



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 6 July 2017
(OR. en)

10742/17

PECHE 273

COVER NOTE

From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director
date of receipt:	6 July 2017
To:	Mr Jeppe TRANHOLM-MIKKELSEN, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union
No. Cion doc.:	COM(2017) 368 final
Subject:	COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION on the State of Play of the Common Fisheries Policy and Consultation on the Fishing Opportunities for 2018

Delegations will find attached document COM(2017) 368 final.

Encl.: COM(2017) 368 final



Brussels, 5.7.2017
COM(2017) 368 final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

on the State of Play of the Common Fisheries Policy and Consultation on the Fishing Opportunities for 2018

{SWD(2017) 256 final}

1. INTRODUCTION

This Communication gives an overview of the state of play of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). It reports on progress in achieving sustainable fisheries, and especially in ensuring that the exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield, which will also contribute to achieving good environmental status in European seas by 2020¹. It looks at changes in the state of stocks, the state of the EU fleet, the phasing-in of the landing obligation and progress with decentralisation². It also sets out the principles underpinning the Commission proposals for fishing opportunities for 2018. Member States, Advisory Councils (ACs), other stakeholders and the public are invited to provide suggestions on these policy directions.

2. PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

Over the past few years there has been significant progress in implementing the 2013 CFP reform:

- **Meeting the MSY objective.** According to the latest assessment from the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF), based on 2015 data³, 39 of 66 stocks assessed in the North-East Atlantic were exploited within F_{MSY} (equating to 59 %, up from 52 % in the previous year). Median fishing mortality has now stabilised at around 1.0. In 2017, the number of total allowable catches (TACs) set in line with MSY advice increased to 44, representing 61 % of all catches in the North-East Atlantic.
- **Rebuilding stocks.** Average stock biomass in the North-East Atlantic increased by 35 % between 2003 and 2015.
- **Improving overall economic performance.** The EU fleet registered record net profits of EUR 770 million in 2014, a 50 % increase over the 2013 figure of EUR 500 million.
- **Better balancing fishing capacity and fishing opportunities.** In recent years, the balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities across the entire EU fleet has improved. Between 2007 and 2015 the EU fishing fleet's capacity fell gradually, with the number of fishing vessels decreasing by 6 %, engine power by 14 % and tonnage by 24 %.
- **Shaping multiannual plans in line with the reformed CFP.** After the adoption of the Baltic plan last year, the Commission proposed multiannual plans for demersal fish stocks in the North Sea⁴ and for small pelagics in the Adriatic⁵.

¹ Directive 2008/56/EC, OJ L 164, 25/06/2008, p. 19.

² The annual Commission reports on the implementation of the landing obligation and on the balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities, required under Articles 15(14) and 22(4) respectively of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of 11 December 2013 (OJ L 354 of 28.12.2013) are included in the Staff Working Document accompanying this Communication.

2017-04_STECF 17-04: *Monitoring the performance of the Common Fisheries Policy*, Ispra, Italy, 27-31 March 2017.

⁴ COM/2016/0493 final - 2016/0238 (COD).

⁵ COM/2017/097 final - 2017/043 (COD).

- **Decentralising governance.** CFP governance has clearly shifted to a more decentralised governance, including multiannual plans and delegated acts adopted through regionalisation.
- **Commitments for the Mediterranean and Black Sea.** Important political agreements to achieve environmental, economic and social sustainability have been reached – in the Mediterranean Sea through the Medfish4Ever Ministerial declaration⁶, and in the Black Sea through the Bucharest Declaration⁷.

Despite this progress, further efforts are needed in particular to bring down the high levels of overfishing in the Mediterranean, to reduce the number of individual stocks exploited above F_{MSY} in the North-East Atlantic and to implement the landing obligation.

2.1. Progress in achieving F_{MSY}

Progress towards fishing stocks at levels consistent with F_{MSY} ⁸ has continued. In all TAC regions the rate of fishing above F_{MSY} has decreased considerably. Fishing compared to F_{MSY} was at 99 % in 2015 (down from 158 % in 2003 and 129 % in 2008). Overall, overexploitation has declined drastically across all areas (with the exception of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea).

A more detailed breakdown is given below.

