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Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council

First report on the implementation of the multiannual plans for the North Sea and Western Waters and the fisheries exploiting those stocks and on the delegation of powers conferred to the Commission by these multiannual plans and by the Deep-Sea Access Regulation

{COM(2024) 406 final}

Executive summary

This staff working document provides more details about certain chapters of the report ⁽¹⁾ on the implementation of the multiannual plans for the North Sea ⁽²⁾ (NS MAP) and for the Western Waters ⁽³⁾ (WW MAP), information about the implementation of the MAPs, and the detailed replies given in the stakeholder consultation.

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⁽¹⁾ COM(2024)406

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2018/973 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2018 establishing a multiannual plan for demersal stocks in the North Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, specifying details of the implementation of the landing obligation in the North Sea and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 676/2007 and (EC) No 1342/2008 (OJ L 179, 16.7.2018, p. 1).

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/472 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2019 establishing a multiannual plan for stocks fished in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Regulations (EU) 2016/1139 and (EU) 2018/973, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007 and (EC) No 1300/2008 (OJ L 83, 25.3.2019, p. 1).

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1. TAC setting

This section adds additional elements to Chapter 3 of the report (COM(2024) 406).

DEEP-SEA STOCKS

In December 2020, for the first time since the Western Waters multiannual plan (MAP)⁽⁴⁾ started to apply, the Council took a decision on a number of total allowable catches (TACs) for deep-sea stocks. For red seabream in Iberian waters, which is a target stock under the Western Waters MAP, the Commission proposed a 20% reduction for 2021, in line with the precautionary advice issued by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), to be rolled over in 2022. The Council decided to follow the Commission's proposal. For 2023-2024, the Commission proposed a 4% reduction for red seabream in Iberian waters, in line with ICES precautionary advice, which the Council also decided to follow. However, regarding the Commission's proposal for a 25% reduction for 2021 for black scabbardfish in the Iberian Sea and Azores, in line with ICES precautionary advice, to be rolled over in 2022, the Council decided to reduce the TAC by only 20%. The Commission also proposed a 22% reduction for red seabream in the Azores for 2023, in line with ICES precautionary advice for 2023, to be rolled over in 2024. However, the Council decided against this and instead rolled over the TAC from 2021 to 2022.

STOCKS NOT COVERED BY THE MAPS

Pelagic stocks such as western, northern and southern horse mackerel and anchovy and others are not managed under the MAPs.

2. Modifications of the North Sea MAP

Three aspects of the North Sea MAP were modified in 2019. Firstly, the Western Waters MAP modified the provisions of the North Sea MAP to align it in relation to the review of the minimum conservation reference size to what was agreed for the Western Waters. Secondly, it was specified that the landing obligation does not apply to recreational fishing in the areas it covers. Thirdly, it was modified along the same lines as the Western Waters MAP to clarify

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/472 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2019 establishing a multiannual plan for stocks fished in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Regulations (EU) 2016/1139 and (EU) 2018/973, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007 and (EC) No 1300/2008 (OJ L 83, 25.3.2019, p. 1).

the scope of the respective empowerments and to specify that delegated acts adopted under the empowerments should comply with certain requirements.

3. LANDING OBLIGATION

A key objective of the reformed common fisheries policy (CFP) ⁽⁵⁾ is to implement the landing obligation and gradually eliminate discards by avoiding and reducing unwanted catches. The landing obligation applies to species in the North Sea and Western Waters managed by a TAC and has been in force since January 2019.

On the landing obligation, stakeholders replying to the consultation stated that while there is evidence pointing to a decrease in discards, the landing obligation has not met its objective. The main challenge is still to make the landing obligation workable within the legal framework, while encouraging a change in fishing patterns towards further selectivity. Despite this feedback, since the landing obligation was introduced, actors in the fisheries sector have made a considerable effort to understand and implement this policy and to actively engage with research institutes to develop ways of avoiding and reducing unwanted catches, as well as improving general knowledge on these species (including survivability).

For example, Member States have made a significant effort to provide scientific knowledge on the survivability of fish caught in different gears. Member States are also carrying out multiple research projects to develop gears that are more selective.

Another challenge identified by stakeholders is the level playing field on the TAC deductions when applied to stocks that are shared with non-EU countries.

On a positive note, stakeholders confirm that the landing obligation has stimulated scientific research on the development of more selective gears and fishing patterns. However, for the mixed demersal fisheries, stakeholders believe that there will be a limit to the degree of selectivity.

The Commission considers that the continuing problem of discards is a control and enforcement issue to be addressed within the EU's fisheries control system. The MAPs were not designed to solve this problem.

4. EXERCISE OF THE DELEGATION OF POWERS UNDER THE MAPs

The below list gives an overview of all delegated acts that have been adopted based on the relevant legal bases under the Western Waters and North Sea MAPs.

4.1. Delegated acts adopted under the Western Waters MAP

1. South Western Waters

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the common fisheries policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22).

- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2019/2237** of 1 October 2019 specifying details of the landing obligation for certain demersal fisheries in South Western Waters for the period 2020-2021, *OJ L 336, 30.12.2019, p. 26–33*:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2020;
 - Based on Art. 13 of the Western Waters (WW) MAP (a.o.) ⁽⁶⁾, following a joint recommendation submitted by Belgium, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal;
 - Repealed by Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2015 of 21 August 2020 (No longer in force).

2. North Western Waters

- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2019/2239** of 1 October 2019 specifying details of the landing obligation for certain demersal fisheries in North Western Waters for the period 2020-2021, *OJ L 336, 30.12.2019, p. 47–58*:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2020;
 - Based on Art. 13 of the WW MAP (a.o.) ⁽⁷⁾, following a joint recommendation submitted by Belgium, Spain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, United Kingdom;
 - Repealed by Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2015 of 21 August 2020 (No longer in force).
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2023/828** of 2 February 2023 correcting Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2015 as regards the survivability exemption for common sole catches by vessels under 12 metres long and using otter bottom trawls, in the Western Waters, ICES division 7e, for 2023, *OJ L 104, 19.4.2023, p. 23–24*:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2023;
 - Based on Art. 13 of the WW MAP, following a request from France regarding an error introduced in Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2015 by Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/2290, which amended Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2015;
 - Matter: correcting Article 4(1) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2015 by including otter trawl gears with a cod end mesh size of 80 to 99 mm (instead of only those larger than 80 mm) because of a new survivability exemption for common sole (*Solea solea*) below the minimum conservation reference size

⁽⁶⁾ Articles 15(6) and 18(1) and (3) of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the common fisheries policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC (1), *OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22–61*.

⁽⁷⁾ Article 15(2) of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005, *OJ L 198, 25.7.2019, p. 105–201*.

(MCRS) caught in ICES division 7e by vessels under 12 m long and using otter bottom trawls (OTB), with a cod end mesh size larger than 80 mm.

