



**Fishing Shipowners' Cooperative
of the Port of Vigo, S. Coop. Gallega**



**Cluster of the
Catching and Producing Sector**

Puerto Pesquero, Edificio Ramiro Gordejuela. Apdo. 1078. 36202 Vigo (Spain)
Tel: +34 986433844 / Fax: +34 986439218 / E mail: arvi@arvi.org Website: www.arvi.org

THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL TO BAN TRAWLING IN DEEP WATERS¹

1. INTRODUCTION

The Shipowners' Cooperative ("ARVI") and the member Associations and Producers' Organizations ("CLUPESCA"), without entering into the articles of the Commission's Communication COM (2012)371 final, in relation to the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council "establishing specific conditions to fishing for deep-sea stocks in the North-East Atlantic and provisions for fishing in international waters of the North-East Atlantic, repealing Regulation (EC) No 2347/2002", wishes to underline the lack of scientific and socio-economic arguments in this proposal that lead to the ban on bottom trawling and gillnetting in deep waters.

2. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT

In order to minimize the socio-economic impact of this proposal to ban bottom trawls or bottom-set gillnets, the Commission tells us that they account for approximately 1% of the landings from the North-East Atlantic.

A clue is given in the press release² where the Commission tells us that "some coastal communities" depend, to a greater or lesser extent, on this fishery. But it fails to provide data indicating the number of ships affected, the number of crewmembers affected, the number of fishing companies affected, etc. Nor does it mention the repercussions in the processing and marketing companies that are going to be affected by such a ban.

If we turn to the quotas for deep-seas species³ for this year (2012), we would be talking about some 76,600 tonnes which, on the first sale market, could amount to around 153 million euros. Therefore, **this is going to cause substantial social and economic damage**, causing fishing companies linked to this fishery to no longer be profitable and to some having to close down, just because of the fact that the Commission chooses to ban some fishing methods contrary to the opinion of the Member States, the Regional Advisory Councils, the Scientific Committees of the NAFO and of the NEAFC, and even contrary to the opinion of an NGO alliance (the "Deep-Sea Conservation Coalition").

¹ See COM (2012) 371 end of 19/7/2012

² Press release dated 19/7/2012

³ Deep-sea species are covered by Annex I of the la COM (2012) 371 final

3. SCIENTIFIC OPINION

The Scientific Councils advising the most important organizations on knowledge of deep-sea species, the NAFO and the NEAFC⁴, have recommended, and such recommendations have been adopted, drafting regulatory norms for the deep-sea species fisheries and for the fishing methods that they use, without having included the PROHIBITION OF SUCH METHODS.

Needless to say that, scientifically speaking, there is no room or justification whatsoever for banning fishing methods, quite simply in view of the fact that the scientists always propose their management and regulation.

Furthermore, there are no scientific proposals or responses on the banning of deep-water trawling, nor on any other fishing method, because nobody can maintain that any given fishing method is only harmful and detrimental for certain sea bottoms and not for others, in this case, shallower and less deep waters.

Another aspect of the confusion and uncertainty in the Commission's proposals is the lack or absence of definition of what the waters and the deep-water areas are. All this makes the proposal to do away with or ban these methods, as proposed by the Commission, more inoperative.

Although it is true that there is a lack of scientific knowledge on the exploitation rates of deep-sea species in the EU waters (MSY, Fmax, Flim, etc.), it is also true that THE MAJORITY OF THE SPECIES OR STOCKS THAT ARE CAUGHT IN AREAS OF THE EU WATERS ARE ALSO UNKNOWN, but this has not been a reason for banning fishing methods.

The scientists usually agree on stating that there are no good or bad fishing methods, but rather well or poorly regulated ones. ALL fishing methods have a certain impact on marine ecosystems, so that there is a need for an effective use and regulation of the same through good management and efficient control, but not a ban on the same.

Also, as noted by the Commission, the scientific project "Deepfish Man" is underway, the objective being to develop more advanced exploitation regulations, but not to ban deep-sea fishing methods. So we shall wait for the publication of the conclusions of this project scheduled for completion at the end of this year.

As far as protecting Vulnerable Marine Systems (VMS) is concerned, the latest advancements in waters where the EU fleet operate are widely known, including by the Commission, with the mapping and closure of areas where there are VMSs, with prior impact assessments, etc. Everybody is aware of this effort that both the fishing industry and some of the Member States are making in various fishing areas around the world that are at the leading edge worldwide in the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, following the recommendations of the United Nations. There we have the deep-seas areas and seabeds

⁴ NAFO: Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization. It should be noted that this proposal neither affects the waters nor the deep-sea species regulated by the NAFO. NEAFC: North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

already protected in the NEAFC, NAFO and South-West Atlantic as a result of the surveys and projects known as “ECOVUL”, “NEREIDA” and “ATLANTIS”, conducted in recent years by the Spanish scientific research vessels, the “Miguel Oliver” and the “Vizconde de Eza”.

Clearly, if all this scientific and economic effort has been and is being made, it makes no sense at all to now seek to ban deep-sea waters fishing methods. We could have saved ourselves many millions of euros ... Truth be said, this makes no sense whatsoever.

4. GOVERNANCE

The Commission has chosen to take a political decision, with no scientific report to recommend such a ban, and nor has it taken into account the opinion of:

- The Member States:

In the consultation made with the stakeholders⁵, the Member States did not, at any point in time, call for the banning of deep-water trawl fishing methods. Only the need to find formulas was underlined that do not involve radical changes in the fisheries management.

As far as discards occurring in these fisheries are concerned, a fair part of the same is due to the EU regulations themselves.

- Regional Advisory Councils.

Nor would the RACs that have been consulted support the ban option, which was finally chosen by the Commission and embodied in article 9 of this proposal for Regulation.

- “Deep-Sea Conservation”.

This alliance of NGOs pointed out the need to establish conditions for the use of bottom trawls, but the Commission does not record in its document that they called for a ban on the same.

Therefore, the Commission appears to have overlooked these consultations and proposes five political options for regulating these nets, finally choosing banning for being “a more effective and simpler instrument”. Evidently, banning fishing methods, be they for deep-waters or otherwise, is the simpler and more effective instrument for there to be neither fishing nor EU fishing companies.

⁵ See page 4 COM(2012) 371 end

5. CONCLUSIONS

Without having intended to enter into an analysis of the articles of the Commission's proposed Regulation, this Shipowners' Cooperative, the Associations and Producers' Organizations under this umbrella consider that the Commission's proposal to seek to ban, within a period of two years, bottom trawls and bottom-set gillnets to protect deep-water species and vulnerable marine systems, is totally unacceptable.

The Scientific Committees that advise the institutions, with a more in-depth knowledge of deep-waters, the NAFO and the NEAFC, have not issued any Report to back this ban. Nor have the Member States and nor have the RACs supported this measure when they were consulted.

There are now various Regulations that could be subject to review with a solid scientific basis, that regulate these fishing methods as well as the protection of Vulnerable Marine Systems.

Therefore, we consider that there is no scientific basis or political support for banning deep-sea fishing methods and, for this reason we call on the Parliament and the Council not to second this Proposal.

Vigo, October, 2012