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## Opinion

**Title**                      **Impact Assessment on: Regulation on long-term management of Northern hake stock**

**(draft version of 26 June 2008)**

**Lead DG**                      **DG MARE**

### **1) Impact Assessment Board Opinion**

#### **(A) Context**

The 2002 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy set the basis for management under long-term plans rather than by annual decision-making. In 2006 the Commission made a commitment to reach the objective of the declaration made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg with respect to restoring stocks to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yields by 2015. This political objective was confirmed in a separate Commission Communication later that year.

The Northern Hake recovery plan was adopted in 2004. The recovery plan is to be replaced by a management plan when in two consecutive years the target level for the stock has been reached. The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, with the agreement of the Scientific Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries, concluded that the targets set in the recovery plan have been reached, and therefore a management plan must now be established.

#### **(B) Positive aspects**

The impact assessment is concise and focused, and clearly identifies the regional impacts of the proposed policy.

#### **(C) Main recommendations for improvements**

*The recommendations below are listed in order of descending importance. Some more technical comments have been transmitted directly to the author DG and are expected to be incorporated in the final version of the impact assessment report.*

**General recommendation: The report should describe in more detail the need for**

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**mitigating measures, provide a better assessment of short term impacts alongside long term impacts, and distinguish between objectives and policy measures.**

**(1) Assess the need for mitigating measures.** The report should assess how the expected costs of reducing fishing mortality to maximum sustainable yield which amounts to 1-5% of gross value added compares to the current economic profitability of the fishery enterprises involved, and whether there is a need for mitigating measures. In its written exchange with the Board, DG MARE explained that an emergency package is indeed envisaged, and that the relevant details will be included in the IA report. The IA report should also explain whether decommissioning of ships (option 3) is part of this package, and explain the modalities of this option including who would pay for it.

**(2) Assess short term impacts in more detail.** While the Board appreciates DG MARE's view that fisheries conservation measures by their nature primarily need to be assessed on the basis of long term impacts, the IA report should also discuss in appropriate detail the short term impacts. Of these, especially the negative employment impacts merit a more detailed assessment. The table comparing the options (table D) already makes a distinction between short term and long term impacts, but should be made more specific by quantifying the impacts wherever possible.

**(3) Distinguish objectives from policy measures.** Objectives B (establishing harvest control rules), C (introducing technical measures to protect juvenile hake and reduce discards), and D (reducing overcapacity) are actually policy measures and should be presented as such in the appropriate section of the report. The report should clarify whether they are part of one or more of the options, and if they are complementary measures then their relative contributions should be separately assessed.

**(D) Procedure and presentation**

The report could explain more clearly certain concepts such as the relationship between total allowable catches and fishing mortality. It should avoid technical acronyms as far as possible.

Considering the cross-cutting nature of this initiative it would have been appropriate to establish an Inter-Service Steering Group to support the preparation of the IA.

**2) IAB scrutiny process**

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Author DG	MARE-C-2
External expertise used	No
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