3. North & South Western Waters

- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2020/2015** of 21 August 2020 specifying details of the implementation of the landing obligation for certain fisheries in Western Waters for the period 2021-2023, *OJ L 415, 10.12.2020, p. 22–38*:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2023;
 - Based on Art. 13 of the WW MAP, following two joint recommendations submitted by (i) Belgium, Spain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands (*‘North Western Waters Member States’*), (ii) Belgium, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal (*‘South Western Waters Member States’*).
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2021/2063** of 25 August 2021 amending and correcting Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2015 specifying details of the implementation of the landing obligation for certain fisheries in Western Waters for the period 2021-2023, *OJ L 421, 26.11.2021, p. 6–8*:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2023;
 - Based on Art. 13 of the WW MAP, following two joint recommendations submitted by (i) North Western Waters Member States, (ii) South Western Waters Member States.
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2022/2290** of 19 August 2022 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2015 as regards certain exemptions to the landing obligation in the Western Waters for 2023, *OJ L 303, 23.11.2022, p. 12–18*:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2023;
 - Based on Art. 13 of the WW MAP, following two joint recommendations submitted by (i) North Western Waters Member States, (ii) South Western Waters Member States.
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2023/1480** of 11 May 2023 correcting the Dutch language version of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2015 specifying details of the implementation of the landing obligation for certain fisheries in the Western Waters for the period 2021-2023, *OJ L 182, 19.7.2023, p. 90–90*:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2023;
 - Based on Art. 13 of the WW MAP;
 - Matter: correcting an error of the Dutch language version in Article 13(1), point (a) of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2015.
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2023/2623** of 22 August 2023 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2019/472 of the European Parliament and of the Council by specifying details of the landing obligation for certain fisheries in Western Waters for the period 2024-2027, *OJ L 2023/2623, 22.11.2023*:
 - In force; Date of effect: 01/01/2024; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2027;

- Based on Art. 13 of the WW MAP, following two joint recommendations submitted by (i) North Western Waters Member States, (ii) South Western Waters Member States.

4.2. Delegated Acts adopted under the North Sea MAP

- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2018/2035** of 18 October 2018 specifying details of implementation of the landing obligation for certain demersal fisheries in the North Sea for the period 2019-2021, *OJ L 327, 21.12.2018, p. 17–26*:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2019;
 - Based on Article (Art.) 11 of the North Sea (NS) MAP, following a joint recommendation submitted by Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, ('Scheveningen Group') and United Kingdom;
 - Repealed by Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/2238 of 1 October 2019 (No longer in force).
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2019/906** of 13 March 2019 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/2035 specifying details of implementation of the landing obligation for certain demersal fisheries in the North Sea for the period 2019-2021, *OJ L 145, 4.6.2019, p. 4–6*:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2019;
 - Based on Art. 11 of the NS MAP, following two joint recommendations submitted by the Scheveningen Group and United Kingdom;
 - Implicitly repealed by Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/2238 of 1 October 2019 (No longer in force).
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2019/2238** of 1 October 2019 specifying details of implementation of the landing obligation for certain demersal fisheries in the North Sea for the period 2020-2021, *OJ L 336, 30.12.2019, p. 34–46*:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2020;
 - Based on Art. 11 of the NS MAP (a.o.) ⁽⁸⁾, following a joint recommendation submitted by the Scheveningen Group and United Kingdom;
 - Repealed by Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2014 of 21 August 2020 (no longer in force).

⁽⁸⁾Article 15(2) of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005, *OJ L 198, 25.7.2019, p. 105–201*.

- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2020/1758** of 28 August 2020 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/2238 as regards high survivability and de minimis exemptions applicable to certain demersal fisheries in the North Sea, *OJ L 397*, 26.11.2020, p. 1–3:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2020;
 - Based on Art. 11 of the NS MAP, following a joint recommendation submitted by the Scheveningen Group and United Kingdom;
 - Matter: correcting some errors and unintentional omissions in Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/2238;
 - Implicitly repealed by Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2014 of 21 August 2020 (No longer in force).
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2020/2014** of 21 August 2020 specifying details of implementation of the landing obligation for certain fisheries in the North Sea for the period 2021-2023, *OJ L 415*, 10.12.2020, p. 10–21:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2023;
 - Based on Art. 11 of the NS MAP, following a joint recommendation submitted by the Scheveningen Group.
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2021/2062** of 23 August 2021 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2014 specifying details of implementation of the landing obligation for certain fisheries in the North Sea for the period 2021-2023, *OJ L 421*, 26.11.2021, p. 4–5:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2023;
 - Based on Art. 11 of the NS MAP, following a joint recommendation submitted by the Scheveningen Group;
 - Matter: continuation of certain exemptions to the landing obligation beyond 2021.
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2022/2289** of 18 August 2022 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2014 as regards exemptions to the landing obligation for certain fisheries in the North Sea for 2023, *OJ L 303*, 23.11.2022, p. 6–11:
 - No longer in force; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2023;
 - Based on Art. 11 of the NS MAP, following a joint recommendation submitted by the Scheveningen Group.
- Commission Delegated **Regulation (EU) 2023/2459** of 22 August 2023 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2018/973 of the European Parliament and of the Council by specifying details of the landing obligation for certain fisheries in the North Sea for the period 2024-2027, *OJ L*, 2023/2459, 06.11.2023:
 - In force; Date of effect: 01/01/2024; Date of end of validity: 31/12/2027;
 - Based on Art. 11 of the NS MAP, following a joint recommendation submitted by the Scheveningen Group.

5. ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACH

Article 2(3) of the Basic Regulation states that the CFP must implement an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management to reduce negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem. Article 3(3) of the MAPs provide that the MAPs have to be coherent with EU environmental law and in particular with the objective of achieving good environmental status by 2020 as required by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) ⁽⁹⁾. The MSFD provides 11 qualitative descriptors for determining good environmental status. The MAP aims to ensure that the conditions of descriptor 3 (as the one most relevant for fisheries management) are met and to contribute to meeting the other relevant descriptors in proportion to the relative role played by fisheries.

Descriptor 3 is directly linked to the fixing of fishing opportunities. It reads ‘the populations of all commercially exploited fish and shellfish are within safe biological limits, exhibiting a population age and size distribution that is indicative of a healthy stock’. Fishing activities have an impact on the descriptors relating to biological diversity (1), the food web (4), sea-floor integrity (6) and marine litter (10). The contribution of fishing to the other descriptors is at best indirect and/or not substantial ⁽¹⁰⁾.

ICES indicates that fishing mortality has in general decreased steadily since the 1990s and is now on average below F_{MSY} .

Regarding the Bay of Biscay and Iberian waters ecoregion, ICES indicates that natural mortality is becoming proportionately more significant, because fishing mortality has been reduced on many stocks. Predation mortality can occur from other fish, seabirds and marine mammals. ICES also notes ⁽¹¹⁾ that ‘climate change effects are evident within the ecoregion, notably in the Gulf of Cadiz, where warming has been observed over the last two decades’, and that this is leading to distribution changes in the fish population and migration patterns. ICES further notes that ‘climate-induced changes in temperature and salinity have affected the biological communities of the Gironde estuary and modified its nursery function for marine juvenile fish’ ⁽¹²⁾.

