



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE.C5/JB/vr

Subject: Reply to NWWAC advice on management measures for Northern seabass in 2026

Dear Ms Philippe,

I would like to thank the NWWAC for its advice on the management measures for Northern seabass in 2026.

The latest ICES advice informs the discussions in the Council on the EU position in the bilateral consultations with the UK on 2026 fishing opportunities. In this context, the NWWAC's assessment that the seabass stock has recovered above MSY Btrigger and its recommendation to lift the current moratorium are noted.

For commercial fisheries, proposals to maintain the current gear-based management system, with targeted adjustments such as higher catch limits and conversion of unavoidable by-catches into landings, will be carefully considered in light of the scientific evidence, stock status, and socio-economic factors.

For recreational fisheries, the recommendation to maintain current measures is noted, alongside the need to improve data collection. The revised fisheries Control Regulation will establish a harmonised framework for registering recreational fishers and recording catches, improving data quality and supporting scientific management.

Concerns regarding the seabass allocation tool are shared. Unfortunately, the tool was not delivered in time for this year's annual consultations. The EU and UK have requested an update, insisting on an early delivery of the tool. Due to its complexity, ICES expects it to be ready next year, addressing key uncertainties such as uptake and seasonality.

The Commission values the recommendation to develop a multiannual management strategy with the UK to enhance predictability and coherence. Experience from joint work on other species, such as king scallops, may provide useful insights, though any initiative will require close UK dialogue and agreement on scientific and technical parameters.

Ms Philippe
Chair of the North Western Waters Advisory Council,
info@nwwac.ie

Regarding the prohibition for Irish vessels to land seabass, this stems from national legislation and should be addressed directly with the Irish authorities.

The Commission appreciates the Advisory Council's continued engagement in ensuring seabass management remains sustainable and balanced. I thank you again for your constructive cooperation and look forward to continuing our close dialogue to support the sustainable management of seabass.

Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Mr Jurgen Batsleer (Jurgen.Batsleer@ec.europa.eu) or Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA