



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

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

Dublin, 08 May 2020

Dear Mr Friess,

Subject: Remedial measures for cod and whiting in the Celtic Sea (Art. 13 Council Regulation (EU) 2020/123)

The COVID-19 crisis continues to present a major challenge to all aspects of life in the European Union and worldwide and has greatly affected the members of the North Western Waters Advisory Council. In this regard, the NWWAC greatly appreciates the measures proposed by the European Commission to alleviate the impact of COVID-19.

The work of the Advisory Council itself has also been impacted by the current health crisis, obstructing members' ability to continue contributing to current advice drafting processes, and in particular regarding the preparation of proposals on remedial measures for Celtic Sea cod and whiting stocks as identified in Article 13 of Council Regulation 2020/123.

The NWWAC industry members' full attention is taken up with efforts to ensure support for their own members, their families and coastal communities overall. The European institutional bodies have agreed on an aid principle including the facilitation of temporary cessation and storage for delayed sales, which can be used until the end of the year. Already, the activity in the relevant area where extra measures are scheduled, has substantially decreased and the fishermen involved intend to use the possibilities created by the revised regulations.

Therefore, the industry members of the NWWAC are asking for a postponement of the implementation of new technical measures. This request is not only based on the anticipated positive impact of the reduced activity on the status of the stocks. It also takes into account that the possibilities to act upon new technical measures are substantially reduced during these times in which suppliers and fishermen are hampered by reduced activities under the current corona-crisis production and market situation.

Members of the NWWAC Other Interest Group express their understanding for the difficulties the fisheries sector is experiencing due to COVID-19. However, E-NGOs highlight that any potential positive short-term impact of a temporary reduction in fishing pressure due to the current crisis is uncertain and not a substitute for effective remedial measures, which are crucial for the recovery of Celtic Sea cod and whiting, and for the continuation of the mixed fishery. Therefore, OIG members do not support delays in the implementation of such measures.



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Some NWWAC members add the comment that a thorough evaluation of the concrete impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, both on the fishing sector and on the fishing pressure and the potential consequences for the stocks in question, is crucial to tailor further steps which affect fisheries and stocks. We are aware that discussions are currently taking place at Member States' level specifically regarding how to address this. However, the Advisory Council has only recently been made aware that Joint Recommendations are being prepared on this topic. As per the description of the current circumstances above, a consensus contribution to this work by the NWWAC within the given time frame is highly unlikely.

Thank you for your support during this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

Emiel Brouckaert, Chairman Executive Committee

CC: Ms. Isabel Artime Garcia – Chair of the NWW MSG



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