



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director

Brussels
MARE.C.5/NG/vr

Dear Mr Brouckaert,

Thank you for your detailed advice on Technical Measures in the Celtic Sea. My apologies that it has taken so long to respond.

I note your observations and concerns regarding the potential impact of climate change on the productivity of this stock. Indeed, cod in the Celtic Sea is at the southernmost boundary of cod distribution in the North East Atlantic. I do also note that fishing mortality on this stock is excessive and very close to F_{lim} , the fishing pressure that leads to serious harm to the stock. While the stock productivity may be influenced by climate change, it is also necessary to lower fishing pressure from these very high levels.

ICES intends to host a second workshop on research needs and a roadmap for further research on cod in the southern shelf seas - including cod in the Celtic Seas. This will take place in Edinburgh on 23 May 2023.

The object of this workshop is to identify issues, which stakeholders and fisheries managers perceive as suffering from further knowledge deficits, and prioritise recommendations for research to improve scientific advice for cod. Given the substantive interest of the NWWAC member on Celtic Sea cod, I would encourage your participation.

The details are here <https://www.ices.dk/community/groups/Pages/WKRRCOD.aspx>.

Specifically on technical measures, as you may be aware, technical measures in the Celtic Sea are still subject to an ongoing discussion with the United Kingdom, and as part of the Written Record between the European Union and the United Kingdom.

We have agreed *‘to continue working together, through the SCF, to develop effective and practical additional coordinated measures, including possible spatial and gear-based technical measures to substantially reduce Celtic Sea cod catches with the aim of supporting the recovery of the stock’*. Consideration should be given to *‘effective new measures in areas with the highest cod catches and abundance in UK and EU waters of the Celtic Sea, to be identified by 1 June 2023 with a view to their implementation as soon as possible in 2024 (subject to each Party’s respective internal processes)’*.

Mr Emiel Brouckaert
Chair of the North Western Waters Advisory Council
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While previous work by STECF had identified a number of “cod hotspots”, the data was incomplete and in particular missing UK data. We have recently launched a data call to rectify this, and we aim to produce higher resolution data to assess the spatial and temporal distributions of cod in the Celtic Sea. This is an essential element and may help refine our current measures noting that the current EU Delegated Act (Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/2588) is due to expire on December 31 2023. Your detailed advice is therefore timely and useful for these forthcoming discussions.

I fully appreciate the challenges relating to cod management in mixed-demersal fisheries and would like to take the opportunity to offer more detailed discussions in the coming months. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Pascale COLSON, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (Pascale.COLSON@ec.europa.eu; +32.2.295.62.73), who will forward them to relevant colleagues.

Yours faithfully,

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