

Fisheries: Commission proposes measures to conserve stocks of deep-sea species in the North-East Atlantic

“Our proposal invites Member States to apply a precautionary approach to reverse the worrying situation of declining deep-sea fish stocks”, said Commissioner Karmenu Vella, responsible for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. “It is in our shared interest to ensure that we have healthy fish stocks in deep-sea waters, for the sake of our fishermen and coastal communities, their livelihoods and for our marine ecosystems. Evidence also shows that sustainable fish stocks go hand in hand with a thriving industry.”

The majority of deep-sea species are highly vulnerable and take a long time to mature. The Commission’s proposal is based on precautionary scientific advice from the [International Council for the Exploration of the Seas \(ICES\)](#), and takes into account the obligation for fishermen to bring to land all catches as of 1st January 2019. The proposal reduces the catch limits in seven fish management areas compared to 2017-2018 levels, including for alfonosinos and black scabbardfish. Fishing for orange roughy will remain prohibited.

At the same time, positive scientific advice concerning red seabream around the Azores and roundnose grenadier in South Western waters, has allowed the Commission to propose increased quotas for these species over the next two years.

The Commission also proposes to cancel the TAC management system for three species (greater forkbeard in the North-East Atlantic, roundnose grenadier in the North Sea and black scabbardfish in the North Sea and Skagerrak), as they are fished in small quantity which does not prevent them from reproducing.

The scientific advice for deep-sea sharks was delivered on 5 October and is currently being analysed. The Commission will complete the current proposal in view of its adoption by EU Member States in the Council, currently scheduled for 19-20 November.

Background

Deep-sea fisheries account for less than 1% of all fish caught in the North-East Atlantic. Over the years, fishing activity and associated jobs have been declining together with deep-sea stocks. At the same time, data on the structure of the stocks, age classes or frequency of young fish recruitment are often difficult to gather because of the deep-sea marine environment. Scientific advice recommends applying the precautionary approach to these stocks. The goal is to improve the state of stocks and allow for fishing at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), the level that allows the fishing industry to take the highest amount of fish from the sea while keeping fish stocks healthy.

Fishing for deep-sea species has been regulated by the European Union since 2003.

For further information

[Map of fishing areas](#)

[Total Allowable Catches](#)

Annex: TACs proposal for each deep-sea species

Species	Area	Council Regulation (EU) 2016/2285 12/12/2016		Commission Proposal XXX (2018) 09/10/2018			TAC change (%) 2019-2020 <i>proposed</i>
		TAC in 2017 (tonnes)	TAC in 2018 (tonnes)	TAC 2019 Proposal	TAC change (%) 2018-2019 <i>proposed</i>	TAC 2020 Proposal	
Deep-Sea sharks	EU and international waters of 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9	10	10	pm *		pm *	
	EU and international waters of 10	10	10	pm *		pm *	
Deep-sea sharks – <i>Deania hystricosa</i> and <i>Deania profundorum</i>	International waters of 12	0	0	pm *		pm *	
Deep-Sea sharks	Union waters of CECAF 34.1.1, 34.1.2 and 34.2	10	10	pm *		pm *	
Black scabbardfish **	EU and international waters of 5, 6, 7, and 12	2954	2600	2390	- 8%	2390	0%
	EU and international waters of 8, 9 and 10	3330	2997	2832	-6%	2832	0%
Alfonsinos	EU and international waters of CECAF 34.1.2.	2488	2189	Delegation to PT		Delegation to PT	
	EU and international waters of 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 14	280	280	224	-20%	224	0%
Roundnose grenadier **	EU and international waters of 3	278	223	50	-78%	50	0%
	EU and international waters of 5b, 6, 7	3052	3120	2462	-21%	2462	0%
	EU and international waters of 8, 9, 10, 12 and 14	2623	2099	2281	+9%	2281	0%

	EU and international waters of 6, 7 and 8	144	130	104	-20%	83	-20%
Red seabream	EU and international waters of 9	174	165	149	-10%	149	0%
	EU and international waters of 10	517	517	576	+11%	576	0%

* The scientific advice for deep-sea sharks has been delivered on 5 October 2018 and is currently being reviewed.

** TAC management cancellation:

– for black scabbardfish in the North Sea and Skagerrak (ICES subareas of 1,2,3 and 4) due to low quota uptake and no targeted fisheries

– for roundnose grenadier in the North Sea (ICES subareas 1,2 and 4), following ICES advice that this would pose no risk of unsustainable exploitation

– for greater forkbeard (ICES subareas 1-10, 12 and 14), following ICES advice that removing these TACs would pose a low risk of unsustainable exploitation