AGRIFISH Council

Press Conference, 12-13 December 2016

Speaking points

Today we have taken another important step towards sustainable fisheries, towards achieving the core objective of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy.

I am proud to say that our push for healthy fish stocks is starting to pay off.

Following years of disciplined fisheries policy, scientists this year advised increasing catch limits for several stocks in the Atlantic and North Sea.

This is encouraging, and shows that sustainability really does get fishermen the best deal.

Allow me to thank the Slovak Presidency and all those involved in today's agreement for the good cooperation. The result before us is, no doubt, a clear reflection of that.

Some examples of where we can point to success for our policies and bringing benefits for our fishermen:

For Northern hake we have been increasing the Total Allowable Catches for a few years now. Sole in the Bay of Biscay is stable, and we have increased the TAC for sole in the North Sea.

On Maximum Sustainable Yield our policy is one of measured consistency. 'Year on year' steps towards our 2020 targets is the goal.

That is why we must still take the hard decisions where there is real concern. As you know, the Commission has put forward bold proposals for a number of stocks. Even though the final Council compromise does not reach the same level of ambition, it still makes considerable progress towards more sustainable management of our fisheries.

For example, this includes a substantial cut of 38% for the Celtic sea cod and a set of measures for sea bass covering all relevant fleets. Overall, more fish stocks are being fished sustainably.

In 2009, only five stocks had Total Allowable Catches set at MSY. Today's agreement will bring 44 stocks to MSY compared to 36 last year.

This increased sustainability is in the end for the benefit of our fishermen. Our evidence indicates that effective conservation policies and economic profitability go hand in hand. The economic performance of the EU fleet has improved considerably over the last years.

There is simply no better indication that we are on the right path.

So, the faster the transition to MSY, the higher the long-term benefits.

Thanks again to the Slovak Presidency and to participants for another important step towards achieving our 2020 targets and the long term viability of our stocks and our fishermen.