Moreover, ICES notes that: ‘Fish diversity is high in this ecoregion, reflecting its wide latitudinal dimension. [...] Hake is the most abundant predator species in the demersal community. Anglerfish, megrim, and sole are more abundant in the northern part of the ecoregion. The limit of distribution for some cold-water species such as whiting and pollack is

⁽⁹⁾ Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for the community action in the field of marine environmental policy (OJ L164, 25.6.2008, p. 19).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Introduction of non-indigenous species (2), human-induced eutrophication (5), hydrographical conditions (7), level of contaminants in the sea (8), level of contaminants in fish and seafood (9), introduction of energy including underwater noise (11).

⁽¹¹⁾ ICES. 2022. Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast ecoregion – Ecosystem overview. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2022. ICES Advice 2022, Section 6.1, <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21731579>.

⁽¹²⁾ ICES 2020. Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast Ecoregion – Ecosystem overview. ICES Advice: Ecosystem Overviews. Report. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.7636>.

in the north of Portugal. Skates, sharks, and deep-sea fish occur over the continental slope and in the deeper parts of this ecoregion. For evaluated stocks, the spawning-stock biomass is above reference points. The historical evolution of spawning-stock biomass relative to reference points by fish guild in the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast ecoregion shows an increase in the biomass that has been observed since 2002.’

Fisheries risk catching protected species, such as seabirds and marine mammals ⁽¹³⁾. The 2013 CFP reform provided new ways for stakeholders and Member States in specific regions to work together to agree on bespoke measures for their sea basins. As part of the ecosystem approach, stakeholders and Member States in the South Western Waters are currently holding discussions in order to agree measures to reduce incidental catches of dolphins in the Bay of Biscay.

Regarding the greater North Sea region, ICES states that climate change is causing the warming of surface water temperature. This has already resulted in the redistribution of several plankton and fish species within the ecoregion, which is likely to continue. Further cascading effects are likely to occur throughout the ecosystem with consequences on the spatial distribution of fisheries. Marine spatial planning actors should therefore consider this when planning infrastructure such as wind farms or putting in place marine protected areas.

In the Greater North Sea ecoregion, according to ICES, by-catch in fisheries is the human activity with the greatest effect on the population level of marine mammals. ICES notes that ‘the highest multiannual by-catch rates during 2017-2021 were recorded for common dolphin in purse seines and harbour porpoise in set gillnets’ ⁽¹⁴⁾.

In the Greater North Sea ecoregion, the stock sizes of most groups of commercial species are now above levels that can provide the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) overall. However, some individual species are still below MSY levels.

Regarding the Celtic Sea ecoregion ⁽¹⁵⁾, ICES states that ‘Climate change is causing changes in water masses. Freshening of western subpolar north Atlantic waters is observed in deeper areas of the ecoregion. In addition, the warming of surface water temperature in shallow shelf regions has become increasingly seasonally stratified and nutrient-limited in some areas. This has already changed the spatial distribution of several plankton and fish species within the ecoregion and is likely to continue to do so.’ ICES also notes that ‘Climate change induced cascading effects are likely to occur throughout the ecosystem with consequences for the spatial distribution of fisheries.’

The North Western Waters Member States Group considers that the North Sea MAP has not achieved the ecosystem-based approach, and some members of the Scientific, Technical and

⁽¹³⁾ ICES. 2022. Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast ecoregion – Ecosystem overview. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2022. ICES Advice 2022, Section 6.1, <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21731579>.

⁽¹⁴⁾ ICES. 2022. Greater North Sea ecoregion – Ecosystem overview. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2022. ICES Advice 2022, Section 7.1, <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21731912>.

⁽¹⁵⁾ ICES. 2022. Celtic Seas Ecoregion – Ecosystem overview. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2022. ICES Advice 2022, Section 7.1, <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21731615>.

Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) and stakeholders mention that neither of the two MAPs has contributed to achieving the ecosystem-based approach. The North Western Waters advisory councils asked for other pressures on the marine environment, such as climate change and pollution, to be taken into account.

A commonly held view by stakeholders responding to the public consultation is that the ecosystem-based approach has not been achieved and the MAP has played a neutral role in this regard. Concerning the high levels of by-catches of common dolphins in the North-East Atlantic, stakeholders consider that the MAP has not yet contributed to protecting sensitive species and the marine environment as required by Article 7 of the Basic Regulation. Consultation respondents also think it is necessary to implement regionalisation better and to use the available scientific advice, in particular when defining spatio-temporal closures.

Industry criticises the MAP as being too rigid on the list of target stocks and having no clear criteria on what makes a target stock. The Commission acknowledges this limitation of the MAP, which was the result of interinstitutional negotiations.

The consulted stakeholders underline the importance of an ecosystem-based management of fisheries and the contribution of fisheries to achieving good environmental status, while pointing out that non-fisheries related factors also play an important role. Member States consider that the situation of the fish stocks would probably have been worse without the MAP, while the Advisory Council is of the view that the MAP has been counterproductive as it lacks specific provisions on how to implement an ecosystem-based management of fisheries in practice.

6. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

6.1. North Sea and the East Atlantic (NSEA)

According to the STECF's latest annual economic report ⁽¹⁶⁾, two main players dominate the seascape of this region. In 2021, the Danish fleet was the most important in terms of both landed weight (about 370 000 tonnes) and landed value (EUR 309 million). Furthermore, the Dutch fleet is also an important contributor (186 000 tonnes and EUR 281 million). The share of the French, German, Swedish and Belgian fleets is considerably lower, but except for the French fleet, the region itself is of major importance for these national fleets.'

The STECF also notes that 'Even though the share of the number of small-scale vessels is more than 50% and the effort is about a quarter of the total days-at-sea in the NSEA, their economic contribution as well as their share of the landed weight is marginal. The large-scale fleet landed 99% of the total weight and 97% of the total value in 2021.'

⁽¹⁶⁾ Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) - The 2023 Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet (STECF 23-07), Prelezo, R., Sabatella, E., Virtanen, J., Tardy Martorell, M. and Guillen, J. editor(s), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, doi:10.2760/423534, JRC135182.

In addition, it notes that ‘The revenue generated by the EU-27 NSEA fleet in 2021 was estimated at EUR 959 million, 35% of which was provided by Denmark (EUR 333 million), 30% by the Netherlands (EUR 288 million), and 11% by Germany (EUR 104 million). Although total revenue remained about stable between 2020 and 2021 some differences between countries can be noticed when comparing 2020 to 2021. Countries that had a noticeable decrease in revenue were Denmark (EUR 50 million; -13%), Lithuania (EUR 9 million; -32%) and Spain (EUR 6 million; -24%), while countries with a noticeable increase in revenue were Ireland (EUR 18.6 million; +790%), Germany (EUR 16 million; +18%) and the Netherlands (EUR 9 million; +3%). The improved economic performance of the German fleet may be a reflection of the complete dataset of pelagic trawlers and thus inclusion of these data in the analyses. The economic performance of the German fleet in comparison with previous years should therefore be placed in correct context. The gross value added (GVA) produced by the EU-27 NSEA fleet covered in the analysis was estimated at about EUR 487 million in 2021. This represented an overall increase of 8% compared to the GVA generated in 2020.’