For **stocks subject to coastal States consultations**, in 2016 the TAC for mackerel increased by 14 %. The fishing opportunities of just over 1 million tonnes for all fishing parties resulted from the application of the long-term management strategy agreed among the parties (the EU, Norway and the Faroe Islands). Benchmarking will take place this year. The blue whiting TAC was set in line with F_{MSY} and rose sharply to 1.3 million tonnes. A new strategy for blue whiting in line with F_{MSY} was agreed among the coastal States concerned. For Atlanto-Scandian herring all parties agreed to an overall catch limit below F_{MSY} (in line with the strategy in place since 1999). This allowed the North-East Atlantic TAC to increase significantly, to almost 650 000 tonnes.

The **Baltic Sea** TACs for 2017 have followed the multiannual plan⁹. The herring and plaice TACs are in line with F_{MSY} ; the TACs for sprat and salmon are below F_{MSY} . Western cod is giving cause for serious concern and so the TAC was reduced by 56 % for 2017. Other flanking measures have been taken to help rebuild this stock. TAC reductions have been adopted for eastern cod (25 %) and for Gulf of Finland salmon (20 %) under the precautionary approach, and Gulf of Riga herring (11 %). The main basin salmon TAC follows MSY and remains unchanged in the last years; together with reducing unreported catches and national river-specific measures, this has helped boost the number of returning spawners.

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/2017-03-30-declaration-malta.pdf>

⁷ The GFCM organised a high-level meeting on fisheries governance in the Black Sea in October 2016. The conference adopted the Bucharest Declaration, which underlines the need for common and collaborative approaches among riparian States to address Black Sea fisheries issues.

⁸ 2017-04_STECF 17-04.

⁹ Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007, OJ L 191, 15.7.2016, p. 1.

North Sea stocks are continuing to improve, with 59 % of landings coming from sustainably managed stocks. In line with F_{MSY} , the TAC for sole has increased by 21 %; for Nephrops the TAC has risen by 46 %. Saithe is fished at levels below F_{MSY} ; its TAC is 53 % higher. In line with F_{MSY} advice, the haddock TAC has been reduced by 45 %. However, the stock is expected to increase, thanks to better recruitment in the past few years. Both cod and whiting continue to be fished at levels slightly above F_{MSY} , but are at levels consistent with $MSY B_{TRIGGER}$. Plaice and sole are fished at levels below F_{MSY} .

In **North-Western Waters** the Northern hake stock continues to grow and the TAC has increased by 10 % in line with F_{MSY} . This stock now stretches further into the North Sea. Celtic Sea and Irish Sea herrings are within safe biological limits but have undergone TAC cuts of 6 % and 10 % respectively, reflecting stock trends. The TAC for Nephrops in area VII has increased by 9 %, with a peak increase of 68 % for the Porcupine Bank. The TAC for sole in the Eastern Channel has fallen by 16 % in line with the STECF-approved industry management approach; additional conservation measures have been set for this fishery. The TAC for western horse mackerel has fallen by 23 %.

In the West of Scotland 63 % of landings come from sustainably managed stocks. In the Irish Sea the figure is 55 %. Significant challenges remain in the latter, as both cod and whiting stocks are severely depleted. Fishing mortality for cod is well above F_{MSY} . Whiting is now fished at levels well below F_{MSY} , but as yet shows no sign of recovery.

The Celtic Sea has 37 % of landings within sustainable limits. The mixed fishery for cod, haddock and whiting remains a challenge when setting fishing opportunities. The TACs for whiting and haddock have risen by 21 % and 7 % respectively, alongside a 38 % reduction for cod. Whiting is exploited at levels below F_{MSY} and haddock is exploited above F_{MSY} , although the stock is above $MSY B_{TRIGGER}$. The Celtic Sea cod stock is depleted and fished above F_{MSY} . The difficulty here is that cod are caught across a range of mixed fisheries, where more selectivity for cod will also result in fewer catches of other target species.

In the **Iberian Sea and the Bay of Biscay**, 68 % of total landings come from sustainably managed stocks. The TAC for anglerfish has increased by 54% in line with F_{MSY} advice. For some years now sole in the Bay of Biscay has been subject to an industry management approach, which the STECF has deemed sustainable. Thanks to this industry initiative, this TAC remains unchanged for 2017. For megrim (Bay of Biscay and Western Waters), on which the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) has provided F_{MSY} advice for the first time, the TAC has been reduced by a quarter. The southern hake TAC has fallen slightly, but the stock is still fished above F_{MSY} . Anchovy in the Bay of Biscay is fished sustainably, and horse mackerel in area IX is within safe biological limits; its TAC has risen by 7 %.

