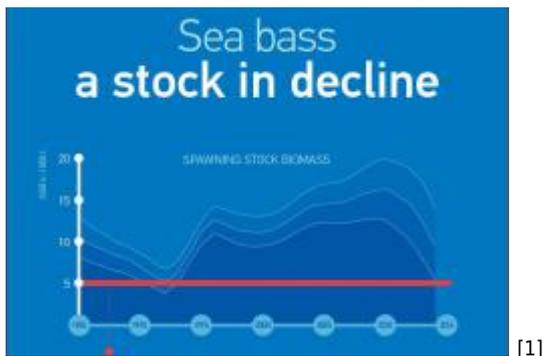


## European Commission acts to protect sea bass stock



26/01/2015

The European Commission has announced measures to avert the collapse of the declining sea bass stock. Immediately effective emergency measures will place a ban on targeting the fish stock by trawling while it is reproducing, during the spawning season, which runs until the end of April. This will be complemented by further measures to ensure that all those who fish sea bass make a balanced and fair contribution to saving the stock.

 [2] The European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella, said: "*The impact of this stock collapsing would be catastrophic for the livelihoods of so many fishermen and coastal communities. This is about saving sea bass and saving jobs in the commercial and recreational fishing sector. I am proud of our quick reaction to what is an immediate danger to the stock*".

The pelagic trawling ban is a critical first step in this package of measures. This ban will protect the stock from being targeted when at its most vulnerable – when the fish is coming together in shoals during the spawning season to reproduce.

The spawning season is already underway and will last until end of April. Pelagic trawling on is a major source of mortality and reduces the spawning stock as it makes up 25% of the impact on the stock. With a reduced spawning stock further actions and any rebuilding of the stock would be endangered. The measure will therefore come into force immediately and last until 30 April 2015. It will apply to the Channel, Celtic Sea, Irish Sea and southern North Sea.

### Commercial and recreational fishing

In order to help the stock of sea bass recover, more action is needed to address the impact of all other commercial and recreational fishing activities.

Therefore the Commission is currently making a renewed and urgent effort in order to help Council and Member States put in place a package of measures to manage commercial and recreational fisheries on seabass more effectively.

For recreational fishing which accounts for 25% of sea bass catches, this would include a limit of three fish per day per angler. Member States would also need to set a minimum size of 42 cm so that fish are not caught, or are released, before they have reproduced.

For other commercial fisheries than pelagic trawling, this would also include limiting catches. The Commission is working with the Member States involved to prepare a proposal to the Council of Ministers as soon as possible.

## **Background**

Sea bass is one of the most valuable fish on which many fishermen, especially small fishing enterprises, depend. Recent scientific analyses have reinforced previous concerns of unsustainable fishing advising urgently a substantial reduction in fishing mortality. We are witnessing a rapid decline of sea bass that risks leading to a collapse if no action is taken. International scientific bodies have called for an 80% reduction in catches to turn the situation around.

Around 100 fishermen depend to a higher degree for part of the year on pelagic trawling of sea bass, while during the rest of year their income is made up also from other fisheries. There are however several hundred small scale fishermen that depend solely on sea bass for their income and for whom finding another source of income is much more difficult. With over 1.3m recreational anglers in France and another 800 000 in the UK, many thousands of jobs also depend on recreational fishing.

Following a lack of agreement between Member States since 2012 on coordinated and effective measures to protect this important stock and another lack of agreement of EU ministers in December's Fisheries Council, on 19 December 2014 the UK made a formal request to the Commission to take emergency measures. The Commission then consulted the Member States involved and analysed the scientific evidence available. On the basis of discussions with all Member States and based on the scientific evidence the Commission has taken its own decision.

The Commission has previously taken such emergency measures to protect vulnerable stocks, most recently with anchovy in the Bay of Biscay.

## **More information**

[Protecting sea bass](#) [2]

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