6.2. North Western Waters (NWW):

Again, according to the STECF’s latest annual economic report ‘The revenue (income from landings and other income) generated by the EU-27 NWW fleet covered in the analysis in 2021 was estimated at EUR 1.07 billion, representing 17% of the total revenue for the EU fleet. This represents an increase in revenue of 7% from 2020. GVA was estimated at EUR 569 million, representing an increase of 1% compared to the previous year. The fleet made EUR 186 million in gross profit, an increase of 14% compared to 2020. The net profit at EUR 85 million also increased by 6% compared to 2020. In 2021, the price of fuel was 0.52 euro/litre (29.5% higher than in 2020) and fuel consumption increased by 14% from 2020 following the increase in effort. Fuel is an important operational cost and therefore an important driver for profits which will no doubt begin to show negative impacts with the increase in fuel prices experienced from 2022 as a result of the war in Ukraine and rising inflation levels.’

Furthermore, when looking at a more detailed picture of the sea basins, for example in the Bay of Biscay, the Commission identified on the basis of an STECF report⁽¹⁷⁾ that the decrease in fishing opportunities for 2024 had an impact on the earnings of specific fleets (netters, hooks and lines).

The North Western Waters Member States group confirms the medium to long-term beneficial socio-economic impact of the Western Waters MAP.

(¹⁷) Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries – 75th Plenary Report (STECF-PLN-24-01), RIHAN, D. and DOERNER, H. editor(s), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024, doi:10.2760/82418, JRC137730.

6.3. South Western Waters (SWW):

According to STECF's latest annual economic report 'The small-scale coastal fleet dominates in number of vessels (63%) and effort (54%) while the large-scale fleet is the main segment in terms of production (88% in weight and 75% in value).'

The report also notes that 'In 2021, the fleet operating in the SWW generated over EUR 1.3 billion in revenue, EUR 758 million in GVA and EUR 168 million in gross profits. Overall, revenue and profits have recovered since 2013, going from a loss-making position to posting net profits, although they have deteriorated from 2015 to 2020. However, in 2021 there was a recovery with an increase of 12% in revenue. This fleet as a whole was profitable in 2021, posting a net profit of over EUR 84 million (7% profit margin).'

7. REGIONAL COOPERATION

Regional cooperation is central to the CFP. Its main goal is to take better account of the differences between the various sea basins and to integrate stakeholders more into fisheries management, including by making use of their knowledge and experience. Ultimately, having stakeholders directly involved in the formulation and implementation of management measures will lead to a greater sense of shared ownership as well as a commitment to comply with the measures. Through regional cooperation, stakeholders with a direct management interest can support the adoption of conservation measures, such as multiannual plans and discard plans. This cooperation is achieved mostly by means of advisory councils and Member States' groups.

The advisory councils (ACs) ⁽¹⁸⁾⁽¹⁹⁾, are stakeholder-led organisations with a common interest in fisheries and aquaculture activities in a given region. They are composed of Member State representatives, fishing sector stakeholders and other groups such as environmental organisations, recreational fishermen and consumers. Scientists from national institutes, the STECF and ICES are also involved and are regularly invited to present their research work. The ACs that fall under the scope of this report are the North Sea Advisory Council (NSAC, established in 2004) ⁽²⁰⁾, the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC, established in 2005) ⁽²¹⁾ and the South West Waters Advisory Council (SWWAC, established in 2007) ⁽²²⁾. These ACs issue recommendations to the Commission and to the Member State concerned on matters relating to the management and socio-economic aspects

⁽¹⁸⁾ Article 43-45 of the Basic Regulation.

⁽¹⁹⁾ [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2017/1575 of 23 June 2017](#) amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/242 laying down detailed rules on the functioning of the Advisory Councils under the CFP (OJ L 239, 19.9.2017).

⁽²⁰⁾ [Commission Decision of 9 November 2004](#) declaring operational the Regional Advisory Council for the North Sea under the CFP (OJ L 342, 18.11.2004).

⁽²¹⁾ [Commission Decision of 22 September 2005](#) declaring operational the Regional Advisory Council for the North Western Waters under the common fisheries policy (OJ L 249, 24.9.2005).

⁽²²⁾ [Commission Decision of 4 April 2007](#) declaring operational the Regional Advisory Council for the South Western Waters under the common fisheries policy (OJ L 95, 5.4.2007).

of fisheries. Together the three ACs have published more than 120 recommendations ⁽²³⁾ between 2019 and 2023, covering a variety of CFP topics such as fishing opportunities, the landing obligation, the marine action plan, the management of skate and rays, seabass, brown crab and Iberian sardines.

According to the Basic Regulation, Member States with a direct management interest may submit joint recommendations on matters related to conservation measures, technical measures and discard plans. For this purpose, Member States gather in the form of high-level groups or **Member States' groups** (MSG). This report covers three MSG: (i) the North Sea MSG, also known as the 'Scheveningen Group'; (ii) the North Western Waters MSG; and (iii) the South Western Waters MSG ⁽²⁴⁾. Their main objective is to improve coordination and cooperation between their members and with other stakeholders in the region, such as the ACs. They exchange information, develop policy positions and design regional conservation measures through joint recommendations. Since the adoption of the North Sea and Western Waters MAPs, the three MSGs have submitted joint recommendations aimed at implementing the landing obligation for the stocks under the MAPs. These joint recommendations have been set out in the Commission delegated regulations referred to above in Chapter 4.

The stakeholder consultation gathered useful comments on how the regional cooperation under the North Sea and Western Waters MAPs is working in practice. For example, stakeholders consider that the MAPs provide the necessary legal framework to implement regional cooperation, and the NWWAC and Members of the STECF think that cooperation is increasing between the relevant stakeholders ⁽²⁵⁾. The joint recommendations have gradually provided more technical evidence and practical knowledge, as well as bespoke sea basin measures. However, the MSGs would benefit from greater involvement of stakeholders and scientists. In this respect, the Fisheries and Oceans Pact ⁽²⁶⁾ calls on Member States to make progress on CFP governance for the benefit of all stakeholders concerned and for society in general.

8. EXERCISE OF THE DELEGATION OF POWERS UNDER THE DEEP-SEA ACCESS REGULATION

The Deep-Sea Access Regulation ⁽²⁷⁾, as well as contributing to achieving the objectives listed in Article 2 of the Basic Regulation on deep-sea species and habitats, aims to:

⁽²³⁾ The recommendations are publicly available online on the websites of [NSAC](#), [NWWAC](#) and [SSWAC](#).

⁽²⁴⁾ The Member States' groups were established in 2014 and are composed as follows: the North Sea MSG includes Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden; the North Western Waters MSG includes Belgium, France Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain; the South Western Waters MSG includes Belgium, France, Portugal, the Netherlands and Spain.

⁽²⁵⁾ Two Members of the STECF replied to the stakeholder consultation. Their responses are available in Section 9.

⁽²⁶⁾ The common fisheries policy today and tomorrow: a Fisheries and Oceans Pact towards sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management, COM(2023) 103 final.

⁽²⁷⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/2336 establishing specific conditions for fishing for deep-sea stocks in the north-east Atlantic and provisions for fishing in international waters of the north-east Atlantic (OJ L 354, 23.12.2016, p. 1.).