Fishing opportunities for **deep-sea stocks** make up less than 1 % of all landings in the EU. They are fixed under a two-year cycle and TACs have been set for 2017 and 2018. The TACs for roundnose grenadier in North-Western Waters have been set in accordance with F_{MSY} . All other stocks are data- or assessment-limited. Some still present significant challenges, given their low productivity.

In the **Mediterranean and Black Sea**, moving towards F_{MSY} remains a challenge, for a combination of reasons:

- the large number of small-scale fleet vessels, for which methods to control, enforce, monitor and report catches (landings and discards) are insufficient;

- the multispecies nature of the fisheries;
- the sharing of fish stocks between Member States and non-Member States, making compliance with CFP objectives more challenging; and
- the fact that the number of fish stocks assessed yearly (about 35) is assumed to be very low.

In the Mediterranean, overfishing is broadly between two and three times F_{MSY} ¹⁰ overall. Despite recent improvements, the status of many stocks remains unknown. For stocks such as hake, red mullet¹¹, black-bellied anglerfish and blue whiting, current fishing mortality rates have been up to six times higher than F_{MSY} . The Commission is working on improved data collection for all relevant stocks, and has asked the STECF for advice on new stocks¹².

In a small number of Mediterranean fisheries stocks are being exploited at rates consistent with achieving F_{MSY} and fleets are making progress, particularly in landings (deep-sea pink shrimp and red mullet in the south and central Tyrrhenian Sea).

Against this background, complying with the CFP objective of achieving F_{MSY} for all stocks by 2020 will require more sustained efforts. This implies working with the EU's international partners through the GFCM, stepping up efforts to update national management plans in line with CFP objectives, and reflecting a sufficient level of ambition in the next generation of multiannual management plans. More work is also needed:

- to further cooperation within sea basins – for example in the Gulf of Lion;
- to adopt ambitious transitional conservation measures in heavily overexploited fisheries;
- to build on and implement the objectives and targets agreed in the March 2017 Malta MedFish4Ever Ministerial Declaration on data collection, scientific evaluation, ecosystem-based fisheries management, the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, sustainable small-scale fishing and coordination in the Mediterranean;
- in the Black Sea, where the October 2016 Bucharest Declaration should be used to tackle serious problems, including IUU fishing.

Within the framework of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)¹³, a TAC for bluefin tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean was adopted for 2017. The TAC reflected the best available scientific information, based on a revision of the stock advice from 2014. High biomass levels – possibly the highest ever – made it possible to increase the TAC by 25 % compared to 2016.

In November 2016, ICCAT also agreed a Recommendation establishing a multiannual recovery plan for swordfish from 2017, with the goal of achieving B_{MSY} in 2031 with at least 60 % probability. The plan has set a TAC of 10 500 tonnes for 2017. This is a

¹⁰ For details see the Staff Working Document.

¹¹ With the exception of red mullet in the south and central Tyrrhenian Sea.

¹² (STECF) – Mediterranean assessments 2016-part 2 (STECF-17-06).

¹³ ICCAT Recommendation 14-04, amending Recommendation 13-07 to establish a multiannual recovery plan for bluefin tuna in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, transposed into EU legislation as Regulation (EU) 2016/1627 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2016 on a multiannual recovery plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 302/2009, OJ L 252 of 16.09.2016, p. 1.

significant development, as swordfish is one of the most overfished stocks in the Mediterranean.

On turbot fisheries in the Black Sea, as of 2018, GFCM contracting and cooperating non-contracting parties have committed not to exceed the level of fishing opportunities allocated in 2013-2015¹⁴. Countries not applying a quota system will not exceed the level of catches or the level of fishing effort deployed in 2013-2015.

2.2. Biomass trends

Both ICES and the STECF provide information on spawning stock biomass trends for the North-East Atlantic and STECF also for the Mediterranean. The analysis shows that average biomass in the North-East Atlantic was 35 % higher in 2015 than in 2003. A less pronounced upward trend is apparent for data-poor stocks. By contrast, in the Mediterranean Sea average biomass declined by 20 % from 2003 until 2014.

