



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Director-General

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North Western Waters Advisory Council
Mr. Emiel Brouckaert
Chair of the Executive Committee
BIM, PO Box 12
Crofton Road,
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin
Ireland

Subject: Advice on Celtic Sea Haddock

Your Ref.: Your email of 26 October 2017

Dear Mr. Brouckaert,

I would like to thank the North-Western Waters Advisory Council for the advice on Celtic Sea haddock and take this opportunity not only to react to the specific issue you have raised on haddock, but also to address more generally our co-operation in 2018 on the implementation of the landing obligation.

Let me start by stressing that the Commission greatly appreciates the work which the NWWAC has put into the "choke species" analysis ahead of the implementation of the landing obligation. The work between your AC, the Member States group and the Commission has been very important in identifying "choke situations" as well as possible solutions for them. There are indeed a number of outstanding challenges to implementing the landing obligation. Let me reassure you that we want to work with you further to finding solutions on specific stocks on a case-by-case basis.

You mentioned as specific case Celtic Sea haddock. The current discard rate is indeed high and the STECF data you cite is similar to the ICES advice, which also demonstrates a high discard rate for 2016.

However, we should also look at the advice over a longer period of time: in the ICES advice, the variations in discards, landings, recruitment and stock size since the 1990's reflect the cyclical pattern of haddock. Any choke mitigation measures we consider must thus take into account these large fluctuations, including the level of juvenile fish in the discards.

As to your request for additional incentives to improve discards data, I understand from your email that the industry is hesitant to improve discard data collection unless extra quota is given in advance. You will remember that haddock in the Celtic Sea has been

included in the scheme for fully documented fisheries, which allocated to the Member States participating in this scheme 5 % additional haddock quota. According to our understanding, the scheme did not achieve its objectives of incentivising better data collection, including accurate discard data. In general, the Commission considers that the industry should understand the importance of the discard data in setting the TAC. Therefore, the industry should take the lead in providing accurate data, without making this conditional upon additional incentives.

Let me also inform you that the Commission proposal for the 2018 fishing opportunities suggested improvements in selectivity for this particular fishery. However, some Member States were concerned by the impact of the proposed measures on profitability. It was hence agreed that in 2018 the Member States would come up with appropriate joint recommendations on improving selectivity in the Celtic Sea.

On a more general note concerning the work of the NWWAC, I would like to repeat the request my collaborators made at the meeting with the North Sea Advisory Council on 1 February in Brussels, which you also attended. It would be important for my services to receive an updated list of possible concrete choke cases for the NWW in 2018, a proposal from the stakeholders in the NWWAC as to how such choke situations can be avoided for 2019 and a list of the technical measures for improved selectivity that were already undertaken by the stakeholders for these particular choke cases. This would greatly facilitate our common work to find solutions. I would like to reassure you that we are aware of the worries of stakeholders as to the final stage of implementing the landing obligation. Let me hence recall what the Commission said throughout the process of negotiating the reformed CFP: we understand that the landing obligation represents a big change as to how we have managed fisheries in Europe so far and we want to reassure all stakeholders that we intend to be with them during its implementation. This means that we work together to address the choke situations you identify so that we can make the landing obligation work for us all.

I look forward to working with you further on this in 2018 and thank you again for the important work you and the NWWAC have undertaken in 2017. I invite you to take contact with Ms Pascale Colson, as coordinator of the ACs (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu; +32 2 29 56273) should you have any question on this reply.

Yours sincerely,

João AGUIAR MACHADO

