

Consultation Document

DEVELOPMENT OF MULTI-ANNUAL PLANS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF DEMERSAL FISHERIES IN WESTERN EU WATERS

The sole purpose of this consultation is to collect the views from the wide public to help the Commission develop its thinking in this area and to feedback the impact assessment work that would eventually underpin future proposals.

This document does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission and should not be interpreted as a commitment by the Commission to any official initiative in this area.

Replies preferably by e-mail to MARE-WWMAP@ec.europa.eu

Deadline: 11 September 2015

Context

The reformed common fisheries policy (CFP)¹ foresees the adoption of conservation measures in the context of multi-annual fisheries management plans (hereinafter MAPs) in order to achieve sustainable fisheries by restoring and maintaining fish stocks above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (MSY). MAPs also ensure transparency, predictability and stability for fisheries management.

The new CFP also introduces a landing obligation requiring unwanted catches of species under catch limits to be landed in a phased in manner and at the latest by January 2019.

Besides, the CFP has introduced the possibility to "regionalise" the adoption of management measures for fisheries occurring in a region, so these are conceived by those Member States with an interest in the fisheries concerned and are specifically tailored to the characteristics of those fisheries.

For a number of fisheries multi-annual management plans have already been in place for a few years². These plans are now outdated, because the reformed CFP establishes the need to maintain fish stocks above levels capable of achieving MSY. Furthermore, the current management plans do not include any measures to implement the landing obligation or the regionalisation concept. Finally, the existing plans are quite static and cannot respond to biological changes quickly.

For these reasons, the Commission services are at present considering drafting proposals for the co-legislators (European Council and the European Parliament) on multiannual plans covering demersal³ fisheries in western EU waters⁴ in line with the reformed CFP. An important element of this process is to conduct an impact assessment, which needs to be based, among others, on consultation to stakeholders and to the wide public.

This consultation intends to gather the views of the wide public on the main elements that will be subject to analysis within the impact assessment process. It will be complemented by a more technical consultation addressed to the main stakeholders in the field of fisheries.

The replies to this questionnaire are to be sent to the Commission, preferably by e-mail, before 11 September 2015 to MARE-WWMAP@ec.europa.eu

¹ Regulation (EU) No [1380/2013](#)

² Plans for cod, northern hake, southern hake and Nephrops, sole (Channel and Bay of Biscay) and fishing effort management regime for western waters.

³ Demersal fisheries are those conducted directly over the sea bed, targeting fish that are over the sea bed or very close to it. Both the gears used and the species targeted are different to those of pelagic fisheries, which target fish swimming close to the surface or in mid-water.

⁴ These waters are essentially: the west of Scotland, the Channel, the Celtic Sea and the seas around Ireland, the Bay of Biscay and the Atlantic waters around the Iberian Peninsula. For the purpose of this exercise, fisheries around the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands are excluded.

Questions

1. THE PROBLEM

The overall problem is that, despite recent improvements, most demersal fish stocks in the area are not yet at levels above those capable to produce MSY, and that there are also a few fish stocks clearly depleted. Therefore the fishing industry and the consumers cannot yet enjoy fully the benefits of a fishery in conditions of environmental, economic and social sustainability.

Current fisheries management plans are no longer fit for purpose: they are either out of date (their targets are superseded by new science) or they have proven ineffective (for instance restriction of the fishing effort –days that fishermen can spend at sea- have not yielded results). The current fisheries management plans do not allow the use of any of the tools of the new, reformed EU fisheries policy: regional decision-making, management measures that are adapted to regional circumstances, or flexibility to change management measures to new circumstances.

(1) Do you agree with this perception of the problem?

Fully	Mostly	Partially	Barely	Not at all

Observations (max. 100 words):

(2) What is your perception of the importance of the problem?

Very severe	Severe	Moderate	Appreciable	insignificant

Observations (max. 100 words):

(3) Do you agree on the need for the EU to take action?

Fully	Mostly	Partially	Barely	Not at all

Observations (max. 100 words):

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2. MULTIANNUAL PLANS AS MANAGEMENT INSTRUMENT

Fishery management decisions can be taken just in a reactive fashion, responding to fluctuations in stock sizes produced by fishing activities, environmental variations, natural or anthropogenic catastrophes or market disruptions (such as the recent Russian import ban on certain fish products from the EU).

These decisions can also be taken in a proactive manner, establishing multi-annual plans. These would determine in advance the type of measures that are to be taken in each circumstance, what are the ultimate and intermediate objectives and would ensure the transparency and predictability of the management measures, that can then be defined at the regional level and in response to specific circumstances.

(4) Would you prefer a multi-annual, proactive approach rather than an annual, reactive one?

(5)	Fully	Mostly	Partially	Barely	Not at all

Observations (max. 100 words):

The ultimate aim of this multiannual approach would be to address the main problem as described above, with the following specific objectives:

- To provide a transparent and stable framework to achieve MSY, avoiding stock decline and taking into account the interactions between fish stocks and the diverse fishing modalities and the economic and social consequences of management measures.
- To provide a legal framework for the long-term implementation of the landing obligation and the regional approach to fisheries management

(6) Would you agree with these objectives?

(7)	Fully	Mostly	Partially	Barely	Not at all

Observations (max. 100 words):

3. SPECIES COVERED

A number of fisheries have not so far been included in multi-annual management plans. However, many fish species are being caught together in mixed fisheries. Managing them in isolation from other species in the same fishery is not appropriate. Some of those species, such as sea bass, have been over-exploited as a consequence.

(8) Do you agree it is appropriate to establish a framework for managing the main species coherently within a multi-annual management plan?

Fully	Mostly	Partially	Barely	Not at all

Observations (max. 100 words):

(9) Which fish species should be included in such a management plan as a matter of priority?

Please give a list of species in priority order

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4. GENERAL QUESTION

(10) Please include below any other comments you may have on this initiative

Observations (max. 200 words):

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Many thanks for your cooperation