

Brussels, 17 May 2010

Commission seeks to get fisheries management on track in 2011

Today the European Commission published its report launching discussions on fishing opportunities in EU waters in 2011. The document sets out how the Commission intends to act on the scientific advice it receives on the state of fish stocks when proposing catch limits and quotas for next year. Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki wants to bring EU fishing limits back to sustainable levels in 2011 – in line with the EU's international commitments and recommendations from the authoritative science bodies which advise the Commission.

European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Maria Damanaki would like to see a tougher method applied to setting quotas and days at sea, in order to meet international standards. "I want to be clear that the quota levels set must respect all the European Union's commitments to sustainability, our commitments to nearby States, and the commitments we have made under the long-term plans. "

Back in 2002, all the Member States of the European Union agreed that fish stocks should be exploited so that they could deliver the highest possible sustainable catches, and that this should be done by 2015. There has been progress since then, with 11 stocks¹ meeting the target in 2009 compared with only two in 2002². Yet most stocks are still overfished.

The Commission draws up a report on fishing opportunities every year to explain to fishers and their industry what common rules will be used to set the quotas. Common rules are put in place to ensure that all fleets are treated equally and fairly. The Commission will base itself on the following guiding principles when making proposals : environmental sustainability; stability in quotas as far as possible; implement long-term plans; meet international commitments; reduce overfishing and rebuild stocks; use international consensus scientific advice; where there is uncertainty, use more caution.

The Commission relies on scientific advice from two international committees of experts when proposing fish quotas: the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, based in Copenhagen, and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries. This advice will be available in June/July.

The Commission will now send the report to the fishers, others concerned with the industry and Member States for consultation and examination. After taking account of their replies, the Commission may adapt the strategy before using it to propose the fishing possibilities for next year.

¹ Sole in the Kattegat and Skagerrak, sole in the North Sea, haddock in the North Sea, haddock at Rockall. West of Scotland herring, herring in the Celtic Sea, Nephrops in the North Sea, plaice in the Irish Sea, saithe in the North Sea and in the West of Scotland, cod in the eastern Baltic, and herring in the Bothnian Sea.

² North Sea herring and North Sea haddock.

Background

Catch limits for the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the North-East Atlantic (including the North Sea) are set annually by fisheries ministers upon proposals by the Commission to come out in the autumn. For fisheries targeting deep-sea species, they are fixed every two years. Fisheries in the Mediterranean are not managed through catch limits, except in the case of bluefin tuna.

More information:

TACs and quotas - EU fishing rules :

http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/tacs/index_en.htm