

North Sea fisheries: Council adopts multiannual management plan

On 18 June 2018 the Council adopted a new **multiannual management plan (MAP) for the North Sea** concerning **demersal fish stocks** – species that live and feed near the bottom of seas.

The new measures will **target key species** covering more than 90% of the landings in the area (ICES divisions 2a, 3a and subarea 4) and being at risk of over-exploitation, as well as **their by-catches**. The North Sea basin is a complex fishing area marked by the presence of **mixed stocks** and the phenomenon of **choke species**, i.e. low volume quota species which, if reached, would lead to vessels having to tie up even if they still had quota for other species.

The new North Sea MAP will ensure that **demersal fish stocks** are **sustainably exploited** according to the principles of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management. Thanks to the new rules, the **best available scientific advice** will be the basis for setting **ranges, within which** total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas **will be set in the future**. Moreover further measures will have to be taken to bring stocks back within safe biological limits where limits are exceeded.

The adoption of a multiannual management plan for fisheries in the North Sea is a fundamental contribution to making the principles of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy a reality. A predictable and science-based approach will help politicians make the right choices for the future competitiveness and sustainability of European fisheries, and will help fishermen have a longer term vision for their businesses.

Rumen Porodzanov, minister of agriculture, food and forestry of the Republic of Bulgaria and president of the Council

Next steps

The North Sea MAP was adopted at a meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, without discussion. It will enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

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