



An Roinn
**Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of
**Agriculture,
Food and the Marine**

Emiel Brouckaert
Chairperson
North Western Waters Advisory Council
C/O Bord Iascaigh Mhara
Crofton Road
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin

10th January 2018

Dear Mr. Brouckaert,

I am writing to you on behalf of the North Western Waters Member States Group, which Ireland is chairing for the first half of 2018.

There are now less than twelve months remaining until the landing obligation will apply to all quota species, and there are still a number of serious challenges remaining. Practical solutions need to be found in order to address the possible residual choke situations identified by the Choke Mitigation Tool, to ensure that certain fisheries are not closed prematurely in 2019. In addition, for a new demersal discards plan to be in place for 1st January 2019, a Joint Recommendation must be adopted by the end of May 2018.

In this regard, we request that the NWWAC begin consideration on your recommendations for the upcoming discards plan and possible options for dealing with choke species in particular. The most difficult issues remain to be resolved this year and we are seeking your advice in a number of areas, including:

1. **De minimis:** New specific cases for a de minimis exemption in accordance with the conditions as set out in Article 15.5(c). We are seeking your advice on possible de minimis proposals for species that will be brought under the landing obligation in 2019.
2. **High survivability:** The NWW Group seeks your advice on specific cases for an exemption based on high survivability in accordance with the conditions as set out in Article 15.4(b).

3. **Choke species:** We also seek your advice on possible options for species where even after applying all appropriate measures, residual choke issues still remain.
4. **Technical measures:** We are seeking advice from the NWWAC on possible changes to technical measures which may aid in the implementation of the landing obligation.

We would like to have a first exchange of views on these issues at the Technical meeting scheduled for 31 January (an invitation for which has issued already).

We would like to express our appreciation for your contributions so far to the phasing in of the landing obligation. Close cooperation between the NWWAC, Member States and the Commission has been instrumental in the work done in developing the Choke Mitigation Tool and this must continue during the challenging months ahead.

We look forward to working in close consultation with the NWWAC in the coming months in order to ensure that profitable and sustainable fisheries remain open following the full implementation of the landing obligation in January 2019.

If you have any queries please contact Helena.horan@agriculture.gov.ie .

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Cecil Beamish