

Atlantic and North Sea: agreement on 2019 fishing quotas



[1]

19/12/2018

Statement by Commissioner Vella after the Agrifish Council, 19/12/2019

I would like to thank you, Elisabeth and your entire team from the Austrian Presidency for helping to broker a deal on the fishing opportunities for 2019.

After two full days of intense and at times difficult negotiations, I can say that today is a good day for European fishermen and for fish alike.

Today, we have agreed on fishing opportunities for European fishermen worth more than 5 billion euros, and benefitting more than 50 000 fishermen. The catches agreed today will continue to make the European fishing industry highly profitable also in 2019.

We were able to agree on increased quotas compared to last year, fully in line with scientific advice, on a number of very important stocks, such as northern hake, northern haddock, horse mackerel, seabass and some stocks of Norway lobster.

We have also taken important decisions to help implement the ban on the wasteful practice of discards. The landing obligation will enter into force in two weeks time. Today, we have agreed on a number of practical ways to limit possible choke situations. This should give business certainty for our fishermen for next year.

In particular, I would like to praise our Member States for showing solidarity towards each other, where zero or low quotas combined with the landing obligation would have forced a Member State to stop very early or to not even start fishing for certain stocks.

Here, Member States used existing mechanisms to address such situations, but also agreed on a new

tool, based on the Commission's proposal. The system of limited by-catch quotas together with the creation of a common pool based on contributions from a number of Member States will address possible choke situations. The solution agreed includes incentives for fishermen to be more selective and commitments by Member States to take appropriate control measures. I would like to thank all Member States who have invested a lot in preparing this package.

It is, however, also clear that additional efforts will be required to further improve selectivity and to control the landing obligation.

We also took some difficult decisions on stocks which are not in a good shape. In particular, I would like to commend the responsible decision to follow the Commission's proposal and to reduce catches for Herring in the Celtic Sea by 53%, reduce catches for Nephrops in the waters around Ireland by 32% and to reduce catches for sole in the Eastern channel by 26% - all three in line with the MSY advice.

We made further progress on protecting the eel stock, which is still in a critical condition. Following the important decisions taken earlier this year for the Mediterranean, today we created a level playing field across the EU by establishing a consecutive 3 months closure period (to be chosen between August and February) for all fisheries of European eel at all life stages, including glass eel. This closure will apply to all marine waters and to brackish waters. These are crucial measures to ensure the recovery of the stock.

The Council also adopted the Commission's proposal for fishing opportunities on sprat and turbot in the Black Sea for 2019. The turbot multi-annual plan adopted last year by the GFCM was the first ever plan for the Black Sea. I am confident that the situation of turbot will improve and that IUU fishing will be reduced substantially.

Overall, the decisions adopted today allow us to make further progress in ensuring sustainable fisheries in the EU. Our first assessment suggests that 59 stocks, managed by the EU or by the EU and Norway together, and for which MSY advice was available, will be managed at sustainable levels in 2019.

Out of the 57 stocks managed by the EU only, for which MSY advice was available, we have set limits at sustainable levels for 50 stocks. Most importantly, if we look at the expected landings next year, we can say that almost 99% of landings in the Baltic, North Sea and the Atlantic, managed exclusively by the EU, will be fished at sustainable levels.

This, I believe, is an important step forward, in particular in a very challenging year, where the landing obligation fully kicks in. However, it is also clear that we will need to step up our efforts next year to reach the targets we have all agreed to.

Thank you.

Check against delivery

More information:

[Atlantic and North Sea: Council agrees 2019 fishing quotas](#) [2]

[EU fisheries in the North East Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic Sea in line with maximum sustainable yield \(MSY\)](#) [3]

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Links

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/newsroom/20181219-vella_39932_19.jpg

[2] <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/12/19/atlantic-and-north-sea-council-agrees-2019-fishing-quotas/#>

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/mare/document.cfm?doc_id=57835