- (1) improve scientific knowledge on deep-sea species and their habitats;
- (2) prevent significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems within the framework of deep-sea fishing and ensure the long-term conservation of deep-sea fish stocks;
- (3) ensure that EU measures for the sustainable management of deep-sea fish stocks are consistent with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in particular Resolutions 61/105 and 64/72.

To achieve the objectives of the Deep-Sea Access Regulation, Article 9(7) empowers the Commission to amend Annex III to ensure that the list of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VME) indicator species is updated in line with the latest scientific advice. This power was conferred for 5 years as from 12 January 2017. The Commission had to prepare a report on the delegation of powers no later than 9 months before the end of the 5-year period. In the absence of any opposition by the co-legislators, the delegation of powers was tacitly extended for another 5 years, so until 12 January 2027.

The Commission considers that so far it has not been necessary to adapt Annex III. The Commission has therefore not adopted a delegated regulation.

9. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

For this first report on the implementation of the North Sea and Western Waters MAPs, the Commission carried out a targeted stakeholder consultation. The consultation was based on a questionnaire. Consulted stakeholders included the North Sea MSG, the North Western MSG, the South Western MSG, the NSAC, the NWWAC, the SWWAC, the Pelagic AC, the Long Distance AC, ICES (who replied that they could not participate in such a survey), STECF, the national correspondents and the chairs of the regional coordination groups (Data Collection Framework), the Commission Expert Group for Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Fisheries attachés, the MSFD experts and the Marine Expert Group.

This staff working document provides the content of the replies received by the Commission.

9.1. Member of BLE Deutschland

Member of the North Sea Member States Group (Scheveningen Group), North Western Member States Group, Expert Group for Fisheries and Aquaculture

North Sea MAP

According to the North Sea MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. beneficial
2. very beneficial
3. beneficial

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. negative
2. beneficial
3. neutral
4. negative in the short term

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. negative
2. neutral
3. no opinion
4. negative

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened regional cooperation on the proposal of conservation measures through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

neutral

Are there any additional measures that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Moratoria, Area closures.

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?

2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. beneficial
2. very beneficial
3. beneficial

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the **landing obligation** (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. negative
2. beneficial
3. neutral
4. negative in the short term

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?

2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. negative
2. neutral
3. no opinion
4. negative

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

neutral

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

no opinion

9.2. Member of DTU Aqua expert group for Fisheries and Aquaculture

Member of an Expert Group for Fisheries and Aquaculture

North Sea MAP

According to the North Sea MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?

2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

very beneficial

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

very negative

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?

4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

beneficial

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened regional cooperation on the proposal of conservation measures through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

no opinion

Are there any additional measures that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

no opinion

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the **landing obligation** (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?

2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative

9.3. Member of IE National correspondents and of the Regional Coordination Groups (Data Collection Framework)

Member of a National correspondents and of the Regional Coordination Group (Data Collection Framework)

North Sea MAP

According to the North Sea MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation** measures through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any additional measures that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?

3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. beneficial - There has been a gradual improvement in the status of stocks in relation for MSY targets in the Celtic Sea ecoregion since the introduction of the MAPs

<https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21641312>

Some cod and whiting stocks remain in poor condition despite various management measures and a limitation to the current MAPs is that they do not define measures to be taken when stocks are below Blim. There is a need to develop and implement rebuilding plans with clear targets and time-frames for stocks below Blim based on best available scientific advice. This might involve rebuilding to Bpa with 50% probability by 2 X T0 (the time required to rebuild with zero fishing). This could allow for positive catches prevent chokes and allow for rebuilding with some additional risk.

2. neutral, Not our remit but it is very soon to see evidence of medium or long-term impacts. There have not been medium or long-term simulations on the socio-economic impacts to our knowledge.

3. beneficial - The MAPs are working well and do a good job in clarifying the understanding of how MSY is to be implemented as a management objective. However, the list of target stocks in the plan is rigid with no clear criteria on what constitutes a target stock. In some cases, the scientific information is not sufficient to provide MSY advice e.g., Pollack in area 7 and it is not clear why this stock is considered a target. Fishing exploitation ranges are important if we are to integrate the ecosystem indicators to adjust the target fishing mortality (e.g., as suggested by WKIRISH).

On discards (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?

4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. Negative – There have been some discard reductions thanks to increased mesh sizes and effective technical measures since the introduction of the LO however discards are continuing for many demersal stocks in Western Waters according to the ICES assessments.
2. The MAP FMSY ranges provide some scope to reconcile different fishing opportunities in mixed fisheries and reduce discards. However, there are few examples of where the full MSY ranges have been used with the objective of reducing discards. The MAP does not directly take account of by-catch stocks. For depleted (below Blim) target species where bycatch TACs are set those bycatch TAC should be consistent with rebuilding plans (as mentioned above).
3. Implementation of the LO remains problematic in demersal mixed fisheries (https://bim.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Lo,report,2016_final.pdf). Up take of effective technical measures remains poorly documented.
4. Many challenges remain for the industry to comply fully with the LO.

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. neutral, In general, there has been very little implementation of EBFM in western waters. The MAP was introduced in 2019 and GES has not been achieved by 2020, there has been but according to ICES there has been a trend of declining fishing mortality since the mid-1990s for the benthic and demersal stocks with known status. The average F/F_{MSY} ratio is below 1 for assessed benthic stocks and just above for the assessed demersal stocks. The trend for stock size in assessed benthic and demersal stocks has been increasing over the same period. The average F/F_{MSY} ratio is below 1 for the crustacean stocks, and the average biomass has been above 1 in the past decade. The average F/F_{MSY} ratio for pelagic assessed stocks has been above 1 in recent years, and the average stock size indicator is declining in recent years but remains above MSY Btrigger.
2. negative. The MAP seems mainly concerned with single species stock MSY .
3. Neutral – it is not clear what aspect of the “current situation” is intended here
4. Negative – the combination of external drivers – fuel price, Brexit, COVID, control issues etc. Have reduced fishers interest in getting involved in EBFM approaches.

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

9.4. Contributor of Ministry of Denmark

Member of the North Sea Member States Group (Scheveningen Group)

North Sea MAP

According to the North Sea MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Setting TACs at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) has been an important milestone in transitioning towards sustainable fisheries management. The North Sea Multi Annual Plan (MAP) provides a range for MSY, which gives some needed flexibility for a coherent management of fisheries - taking into account scientific advice and in a lesser extent socio-economic concerns. Furthermore, the MAP provides a framework for conservation measures needed to preserve and restore the stocks covered on the long term.

A MSY range recognises that multiple factors have an impact on the stock situation (e.g., predator -prey interactions). Further, flexibility makes the current single species MSY concept more workable (i.e. in mixed fisheries) while maintaining MSY as a target and without jeopardising the sustainability of the stock. In practice, we see that the higher ends of the ranges are rarely used.

Consideration should also be given to the fact that choke situations most likely will continue to be a challenge as stock situations may change over time.

On discards (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations

3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

The Member States in the Scheveningen Group have continuously addressed the challenges encountered when implementing the landing obligation, particularly endeavoring to make it workable within the legal framework while encouraging a change in fishing patterns towards further selectivity.

