will be available in due time.



1. Seminar on the landing obligation organized by OPPC-3 and OPPF-4, 20 December, Vigo, Spain

2. International Dialogue Meeting on Pulse Fishing 2017, 20 January, Amsterdam, Netherlands (Link [HERE](#))

3. Seafood safety: new findings & innovation challenges, 25-26 January, Brussels, Belgium (Link [HERE](#))

4. EP Fisheries Committee, 25-26 January, Brussels, Belgium

