



Dr Cecil Beamish
Assistant Secretary General (Marine)
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
National Seafood Centre
Clonakilty
Co. Cork, Ireland

Dun Laoghaire, 2 February 2023

Dear Dr Beamish,

Subject: NWWAC advice on a joint recommendation on management of the whelk fishery in the Channel (ICES 7d and 7e, EU waters)

In December 2021, the NWWAC issued advice on a general framework for managing the whelk fishery in the Channel (ICES 7d and 7e) to the European Commission and the NWW Member States Group. Following the Commission's response and further dialogue with DG MARE at a meeting of the Focus Group Whelk in December 2022, the NWWAC decided to prepare the present advice to request the NWW Member States Group to work on a joint recommendation on whelk management in European Waters of ICES 7d and 7e.

The whelk fishery in the Channel is currently in full development and the NWWAC firmly believes that the establishment of a management framework is needed to ensure the conservation of a healthy status of the stock. In EU waters, the fishery is carried out mainly by vessels from three French regions, Normandy, Hauts de France and Brittany, exclusively using pots (FPO) all year round. Pots are usually baited with pieces of shellfish or fish. There are around 260 vessels in the Channel fishing for whelk, mostly under 16 meters, both inside and outside 12 miles. This fishery is subject to specific national regulations in each region (licenses, number of traps, spatio-temporal closures, carrying a sorting grid, etc.). In order to be able to decide on an efficient set of measures, the Focus Group had collected information on the fishery through a questionnaire which was completed with information on the fishing activities in Normandy, Hauts de France and Brittany.

The NWWAC is aware that discussions on non-quota stocks, including whelk, are taking place between the EU and the UK in the Specialised Committee on Fisheries. In particular, the two parties have agreed to work on a general framework for multi-year management strategies for non-quota stocks and are first going to study a pilot management strategy for scallop. Other non-quota stocks will follow, but no timeline is available yet. However, this should not prevent working on whelk management in EU waters. Following suggestions by the Commission, the NWWAC suggests including the following recommendations in a joint recommendation by the NWW Member States Group in order to set a management framework for whelk fisheries in European waters of the Channel (ICES 7d and 7e).





- Maximum vessel length of 16 meters, except for larger vessels that have been historically fishing for whelk in the area (reference period to be defined);
- Use of sorting grid with a minimum spacing of 22mm;
- Electronic positioning systems (VMS) installed on all vessels;
- These measures should apply to fishing activities in EU waters only.

The NWWAC believes this set of measures would constitute a good starting point for a better management of the whelk fishery in the Channel, which could be further improved with the introduction of specific technical measures. To aid the work of the NWW Member States Group, the NWWAC has also compiled the following list of relevant studies and projects, supporting these recommendations with solid scientific data:

- The MECANOR² project, a study on Eastern Channel whelk. A report will be published in early February 2023.
- [BESTCLIM](#) and [BULOCLIM](#), both focusing on whelk in 7e.

We thank you for your attention to this matter that is considered urgent by the NWWAC members having an interest in the Channel. We appreciate the continued collaboration with the NWW Member States Group which is crucial for our work and look forward to your confirmation of expeditious address of this advice.

Yours sincerely,

Emiel Brouckaert
NWWAC Chairman

