



Mr Bernhard Friess
Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
European Commission
1049 Brussel
Belgium

Dublin, 9 April 2020

Dear Mr Friess,

Subject: Request for clarification on current terms of the closed area for conservation of cod in the Irish Sea

The Irish Sea cod closure was introduced as an emergency measure to protect spawning cod and has been in place now for twenty years.

Following a recent discussion within the NWWAC Working Group Irish Sea, members expressed their uncertainty concerning the interpretation of the measures for regulating the closure for spawning cod in the Irish Sea as set out in the new Technical Measures Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 Annex VI part C 3.

We note that the rules and closure periods are largely similar to the previous regulations. However, the new regulation includes a provision for the establishment of potential derogations should an STECF assessment positively prove that use of a specific gear supports avoidance of catches of spawning cod. The NWWAC is unaware of any such STECF gear assessment to date, although some of our members report that derogations are in place in the area. It appears that in some places the interpretation exists that the derogations contained in the previous regulations as well as the selective gears introduced in the NWW Discard Plan (Regulation (EU) 2019/2239) are valid for the Irish Sea cod closure.

For the NWWAC this leads to the conclusion that the basis for the current cod closure and its description in the new technical conservation measures regulation lead to confusion and to a risk to create an unlevel playing field. Taking this into consideration we kindly request the Commission to organise a review of the basis for the decision to install this closure and of the implementation rules.

Yours sincerely,

Emiel Brouckaert
Chairman of the Executive Committee

