



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 7.8.2018
C(2018) 5467 final

Dear Chair,

The Commission would like to thank the Houses of the Oireachtas for their Opinion on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual plan for fish stocks in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks {COM(2018) 149 final}.

The fisheries in the Western Waters and adjacent areas are highly complex, involving vessels from at least seven coastal Member States, using a wide variety of different fishing gears to target a wide range of different fish and shellfish species. A key issue is that many of the most important demersal stocks are caught in mixed fisheries. In view of the interactions in Western Waters demersal fisheries, it is hence desirable to manage fishing opportunities in a mixed-fisheries perspective, which, given recent scientific advances, is now available. Such an approach would also be consistent with the ecosystem approach to fisheries management.

As the Houses of the Oireachtas note, the multiannual plan for the Western Waters will have an important impact on the Irish whitefish and Nephrops fisheries, as it will be the framework for ensuring sustainable fisheries, adapted to the landing obligation through regionally fitted solutions, also in the long term.

The Commission has taken note of the Houses of the Oireachtas' concern on seabass, but would like to emphasise that seabass was included in the list of targeted species in order to take into account that in certain regions, other than waters around Ireland, seabass is

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a targeted fishery. The Commission very much supports Ireland's longstanding efforts to protect and ensure a long-term sustainability for seabass.

The Commission also welcomes the Houses of the Oireachtas' support for the ranges of maximum sustainable yield. With the full implementation of the landing obligation in 2019, new mechanisms are needed to ensure that mixed fisheries can be managed in a flexible and sustainable way. The ranges of maximum sustainable yield are based on the best available scientific advice, as the Opinion rightly points out, and are fully in line with the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy. The flexibility provided by these ranges will allow regional stakeholders a more active role in discussions on the fishing opportunities, as the ranges enable setting fishing opportunities more in line with the actual fishing patterns.

Finally, as regards concern expressed on 'choke species', the Commission would like to confirm that it is looking into possible choke situations in detail, and in collaboration with the relevant Member States and stakeholders, to ensure that, together, sustainable solutions are developed for the most serious problems ahead of 2019.

The points made above are based on the initial proposal presented by the Commission, which is currently in the legislative process involving both the European Parliament and the Council.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Houses of the Oireachtas and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,



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Member of the Commission