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## **Fisheries: Commission proposes science-based, sustainable fishing opportunities for 2011**

***The European Commission has adopted its fishing opportunities proposal for 2011 setting levels of total allowable catch (TAC) and fishing effort for the Atlantic, the North Sea, and international waters regulated by a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation. The proposal is based on scientific advice about the quantities of fish that can be caught sustainably. The Commission has discussed working methods with Member States and stakeholders and has taken into account their advice, while being consistent with the objective of achieving maximum sustainable yield (MSY) by 2015.***

Commenting on the proposal, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki said: "We must not lose sight of the basic facts. The amount of fish in the sea is limited and the amount of fish that can be caught each year without putting the future of the stocks at risk is limited too. Each year we ask scientists to tell us what those limits are. The Commission is basing its proposal on that advice." The Commissioner continued: "I am keen to see the EU meet the World Summit on Sustainable Development target of exploiting fish stocks according to their maximum sustainable yields by 2015. That deadline is not far off and we need to start moving now. Clearly, science-based decisions are the only way to help rebuild fish stocks to levels that will sustain a healthy and profitable EU fishing industry. I regret to say there will be disappointing news on some quota levels, but past experience has shown that those who think they can negotiate with nature will not have a long future in fishing."

In their scientific advice for 2011, experts of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) once more underlined the poor state of many fish resources in EU waters. The contribution of European fisheries to the economy and food supply is far smaller today than it was just a few decades ago. Progress towards bringing all European fish stocks to sustainable levels has been slow, because the fleets have not been able to adapt quickly enough to the scientific advice. For some 72% of assessed stocks, overfishing is so serious that more fish would be caught if there was less fishing. Only some 40% of our assessed stocks are known to be fished sustainably. On the plus side there have been some improvements since last year, when these figures were 86% and 31% respectively; and there are clear improvements in some important stocks, such as hake and sole.

In order to achieve long-term sustainability goals, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) has provided advice on the Commission's strategy to ensure exploitation consistent with Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015. Multi-annual management plans are being put in place for all major commercial stocks.

These plans cover 30% of the total catches for 2011. If we add the various stocks jointly managed with Norway for which multi-annual management arrangements are also in place, over 80% – by weight – of the fish taken by EU fishermen is subject to multi-annual management. Stocks managed in this way tend to fare better than those subject to short-term decision-making. However, management plans need to be implemented properly, and special safeguards must apply if the results observed on the grounds are not as expected.

Against this background, the Commission is still very concerned about the conservation of **cod**, for which a management plan has been in force since 2004. Cod stocks in the Kattegat, the Irish Sea and the west of Scotland are showing no signs of recovery. The Commission is therefore proposing 50% reductions in these TACs and has asked Member States to collaborate in an in-depth review of cod management. This review will focus on the reasons why the measures agreed under the multi-annual management plan have not delivered the expected improvements.

The situation for North Sea cod took a turn for the worse in 2008, when a greater proportion of the stock was caught than in any year since 1999. Real-time closures and cod-avoidance schemes have not been enough to protect the stock and have had little effect on fishing patterns. Management of North Sea cod is shared with Norway, and discussions will have to be held on redressing this situation.

The Commission's proposal for 2011 recommends quota increases for 6 stocks, quota decreases for 64 stocks and an unchanged quota for 23 stocks (details in attached table). The changes would amount to a reduction in quotas of 89 400 tonnes - or 10% - overall. These statistics do not include those stocks for which fishing opportunities must be agreed with third countries – such as Norway – or within a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation between now and the December Council meeting of Member States' fisheries ministers. At that meeting on 13 and 14 December the fisheries ministers, together with the Commission, will discuss this proposal and set the fishing levels for 2011.

Table in annex: overview of the Commission's proposals for 2011

Further information and maps can be found here:

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/index_en.htm)

See also [MEMO/10/571](#)