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EU APPROVES UNSUSTAINABLE CATCH LIMITS FOR DEEP-SEA SPECIES

Deep-sea species are especially vulnerable yet newly established TACs ignore scientific advice

Oceana expresses dismay at the commercial exploitation of 22 other species without any management measures and using destructive fishing gear

Oceana believes that the Total Allowable Catches (TACs) approved by the Council of Fisheries Ministers of the European Union are insufficient to ensure the sustainable exploitation of deep-water species. The regulation on fishing opportunities, reached yesterday afternoon, aimed to slightly reduce or maintain current TAC levels for 2011 and 2012. The regulation also ignores more than 20 vulnerable species, which will continue to be fished without any management measures.

Oceana supports the new regulation maintaining the 2010 TAC of 0 tonnes for deep sea sharks, including 4 new species, and the orange roughy. However, the organization regrets the decision not to ban incidental deep-sea shark catches in 2011, and incidental orange roughy catches in 2011 and 2012.

With respect to other species included in this regulation, Oceana is deeply concerned about the null or minimal reductions adopted, particularly in those cases where explicit scientific advice was ignored. Indeed, for species such as the black scabbard fish and the sea bream, TACs exceed scientific advice by 15% and 56%, respectively. For other species like the alfonsino, grenadier, blue ling and codling, the approved reductions between 0% and 13% are inadequate, since there is still no scientific evidence that their exploitation is sustainable.

"The slow growth rate, late maturity and low fertility characteristic of these species cannot withstand high operating levels," said Ricardo Aguilar, Director of Research for Oceana Europe. *"Their management must, now more than ever, follow the precautionary approach."*



© OCEANA. Alfonsino (*Beryx decadactylus*) in Santa Maria de Leuca, Italy.



© OCEANA/ LX. Gutted deep sea shark in Lorient fish market, France.

Both the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) have recommended, due to the precarious situation of most of the stocks, a significant reduction in the catches of these deep-sea species, until the evolution of the stock sizes shows a positive trend.

Another problem is the current commercial exploitation of 22 other deep-sea species without any management measures. Although theoretically these species are occasionally caught in small quantities, they are equally vulnerable, and their exploitation should therefore have been regulated and included into the final regulation.

"The impacts of these fisheries are significant, as they cause the physical destruction of important habitats such as seamounts and deep-sea reefs," added Javier Lopez, marine scientist at Oceana. *"Also deeply troubling is the capture of bycatch species. Some fisheries catch more than 70 non-target species."*

Main scientific advices ignored by the Council in this Regulation for 2011 and 2012.

Species Name	ICES Area	TAC (tn) 2010	ICES Recommendation (tn)	TAC (tn)	TAC (tn)
				2011	2012
Black scabbardfish (<i>Aphanopus carbo</i>)	I-IV	12	Reduce catches	12 (±0%)	12 (±0%)
	V-VII, XII	2547	<2000	2356 (-7,5%)	2179 (-7,5%)
	VIII-X	3348	<2900	3348 (±0%)	3348 (±0%)
Alfonsinos (<i>Beryx spp.</i>)	III-X, XII, XIV	328	Reduce catches	328 (±0%)	328 (±0%)
Blue ling (<i>Molva dypterygia</i>)	II, IV, V	56	Reduce catches	56 (±0%)	56 (±0%)
	III	11	Reduce catches	11 (±0%)	11 (±0%)
Red seabream (<i>Pagellus bogaraveo</i>)	VI-VIII	215	Reduce catches	215 (±0%)	215 (±0%)
	IX	780	<500	780 (±0%)	780 (±0%)
	X	1136	<1050	1136 (±0%)	1136 (±0%)
Forkbeards (<i>Phycys blennoides</i>)	I-IV	31	Reduce catches	31 (±0%)	31 (±0%)
	V-VII	2028	Reduce catches	2028 (±0%)	2028 (±0%)
	VIII-IX	267	Reduce catches	267 (±0%)	267 (±0%)
	X, XII	54	Reduce catches	54 (±0%)	54 (±0%)

Marta Madina, Directora de Comunicación
 Plaza España-Leganitos 47. 28013 Madrid, España
 Tel.: + 34 911 440 880 Móvil: +34 687 598 531 E-mail: mmadina@oceana.org

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