The percentage of stocks within safe biological limits is also increasing in the North-East Atlantic. In 2015, 68 % of stocks were classified as being within safe biological limits. This is almost double the figure of just 35 % in 2003.

2.3. Economic performance of the EU fleet

The latest Annual Economic Report produced by the STECF confirms that the EU fleet's economic performance has improved significantly in recent years. Preliminary data for 2015 point to a continued upturn and the economic forecasts for 2016 and 2017 remain upbeat. The EU fleet's gross value added, i.e. the fish-catching sector's contribution to the economy through wages and gross profit, amounted to EUR 3.7 billion in 2014. This is a substantial increase on previous years. Average salaries in the EU fleet have also risen in recent years, while overall employment continues to decline.

Overall, it appears that the performance upturn is the result of a) increased revenue and b) reduced or stable fishing costs. Costs have been driven by relatively low fuel prices, and by a downward trend in fuel consumption and fuel use intensity, because many EU fleets now operate more efficiently. Despite this overall economic progress, performance varies considerably between regions, Member States and fisheries. The North Sea and North-East Atlantic fleets tend to perform better than those in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Recent studies and scientific publications¹⁵ suggest that the EU fleet could substantially improve its economic performance if the biomass of all exploited stocks recovered to MSY levels. They also suggest¹⁶ that the sooner fishing mortality rates are reduced to F_{MSY} , the sooner the EU fleet will see its profits rise.

¹⁴ Recommendation GFCM/40/2016/6 on scientific monitoring, management and control of turbot fisheries in the Black Sea (GSA 29).

¹⁵ The Sunken Billions Revisited: Progress and Challenges in Global Marine Fisheries, World Bank; Sustainability now or later? Estimating the benefits of pathways to maximum sustainable yield for EU Northeast Atlantic fisheries, Marine Policy 72 (2016), pp. 40-47.

¹⁶ In these simulations key external factors such as environmental fluctuations or economic factors such as fuel are held constant.

2.4. Decentralisation

The new CFP promotes decentralisation for fisheries management, consisting in regional multiannual plans and delegated acts shaped through regionalisation.

2.4.1. Multiannual plans

Multiannual plans are one of the main instruments to achieve the objectives of the new CFP. They shall include the target of fishing at maximum sustainable yield and a deadline for achieving this target; measures for the implementation of the landing obligation and safeguards for remedial action where needed, among others.

An important step to this direction was the adoption of a multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea in 2016. Legislative work is under way on multiannual plans for demersal species in the North Sea and pelagic species in the Adriatic.

On 3 August 2016 the Commission proposed a multiannual plan for demersal fish stocks in the North Sea. The proposal aims to ensure that stocks are fished at sustainable levels and follows the same basic principles as the Baltic Sea plan.

In February 2017 the Commission also adopted a proposal for a multiannual plan for the management of small pelagic stocks in the Adriatic. The Adriatic stocks of anchovy and sardine have been continuously assessed as overexploited and their biomass levels are estimated to be at historic lows. According to the latest scientific advice, there is a high risk that anchovy and sardine will collapse if rapid action is not taken¹⁷. The proposed plan sets target fishing mortality rates for both stocks. This represents a shift in the management of small pelagics towards an approach based on fixed fishing opportunities.

2.4.2. Delegated acts under regionalisation

The CFP introduced regionalisation to shape a number of measures adopted through delegated acts, in particular conservation measures needed to comply with obligations under EU environmental legislation and discard plans. Where regionalisation applies, EU countries with a direct management interest may submit joint recommendations for the adoption of Commission delegated acts.

Regionalisation has played an important role in the phasing-in of the landing obligation, where joint recommendations from Member States have fed into 15 discard plans, some of which have accelerated the phasing-in of the landing obligation when compared to the legislative deadlines. These plans contain details of the implementation of the landing obligation, including exemptions, when this is supported by scientific advice.

Joint recommendations on fisheries conservation measures at a regional level in line with Article 11 of the CFP have been less forthcoming, but the Commission has received seven for the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. A key message of the Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration of March 2017 is a commitment to do more to establish marine protected areas in this sea basin as well.

