

Roadmap to enhance evidence of discard survival of skates and rays and increase selectivity and survival of skates and rays

Date: 30 October 2018

Summary

The regional groups for the North Sea and Northwestern waters have submitted a joint recommendation on 31st of May requesting a high survival exemption for skates and rays from the landing obligation.

This request was analysed by STECF and the Commission and was generally accepted. For cuckoo ray the exemption was limited to one year (until 31 December 2019), for other species the exemption is for three years.

As part of the exemption the European Commission has requested a roadmap which includes concrete steps that the regional groups will take to:

- 1) enhance knowledge and data on the state of skate & ray stocks and
- 2) ensure a programme of measures will be drafted that includes measures that fishing fleets, that make use of the exemption, will take to implement best practices such as selectivity improvements and higher survival of skate & ray discards.
- 3) report on progress and advancement of selectivity and survival will be done by (chairs of the) regional groups.

The roadmap thus consists of 3 main areas of work:

- 1) Advancement of data and knowledge of discard survival for different ray & skate species, metiers and areas by member states in cooperation with scientific institutes or other experts.
- 2) Coordination to draft a programme of measures to minimize discards and improve survival by the Advisory Councils.
- 3) Coordination of work and following progress by the chair of the regional group, including taking of initiatives to ensure progress and facilitating cooperation and delivering of results.

Steps forward:

- 1) Meetings by member states (and scientists) in autumn of 2018 and spring 2019 at technical level to:
 - a. discuss, agree and commit on a process to fill data gaps;
 - b. Involve scientific institutes or other experts to fill the data gaps and other knowledge gaps.
 - c. Follow up meeting to discuss progress and possible changes.

- 2) Meeting by member states (and/or chair of the regional group) with regional advisory councils to:
 - a. present the conditions of the exemption, the required commitment and input from advisory councils to implement best practices for survival and selectivity at industry level.
 - b. Define a time line for RAC's to present the programme of measures by the industry, by 1 may 2019 at the latest.

- 3) The chair of the regional groups will:
 - a. monitor progress through regular reports in technical and high level meetings on the above points 1) and 2).
 - b. Will ensure reporting to the Commission in May and at the end of each calendar year.

Timeline:

- **31 October 2018:** submit a Roadmap outlining the work ahead, responsibilities and division of work.

- **November:** meeting by member states to discuss and agree on way to fill data gaps.

- **1 May 2019:** RAC submit a programme of measures implementing best practices at fleet level.

- **31 May 2019:** submit new evidence on the discard survival rates of Cuckoo ray for extension of high survival exemption.

- **31 May of each year:** submit to the Commission an updated roadmap including:
 - a) measures to improve selectivity and survivability by Advisory Councils,
 - b) updated state of play regarding data gaps and proposed filling of data gaps.

- **End of year:** annual report on the progress progress and modifications and adjustments made to the survivability programmes