The legal framework acknowledges continued discards based on either high survivability or de minimis. Member States have put great effort into providing scientific knowledge on survivability of fish caught in different gears. The Scheveningen Group would like to emphasize the need for appropriate levels of TAC deductions that take the best available scientific research results on survivability into account when calculating TAC deductions, and a level playing field on those TAC deductions with third countries such as the UK and Norway.

The landing obligation has underlined the need for scientific research in order to develop gear that is more selective. Member States are conducting multiple research projects to this end. The Scheveningen Group recognises that further selectivity has to be achieved in some fisheries. However, for the mixed demersal fisheries, there will be a limit to the degree of selectivity.

From a socio-economic perspective, it is vital to ensure a smooth process for development of more selective gears that decrease unwanted catch as much as possible while keeping the Catch per Unit of Effort (CPUE) for the wanted part of the catch as high as possible. Cooperation between Member States on development and use of selective gears is crucial for a level playing field for fishermen.

Requesting derogations from the landing obligation or technical measures requires extensive work by national administrations, but these exemptions and derogations provide necessary practical flexibility for fishermen to mitigate challenges, while continuing trying to further develop more selective gears.

Although the North Sea MAP provides the opportunity to adopt delegated Acts on technical measures, it is the experience of the Scheveningen Group that the timeframe for adopting new technical measures on selective gears in practice is long and complicated. This endangers the willingness of fishers to even engage in scientific projects.

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?

4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

The ecosystem approach is gradually being introduced and requires careful consideration of the interactions between different living marine resources, environmental drivers and fishing, but at this stage, we have not yet seen the full impact since scientific advice on the ecosystem-based approach is not yet comprehensive. It is important to note, that factors outside fisheries, such as climate change, pollution and predators like seals and cormorants also affect the conditions of fish stocks and the marine ecosystems.

The MAP provides for a comprehensive approach with TAC setting based on ICES advice - in line with the sustainability objective. However, it provides for limited opportunity to consider species interactions when setting fishing opportunities. Thus far, the MAP has had limited effects on the implementation of an ecosystem-based approach.

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Overall, the establishment of the MAP has provided a common approach for the relevant Member States in managing fisheries and offered an implementing tool for agreements with third countries regarding the EU legal framework.

The MAP has strengthened the close cooperation between Member States in the regional groups on discard plans, technical measures and marine protected areas, resulting in proposals agreed upon by relevant Member States and thus, broad support for the exemptions from the landing obligation, specific technical measures and closures. This procedure allows an efficient and targeted process, involving Member States and the relevant stakeholders with direct interests. The current working procedures for those joint recommendations, however, do put a very important workload on the national fisheries administrations, advisory councils, STECF and DG MARE.

The MAP is an EU only regulation and third countries are not legally bound by the content in the plan. Article 13 of the MAP offers is limited as a legal framework for the EU position when cooperating on fisheries management on stocks shared with third countries, especially with Norway and the UK. A substantially larger number of stocks are jointly managed with third countries in the post-Brexit context, which somewhat limits the ability of the EU to use the MAP as a tool to set fishing opportunities on shared stocks. It is important to find a new joint approach with the UK and Norway to avoid unilateral plans and measures, especially through work on new long term management plans for jointly managed stocks.

Are there **any additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

A well-functioning fisheries sector requires that the EU fisheries legislation is simple, manageable, up-to-date and adapted to the sector, society and technological development. Predictability and transparency are important factors when aiming for a faster achievement of the objectives provided for in article 3 of the MAP. The Scheveningen Group calls for a transparent, speedy and stringent approach from STECF to their evaluations of joint recommendations from the regional groups.

The Scheveningen Group also sees a need for development of a robust scientific basis for implementing the objectives in Article 3.

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the **landing obligation** (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?

4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

9.5. Member of LV National correspondents and of the Regional Coordination Groups (Data Collection Framework)

Member of National correspondents and of the Regional Coordination Group (Data Collection Framework)

North Sea MAP

According to the North Sea MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

No opinion, no fishery in North Sea

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

No opinion, no fishery in North Sea

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

no opinion, no fishery in North Sea

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened regional cooperation on the proposal of conservation measures through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

no opinion, no fishery in North Sea

Are there any additional measures that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

no opinion, no fishery in North Sea

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

no opinion, no fishery in Western Waters

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the **landing obligation** (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

no opinion, no fishery in Western Waters

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

no opinion, no fishery in Western Waters

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

no opinion, no fishery in Western Waters

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

no opinion, no fishery in Western Waters

9.6. CNPMEM

Member of the North Sea Advisory Council, South Western Advisory Council, Pelagic Advisory Council, Long Distance Advisory Council

CNPMEM

North Sea MAP

According to the North Sea MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Le CNPMEM note la progression réalisée dans le nombre de stock géré au RMD en mer du Nord (cf Ifremer, cf communication de la CE COM(2022)253). Pour la plupart des stocks, le FRMD est, quand il est connu, la base de référence de fixation des TACs.

Le plan de gestion offre une certaine flexibilité dans la fixation des possibilités de pêche en permettant de fixer le TAC dans une fourchette de capture autour du RMD (article 4). Cette disposition permet de prendre en compte la complexité de la gestion des pêcheries mixtes. Le CNPMEM regrette que cette possibilité ne soit pas utilisée lors des négociations des TAC et Quotas. Il serait pertinent que le CIEM soit saisi pour préciser les conditions d'utilisation de cette fourchette. Celui-ci propose notamment des scénarios intéressants avec par exemple des probabilités d'atteindre le RMD d'au moins 95%, qui permettent des marges de manœuvre intégrant les considérations socio-économiques.

Enfin, il est regrettable de ne disposer d'aucune autre mesure que la fixation d'un TAC 0 lorsque la biomasse du stock est en dessous de Blim. Il est nécessaire d'entamer des réflexions autour de la mise en place de plan de reconstitution avec des objectifs clairs et un calendrier défini basés sur les meilleurs avis scientifiques disponibles.

On discards (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More

specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations

3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Depuis la mise en application partielle en 2016 puis totale en 2019 de l'OD, les rejets inscrits dans les avis CIEM, sont en diminution ou se stabilisent. Cependant, ces taux de rejets vont dépendre des pêcheries et surtout des espèces capturées.

Une règle applicable pour l'ensemble des techniques de pêche et pour l'ensemble des espèces est irréalisable, car cela ne prend pas en compte les différences entre les stratégies de pêche entre 2 engins, les différences biologiques entre les espèces (morphologiques, cycle de vie...) et les différences biogéographiques entre les différentes zones de pêche (que ce soit entre les façades ou dans les sous- zones de celles-ci).

Malgré cette règle unique, l'objectif de lutte contre les rejets a permis dans un premier temps un accroissement des études sur la sélectivité et le développement d'engins sélectifs. La mise en œuvre d'une l' obligation de débarquement stricte est en revanche un échec, tant-elle ne prend pas en compte les impacts socio-économiques et la réalité des pêcheries. Le CNPMM regrette que l'obligation de débarquement soit un objectif en soi et non plus un moyen d'amélioration de la sélectivité.

