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**Houses of the
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Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine

**Political Contribution - COM (2015) 41: Proposal for a Council Regulation
amending Regulation (EU) 2015/104 as regards certain fishing opportunities
for seabass**

April 2015

An Comhchoiste um Thalmhaíocht, Bia agus Muir

**An Cion Polaitiúil – COM (2015) 41: Togra le haghaidh Rialachán ón
gComhairle lena leasaítear Rialachán (AE) 2015/104 maidir le deiseanna áirithe
iascaireachta le haghaidh doingeán mara**

Aibreán 2015

Political Contribution – COM (2015) 41: Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2015/104 as regards certain fishing opportunities for seabass

The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine (the Committee) has considered COM (2015) 41: Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EU) 2015/104 as regards certain fishing opportunities for seabass under the Common Fisheries Policy. Having analysed the proposal, the Committee wishes to submit a political contribution outlining its views.

Background

The most recent scientific advice for sea bass suggests that the stock is in rapid decline and that fishing mortality levels for this stock are four times higher than the level that would ensure maximum sustainable yield (MSY). Measures are required as a matter of urgency to ensure sustainability of this stock.

Ireland is the only country that has taken an entirely precautionary management approach, in response to a similarly serious risk for the sea bass stock in the early 1990's, by adopting a moratorium on commercial fishing and marketing of sea bass for Irish vessels.

Ireland & Sea bass

Historically, Ireland has had commercial fisheries for sea bass in the waters around Ireland, but because of sustainability and conservation concerns, these fisheries have been prohibited since the early 1990's. The current regime on sea bass in Ireland provides for a complete ban on commercial landings of sea bass and a daily bag limit for anglers of two fish.

The prohibition on commercial fishing of sea bass applies to Irish fishing vessels in all areas, while the vessels of other EU Member States are permitted to fish for sea bass, other than within Ireland's 6 mile coastal zone where a complete preclusion applies. This policy is augmented with catch limits and seasonal closures which apply to recreational fishermen.

The Committee's views on COM (2015) 41

1. Given the poor state of sea bass stock, the Committee recommends that Ireland's national measures should be reflected in EU legislation. Therefore, the Committee recommends that any new measures would include a prohibition on all commercial fishing for sea bass in ICES Areas VIIa,b,c, g, j and k (the waters around Ireland).
2. The Committee recommends that any accidental by-catches in Irish waters of sea bass by any EU vessels should be returned to sea as an EU policy.
3. The Committee welcomes the conservation measures outlined in the proposal to implement a three fish bag limit on sea bass.
4. The Committee notes that Ireland already has a two fish bag limit in place at national level, which it will continue to implement despite the less restrictive three bag limit proposed under the EU proposal.
5. The Committee notes that Ireland has augmented this national policy with catch limits and seasonal closures which apply to recreational fishermen.
6. The Committee highlights that Ireland would have been prepared to support a one fish bag limit and may consider this restriction at national level.
7. The Committee highlights the fact that Ireland has a national policy which completely bans the commercial landings of sea bass.
8. The Committee notes that if catch limits - which would bring sea bass under the landing obligation - are introduced in the waters where the Irish fleet primarily operate, it would oblige Irish vessels to land any catches of sea bass, thus effectively forcing Ireland to reverse its decades old policy of protecting sea bass.

The Joint Committee wishes for its views to be taken into account and looks forward to the response to its observations from the European Commission.



Andrew Doyle T.D.
Chairman
21st April 2015