The Advisory Councils (ACs), stakeholders organisations composed of representatives from the industry and from other interest groups at a 60/40 ratio, have played a central

¹⁷ GFCM workshop on management strategy evaluation, February 2017.

role in regionalisation. They are tasked with providing the Commission and Member States with recommendations and information on fisheries management and the socioeconomic and conservation aspects of fisheries and aquaculture. Member States must consult the ACs on the joint recommendations they draft under regionalisation. In all, the number of recommendations between 2013 and 2016 increased by over a third. In addition, three of the new ACs established by the reformed CFP – for the Black Sea, for markets and for aquaculture – are now fully operational, bringing more stakeholders into the EU consultation and decision-making processes.

2.5. The Landing Obligation

Today, all fisheries in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea as well as all fisheries for pelagic and for industrial species in all EU waters, fall under the landing obligation. Looking at the regional situation, in the North Sea, 82 % of all TACs are now under the landing obligation. In North Western Waters, this figure amounts to 86 % and in South Western Waters to 77 %. Looking at the volume of demersal fish under the landing obligation, this amounts to 28% in the North Sea, 46% in North Western Waters and 27% in South Western Waters. Whereas the implementation of the landing obligation has well progressed for North Western Waters demersal fisheries, more concerted effort is needed for North Sea and in South Western Waters demersal fisheries.

In the Mediterranean Sea, where the landing obligation applies to species which are subject to minimum conservation reference sizes, 29 % of the total landings are currently under the landing obligation. On a fisheries basis, this figure amounts to 82 % for small pelagic species and 17 % for demersal species (including molluscs). Most catches from small pelagic fisheries are subject to the landing obligation, whereas further work is needed to better integrate demersal fisheries in the landing obligation by 2019.

In the Black Sea, since 2017, the landing obligation covers all catches of the species subject to TAC, i.e. sprat and turbot.

The Commission must report annually specific information on the implementation of the landing obligation¹⁸. The first report was adopted in 2016¹⁹ and covered the pelagic and Baltic landing obligation in 2015. The second report, in the Staff Working Document accompanying this Communication, provides an update on the implementation of the landing obligation in 2016, when the discard ban was extended to some demersal fisheries in the North Sea and the Atlantic. It is based on information from Member States, ACs and the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA).

Overall, reports from Member States have highlighted a number of challenges requiring concerted efforts from industry and administrations. The Commission will pursue efforts to discuss with Member States and the sector on how to make use of the available tools to mitigate choke effects and to address issues around the marketing of undersized catches. Industry and Member States should also do more to improve data on discards so as to assess the practical impact of the landing obligation, and to put in place the necessary control and enforcement tools.

¹⁸ Article 15(14) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 as amended by Regulation (EU) 2015/812 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015, OJ L 133, 29.5.2015.

¹⁹ COM(2016) 396 final.

3. PROPOSALS FOR 2018 TACS

Fishing opportunities for 2018 will follow the CFP objectives and be based on the best available scientific advice²⁰. Where no scientific advice is available, the Commission will apply the precautionary approach in line with the CFP objectives.

3.1. Stocks with MSY assessment

To achieve the objectives of the CFP, the share of stocks fished at levels corresponding to F_{MSY} must increase. As in previous years, the Commission intends to propose TACs in line with achieving F_{MSY} the next year, i.e. in 2018 in case of the fishing opportunities proposals made this year. This will help bring compliance with the legal obligation in the CFP gradually closer. It will, however, require a commitment by the Council to align its decisions with this approach. For stocks with an F_{MSY} assessment the Commission intends to use the available point values, unless multiannual plans with F_{MSY} ranges have been adopted.

For MSY-assessed stocks shared with non-EU country partners the Commission continues to seek agreement with them, taking the same approach. For stocks managed through Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) the Commission follows the negotiation directives laid down by the Council for RFMOs, following the same standards and principles as for stocks in the EU.

3.2. Stocks under multiannual plans

Regarding the Baltic multiannual plan, the only one adopted since the entry into force of the new CFP, it specifies target fishing mortality ranges consistent with achieving MSY and will underpin the proposals for 2018 TACs in the Baltic. These ranges, provided from scientific advice, cover all fishing mortality rates that result in biomass levels capable of producing MSY in the long term.