Grace aux PG, les états membres et les professionnels ont pu avoir les outils pour déroger à l'OD, par le biais des exemptions, pour que celle-ci soient plus facilement réalisable, cette flexibilité offerte par les exemptions est essentielle pour les professionnels. Mais leur obtention et leur durée d'application ne sont pas garantie d'une année sur l'autre ou bien trop peu sécurisées. De plus les exemptions sont bien trop précises pour permettre aux pêcheurs travaillant sur plusieurs zones de connaître exactement les réglementations applicables. Des exemptions d'offices pour toutes les espèces soumissent à l'OD pourrait être la solution pour garantir cette flexibilité aux pêcheurs.

L'utilisation des exemptions (de survie et de de minimis) sont de fait essentiel pour ne pas entraîner l'arrêt de l'ensemble des pêcheries d'Europe.

En effet, la question des choke species est l'un des plus gros challenges de l'obligation de débarquement. Le CNPMM a interpellé l'administration et la Commission européenne a de multiples reprises, sans réponse satisfaisante. En effet l'application dogmatique de l'article 15 dans un contexte de pêcheries mixtes demeure impossible sans lourdes conséquences socio-économiques sur les pêcheries concernées. A noter que le rapport EODE mené dans les Hauts-de-France a permis de quantifier très précisément ces impacts. L'article 14 de la PCP permettant la mise en place de projet pilote dédié à la recherche de dispositifs innovants est une des solutions à mettre en œuvre.

La fixation des TAC dans la fourchette du RMD pourrait également résoudre une partie des difficultés, tout en gardant à l'esprit que le contexte de pêcheries mixtes reste une difficulté majeure. A noter que la fixation de TAC 0 est incompatible avec la mise en œuvre de l'obligation de débarquement et la continuité des activités de pêche dans la zone.

L'impact socio-économique de l'OD est l'un des principaux facteurs pour lesquels l'OD a du mal à être pleinement mise en place. Pour beaucoup le traitement des rejets est perçu comme du travail supplémentaire non rémunérées et est une mesure décidée indépendamment de la réalité du métier. Cependant les exemptions ont permis d'offrir au minimum une flexibilité aux marins dans leurs pratiques. Aujourd'hui il semble difficile de voir l'impact de l'OD seule sur l'économie de la pêche, car le secteur sort de plusieurs crises successives (Covid, Brexit, conflit en Ukraine).

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Dans un premier temps, il est nécessaire d'introduire une plus grande flexibilité dans la mise en œuvre du plan de gestion pour pouvoir adapter la gestion des stocks, qui sont soumis à des changements écosystémiques majeurs. La pêche ne peut être la variable d'ajustement pour maintenir sur un court terme une exploitation au RMD.

En effet, l'article 3.3 du plan de gestion de mer du Nord indique que "Le plan met en œuvre l'approche écosystémique de la gestion des pêches afin de garantir que les impacts négatifs des activités de pêche sur l'écosystème marin sont minimisés". Le CNPMM souhaite rappeler deux points importants :

- La nécessité de prendre en compte les trois piliers de la durabilité - environnement, responsabilité sociale et économie. Ainsi, la dimension socio-économique de la PCP doit être renforcée et l'article 2.1 de la PCP doit être pris en compte lors de l'instauration d'une mesure de gestion.
- La nécessité de ne pas uniquement prendre en compte la pression de la pêche sur les stocks mais adopter une approche globale qui tient compte de l'ensemble des pressions sur l'environnement marin (changement climatique, pollution, autres usages, etc.).

Ceci étant dit, il semble important d'entamer une réflexion sur les modifications possibles dans la liste des espèces ciblées pour tenir compte de l'évolution des besoins en matière de production alimentaire dans le cadre des changements environnementaux. Il est également nécessaire de concentrer des moyens permettant d'améliorer les connaissances sur les autres facteurs anthropiques

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Le PPA est un cadre réglementaire permettant aux Etats membres de mettre en place des mesures régionales. Le CNPMMEM participe ainsi activement aux différents CC qui fournissent des avis sur les recommandations conjointe. De même, le CNPMMEM travaille en étroite collaboration avec l'administration française sur ces questions.

De cette expérience, le CNPMMEM souligne l'importance d'une communication fluide et régulière visant à renforcer la collaboration entre les acteurs.

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

L'article 3.5 du PG mer du Nord précise que « Les mesures prises au titre du plan le sont sur la base des meilleurs avis scientifiques disponibles ». Une réflexion sur la définition des « meilleurs avis scientifiques possibles » semble nécessaire.

Nécessité de prendre la pleine mesure des possibilités offertes par les plans de gestion. L'application s'est pour l'heure trop contentée de s'intéresser à la fixation des possibilités de pêche sur le court terme, sans prendre en compte les impacts socio-économiques. Il est aujourd'hui nécessaire que celui-ci se concentrer sur les perspectives d'évolutions pour faire face aux défis à venir.

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Le CNPMM note la progression réalisée dans le nombre de stock géré au RMD dans les eaux occidentales (cf Ifremer, cf communication de la CE COM(2022)253). Pour la plupart des stocks des eaux occidentales, le FRMD est, quand il est connu, la base de référence de fixation des TACs.

Le plan de gestion offre une certaine flexibilité dans la fixation des possibilités de pêche en permettant de fixer le TAC dans une fourchette de capture autour du RMD (article 4). Cette disposition permet de prendre en compte la complexité de la gestion des pêcheries mixtes. Le CNPMM regrette que cette possibilité ne soit pas utilisée lors des négociations des TAC et Quotas. Il serait pertinent que le CIEM soit saisi pour préciser les conditions d'utilisation de cette fourchette. Celui-ci propose notamment des scénarios intéressants avec par exemple des probabilités d'atteindre le RMD d'au moins 95%, qui permettent des marges de manœuvre intégrant les considérations socio-économiques.

Le CNPMM regrette également la rigidité dans la liste des espèces cibles caractérisées dans le plan de gestion, notamment en l'absence de définition claire de la pêche ciblée. Par exemple, le lieu jaune de la zone 7 est défini comme un stock ciblé, alors qu'il n'est pas ciblé par une pêche spécifique et que la connaissance du stock est insuffisante pour que le CIEM fournisse des indicateurs de RMD.

Enfin, il est regrettable de ne disposer d'aucune autre mesure que la fixation d'un TAC 0 lorsque la biomasse du stock est en dessous de Blim. Il est nécessaire d'entamer des réflexions autour de la mise en place d'un plan de reconstitution avec des objectifs clairs et un calendrier défini basés sur les meilleurs avis scientifiques disponibles.

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the **landing obligation** (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

L'objectif de lutte contre les rejets a permis dans un premier temps un accroissement des études sur la sélectivité et le développement d'engins sélectifs. La mise en œuvre d'une l'obligation de débarquement stricte est en revanche un échec, tant-elle ne prend pas en compte les impacts socio-économiques et la réalité des pêcheries. Le CNPMM regrette que l'obligation de débarquement soit un objectif en soi et non plus un moyen d'amélioration de la sélectivité

L'utilisation des exemptions (de survie et de de minimis) sont de fait essentiel pour ne pas entraîner l'arrêt de l'ensemble des pêcheries d'Europe.

