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Multi-annual plan for West of Scotland Herring

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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
Accompanying document to the

**Proposal for a
COUNCIL REGULATION**
**establishing a multi-annual plan for the stock of herring distributed to the West of
Scotland and the fisheries exploiting that stock**

SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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on the proposal establishing a multi-annual plan for the stock of herring distributed to the West of Scotland and the fisheries exploiting that stock

The Impact Assessment concerns a draft proposal that would set long-term management objectives and implementing methods concerning a fishery for herring to the West of Scotland. The scope of the proposal is relatively small, covering about €8 M / year in terms of catch value. Approximately 90 vessels, 1400 at-sea jobs and some 25 000t of fish catch for human consumption would be affected by the proposal, which is intended to deliver stability and sustainability. However, the likely impact is modest because the value of the catches from this stock comprises only a small part (less than 1.7% on average) of similar catching opportunities available to the same fishing fleet.

Scientific and Stakeholder Committees have been consulted.

Despite its modest impact, the proposal is supported by DG FISH as an additional element in bringing decisions setting the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) under a long-term framework that is compatible with international obligations and with the CFP objectives.

The operational elements and options are:

- A rule for setting total allowable catches (TACs) annually, based on scientific advice, and which allows for stability in TACs when the stock is at a high level, but affords greater protection if the stock should fall to smaller sizes. This will be better in delivering sustainability than the current *ad hoc* decision process in Council, which has been shown to set TACs on average around 40% too high.
- A provision to provide more protection to the stock if it falls under the minimum level advised by scientists. DG FISH's preferred option is a closure of the fishery. A progressive reduction or an *ad hoc* "special circumstances" article are options that have also been considered.
- A provision to limit TAC variations when possible. DG FISH considers it feasible to limit TAC variations to less than 15% between years when the stock is at a high level, but the risks attendant on applying this provision at stock sizes under 75 000t would be unacceptable.
- A provision to improve control of catch reports by fishing vessels. The option to rely on control improvements by Member States has been considered, but DG FISH prefers the implementation of area-specific special fishing licences concerning fishing for herring.

Details of consultation processes, options and impacts are provided.