

15/12/2010

EU FISHERIES MINISTERS' 2011 TAC DECISION DISMISSES SCIENTIFIC ADVICE; HAMPERS PROGRESS TOWARDS REBUILDING OF OVEREXPLOITED STOCKS

**Approved 2011 TACs ignore 35% of scientific advice and threaten EU
commitment to reach maximum sustainable yield for all stocks by 2015**

**Total stated catch reduction of around 5% is highly insufficient to rectify
current levels of overexploiting – according to scientists only 11 stocks are not
overfished**

Yesterday night the EU Council of Fisheries Ministers reached an agreement on the 2011 Total Allowable Catches (TAC) and quotas for the main fishing stocks exploited by the community fleet in the northeast Atlantic. Oceana, the international marine conservation organization, is deeply concerned that the catch levels agreed upon are insufficient to guarantee the sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources. The Council's decision to reduce 2011 fishing opportunities by only 4.5%, lacks ambition because the approved TAC will in fact prevent stocks from growing, and keep them in a state of overexploitation.

"The EU has lost another opportunity to firmly commit to stock recovery and the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources. Once again environmental concerns were eclipsed by political and economic interests," stated Ricardo Aguilar, Research Director for Oceana in Europe. "Science-based decisions are the only ones that can guarantee sustainable fisheries".

The principle of relative stability, the basis for allocating fishing rights under the Common Fisheries Policy, imposes that most catch reductions be limited to a maximum of 15% in order to maintain fishing activities in regions particularly dependent upon them. This principle unfortunately compels decision makers to go against scientific recommendations and adopt fishing opportunities that actually harm stock conservation. In fact the Fisheries Council decision ignores approximately 35% of the scientific recommendations made by ICES on fishing opportunities in the region for 2011.

Last night, the Council approved the maximum 15% reduction of catches for horse mackerel in the North Sea, plaice in the Celtic Sea or Norway lobster in the Bay Biscay among others when scientists had recommended a greater reduction. The Council also ignored the advice, based on the precautionary approach, to close the fisheries for several species, including cod and sole in the Irish Sea Atlantic, herring in the northeast of the British Isles, haddock off the west of Scotland or Norway lobster in the Iberian Peninsula. In addition, the Council approved an increase of catches which disregards scientific recommendations as: sole in the Western English Channel, hake in the Iberian Peninsula and Azores waters, herring in the Irish sea, whiting in the North Sea and Norwegian Sea, and plaice in Eastern English Channel, among others.

The overexploitation of EU fisheries resources continues year after year, because the Council, Commission and Member States consistently favour unsustainable fishing opportunities. When you take into account that TACs are not even always respected, the real catches are in fact significantly higher than the agreed amounts.

Time is running out to comply with the commitments taken by the European Union to rebuild exploited stocks to maximum sustainable yield levels by 2015. Many species are not subjected to any real management measures that would allow this objective to be met. Currently, only 11 stocks in the northeast Atlantic are not being overfished, while 22 are outside safe biological limits; 14 stocks should be closed based on scientific advice, and all others are overexploited or their status is unknown.

According to Javier López, marine scientist at Oceana, *“If the EU had gambled in favour of sustainable management over the past decade, we would now be seeing larger catches and greater biomass. Instead, the current fisheries management measures are moving Europe away from its own commitments and towards a bleak future for fisheries resources.”*

[Oceana recommendations on the 2011 European Commission proposal](#)

Photos of fisheries and species available upon request

Marta Madina, Communications Director

Plaza España-Leganitos 47. 28013 Madrid, Spain

Ph.: + 34 911 440 880 **Mobile:** +34 687 598 531 **E-mail:** mmadina@oceana.org

Oceana campaigns to protect and restore the world's oceans. Our team of marine scientists, economists, lawyers and other collaborators are achieving specific changes in the legislation to reduce pollution and prevent the irreversible collapse of fish stocks, protect marine mammals and other forms of marine life. With a global perspective and devoted to conservation, Oceana has offices in Europe, North America, South America and Central America. Over 400,000 collaborators and cyber activists in 150 countries have already joined Oceana. For more information, visit www.oceana.org