

# Multiannual management plan for Western Waters: provisional agreement confirmed by the Council

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The management of fisheries in Western waters will soon benefit from a longer term and more consistent set of rules established jointly by all EU institutions.

EU ambassadors meeting in the Committee of Permanent Representatives (**Coreper**) **confirmed today an agreement** reached on 27 November between the Austrian Presidency of the Council and European Parliament representatives on a **multiannual management plan (MAP) for demersal stocks**, including **deep-sea stocks**, and their fisheries in **Western Waters**.

Thanks to the constructive attitude of the three institution, this agreement could be reached only eight months after the Commission published its initial proposal.

I am pleased to confirm that today the Council took another important step towards the full implementation of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy. Thanks to the newly agreed multiannual management for fisheries in Western Waters we not only guarantee sustainability for the management of fisheries, but also a level playing field for all fishermen across EU sea basins.

*Elisabeth Köstinger, Austrian Federal Minister for Sustainability and Tourism and President of the Council*

The Western Waters area is a particularly challenging fishing environment as the most important demersal stocks (i.e. those that live at the bottom of the sea) are caught in **mixed fisheries**. As fishermen are not in the position to target a single species and are not allowed to discard catches due to the **landing obligation**, they may find themselves forced to stop fishing stocks subject to total allowable catches (TACs) because they reached the limit allowed for the most limiting stock (**choke species**).

In order to deal with this problem, the agreed MAP incorporates **all relevant**

**stocks** (demersal and deep-sea stocks) **into a single management plan**, thereby guaranteeing a sustainable approach and granting fishermen and member states more flexibility.

The **key target species**, counting for around 95% of landings, will be managed in line with the **maximum sustainable yield** principle which is one of the cornerstones of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy, and will have to be fixed within a range of Fmsy values – the fishing mortality consistent with achieving maximum sustainable yield. **By-catches** will be managed according to the **precautionary approach**.

The plan also incorporates **safeguard measures** to restore stocks when they fall below safe biological limits.

Concerning **recreational fisheries**, when scientific advice indicates this could have a significant impact on the fishing mortality of a particular stock, the Council will take it into account and may limit recreational fisheries.

While taking into account the specificities of the Western Waters, the agreement follows the principles set out in the **Baltic and North Sea multiannual plans**, thereby ensuring consistency across sea basins and a level-playing field for all fishermen.

## Next steps

Now that the agreement on the Western Waters MAP has been confirmed by EU ambassadors on behalf of the Council, the regulation will be submitted to the European Parliament for a vote at **first reading**, and will subsequently go back to the Council for adoption.

The new rules will apply on the day after their publication on the Official Journal of the European Union (poss. Spring 2019).

## Background

Western Waters comprise the North Western Waters (ICES subareas 5 (excluding 5a and only Union waters of 5b), 6 and 7) and the South Western Waters (ICES subareas 8, 9 and 10 (waters around Azores), and CECAF zones 34.1.1, 34.1.2 and 34.2.0 (waters around Madeira and the Canary Islands)). Seven member states fish in this area with various types of fishing gears, targeting numerous fish and shellfish species.

The new regulation will replace existing single-species multi-annual plans for: (1) herring in west of Scotland, (2) sole in the western Channel, and (3) sole in the Bay of Biscay, as well as the current recovery plans for the northern stock of hake and hake and Norway lobster in the Iberian Peninsula.

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