Multiannual plans that were adopted before the 2014 CFP entered into force and enable fishing opportunities to be set in accordance with F_{MSY} in 2018 should be applied. For plans which are no longer compatible with this objective, for example because they include a less ambitious objective, the Commission intends to adopt proposals for TACs in line with F_{MSY} for 2018.

3.3. Other stocks

For stocks without full MSY assessment, alternative parameters are considered. TAC proposals will reflect any changes in the available scientific advice, without jeopardising the conservation of the stocks. A number of different cases may arise here.

3.3.1. Stocks with data available to determine MSY proxies

These stocks are assessed with trend forecast models, and ICES delivers quantitative catch advice²¹. The approach will be similar to that for stocks with full MSY assessment.

²⁰ From ICES and, where applicable, from the STECF and the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee.

²¹ Based on a proxy for F_{MSY} .

3.3.2. *Stocks with survey-assessed trends or with catch time series*

In the absence of an F_{MSY} assessment, scientific advice proposes catch limits. The Commission will use the ICES advice on these stocks and will consider the situation on a case-by-case basis, applying the precautionary approach.

3.3.3. *Stocks with a presumption of stability*

In 2013 the Council decided to keep the TACs for 26 stocks unchanged until 2018, unless the biological advice called for adjustments. Generally, these are stocks exploited as by-catches only, with low levels of quota uptake; their economic importance is low and information on their status is limited. The Commission intends to continue with this approach, unless there are ICES indications for review, in which case adjustments will be considered.

3.3.4. *Stocks without biological advice*

In the absence of biological advice, appropriate TAC proposals under the precautionary approach should be applied in line with Article 2(2) of the CFP. The Commission is working closely with ICES to further develop tools to fill existing gaps and enable it to adopt proposals in a more systematic, predefined and transparent way.

3.4. TAC adjustments and the landing obligation

Under the CFP rules, fishing opportunities for stocks subject to the landing obligation should be fixed taking into account catches rather than landings, based on scientific advice. TAC adjustments are part of the overall package of measures to implement the landing obligation. They should not jeopardise the F_{MSY} objective or increase fishing mortality.

The Commission is considering TAC adjustments for stocks subject to the landing obligation as of 2018, as it did for 2017. When no validated or complete discard data are available, the Commission intends to extrapolate data to calculate the TAC adjustments where such methodology proves acceptable, on the basis of STECF advice.

There is no need for adjustments to TACs in 2018 for stocks or catches for which the landing obligation enters into force in 2019. TAC adjustments for stocks jointly managed with international partners (non-EU countries, RFMOs) are subject to consultation with those partners.

After a positive scientific assessment by ICES²², and based on a Commission proposal, the Council decided to scrap the TAC for dab and flounder in the North Sea in early 2017. Many stakeholders welcomed this move, which facilitates the implementation of the landing obligation. With this in mind, the Commission is ready to discuss scrapping other TACs in the future, if there is no risk to the conservation of the stock and ICES agrees to this.

²² ICES, EU request on a combined dab and flounder TAC and potential management measures besides catch limits, 10 March 2017.

4. CONCLUSION

The Commission will continue to pursue full implementation of the CFP and will propose fishing opportunities for 2018 in line with the MSY targets in the CFP. With the first multiannual plan under the CFP now in place, the stage is set for the gradual introduction of this priority management instrument in other EU sea basins, as a means of achieving the main CFP objectives.

The economic performance of many fleets continues to improve and progress towards better alignment of fishing capacity with fishing opportunities has been good. As for the exploitation of the resources, challenges remain in reaching MSY targets, particularly in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The EU must do more in areas where progress is slow. Regional cooperation – in close consultation with all stakeholders concerned, as enshrined in the CFP – will play a key part in making that happen.

SCHEDULE

The planned work schedule is as follows.

When	What
July – September	Public consultation on the Communication
May/June/October	Stock advice from ICES
26 September	Seminar on the state of the stocks with stakeholders Adoption of TAC proposals for the Baltic Sea
October	Council on TACs for the Baltic Sea
November	Adoption of TAC proposals for the Atlantic/North Sea/Black Sea
December	Council on TACs for the Atlantic/North Sea/Black Sea