En effet, la question des choke species est l'un des plus gros challenges de l'obligation de débarquement. Le CNPMM a interpellé l'administration et la Commission européenne a de multiples reprises, sans réponse satisfaisante. En effet l'application dogmatique de l'article 15 dans un contexte de pêcheries mixtes demeure impossible sans lourdes conséquences socio-économiques sur les pêcheries concernées.

A noter que le rapport EODE mené dans les Hauts-de-France a permis de quantifier très précisément ces impacts. L'article 14 de la PCP permettant la mise en place de projet pilote dédié à la recherche de dispositifs innovants est une des solutions à mettre en œuvre.

La fixation des TAC dans la fourchette du RMD pourrait également résoudre une partie des difficultés, tout en gardant à l'esprit que le contexte de pêcheries mixtes reste une difficulté majeure. A noter que la fixation de TAC 0 est incompatible avec la mise en œuvre de l'obligation de débarquement et la continuité des activités de pêche dans la zone.

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Dans un premier temps, il est nécessaire d'introduire une plus grande flexibilité dans la mise en œuvre du plan de gestion pour pouvoir adapter la gestion des stocks, qui sont soumis à des changements écosystémiques majeurs. La pêche ne peut être la variable d'ajustement pour maintenir sur un court terme une exploitation au RMD.

En effet, l'article 3.3 du plan de gestion des EO indique que "Le plan met en œuvre l'approche écosystémique de la gestion des pêches afin de garantir que les impacts négatifs des activités de pêche sur l'écosystème marin sont minimisés". Le CNPMMEM souhaite rappeler deux points importants :

- La nécessité de prendre en compte les trois piliers de la durabilité - environnement, responsabilité sociale et économie. Ainsi, la dimension socio-économique de la PCP doit être renforcée et l'article 2.1 de la PCP doit être pris en compte lors de l'instauration d'une mesure de gestion.
- La nécessité de ne pas uniquement prendre en compte la pression de la pêche sur les stocks mais adopter une approche globale qui tient compte de l'ensemble des pressions sur l'environnement marin (changement climatique, pollution, autres usages, etc.).

Ceci étant dit, il semble important d'entamer une réflexion sur les modifications possibles dans la liste des espèces ciblées pour tenir compte de l'évolution des besoins en matière de production alimentaire dans le cadre des changements environnementaux. Il est également nécessaire de concentrer des moyens permettant d'améliorer les connaissances sur les autres facteurs anthropiques.

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Le PPA est un cadre réglementaire permettant aux Etats membres de mettre en place des mesures régionales. Le CNPMMEM participe ainsi activement aux différents CC qui fournissent des avis sur les recommandations conjointe. De même, le CNPMMEM travaille en étroite collaboration avec l'administration française sur ces question.

De cette expérience, le CNPMMEM souligne l'importance d'une communication fluide et régulière visant à renforcer la collaboration entre les acteurs.

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Sur l'article 3.5 du PG EO, une réflexion sur les « meilleurs avis scientifiques possibles » semble nécessaire. Nécessité de prendre la pleine mesure des possibilités offertes par les plans de gestion. L'application s'est pour l'heure trop contentée de s'intéresser à la fixation des possibilités de pêche sur le court terme, sans prendre en compte les impacts socio-économiques. Il est aujourd'hui nécessaire que celui-ci se concentrer sur les perspectives d'évolutions pour faire face aux défis à venir.

9.7. North Sea Member States Group (Scheveningen Group)

Members of the North Sea Member States Group (Scheveningen Group)

Joint reply by the Scheveningen Group on the North Sea MAP

The Scheveningen Group appreciates the opportunity to be consulted on the North Sea MMulti Annual Plan. The Scheveningen Group provides the following remarks:

MSY

According to the North Sea MAP, MSY was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?

What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?

What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

Reply:

Setting TACs at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) has been an important milestone in transitioning towards sustainable fisheries management. The North Sea MMulti Annual Plan (MAP) provides a range for MSY, which gives some needed flexibility for a coherent management of fisheries - taking into account scientific advice and in a lesser extent socio-economic concerns. Furthermore, the MAP provides a framework for conservation measures needed to preserve and restore the stocks covered on the long term.

A MSY range recognises that multiple factors have an impact on the stock situation (e.g., predator -prey interactions). Further, flexibility makes the current single species MSY concept more workable (i.e. in mixed fisheries) while maintaining MSY as a target and without jeopardising the sustainability of the stock. In practice, we see that the higher ends of the ranges are rarely used.

Consideration should also be given to the fact that choke situations most likely will continue to be a challenge as stock situations may change over time.

DISCARDS

On discards (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?

To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations

What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks? What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned.

Reply:

The Member States in the Scheveningen Group have continuously addressed the challenges encountered when implementing the landing obligation, particularly endeavoring to make it workable within the legal framework while encouraging a change in fishing patterns towards further selectivity.

The legal framework acknowledges continued discards based on either high survivability or de minimis. Member States have put great effort into providing scientific knowledge on survivability of fish caught in different gears. The Scheveningen Group would like to emphasize the need for appropriate levels of TAC deductions that take the best available scientific research results on survivability into account when calculating TAC deductions, and a level playing field on those TAC deductions with third countries such as the UK and Norway.

The landing obligation has underlined the need for scientific research in order to develop gear that is more selective. Member States are conducting multiple research projects to this end. The Scheveningen Group recognises that further selectivity has to be achieved in some fisheries. However, for the mixed demersal fisheries, there will be a limit to the degree of selectivity.

From a socio-economic perspective, it is vital to ensure a smooth process for development of more selective gears that decrease unwanted catch as much as possible while keeping the Catch per Unit of Effort (CPUE) for the wanted part of the catch as high as possible. Cooperation between Member States on development and use of selective gears is crucial for a level playing field for fishermen.

Requesting derogations from the landing obligation or technical measures requires extensive work by national administrations, but these exemptions and derogations provide necessary practical flexibility for fishermen to mitigate challenges, while continuing trying to further develop more selective gears.

Although the North Sea MAP provides the opportunity to adopt delegated Acts on technical measures, it is the experience of the Scheveningen Group that the timeframe for adopting new technical measures on selective gears in practice is long and complicated. This endangers the willingness of fishers to even engage in scientific projects.

ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACH TO FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?

To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?

What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?

What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned

Reply:

The ecosystem approach is gradually being introduced and requires careful consideration of the interactions between different living marine resources, environmental drivers and fishing, but at this stage, we have not yet seen the full impact since scientific advice on the ecosystem-based approach is not yet comprehensive. It is important to note, that factors outside fisheries, such as climate change, pollution and predators like seals and cormorants also affect the conditions of fish stocks and the marine ecosystems.

The MAP provides for a comprehensive approach with TAC setting based on ICES advice - in line with the sustainability objective. However, it provides for limited opportunity to consider species interactions when setting fishing opportunities. Thus far, the MAP has had limited effects on the implementation of an ecosystem-based approach.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened regional cooperation on the proposal of conservation measures through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

Reply:

Overall, the establishment of the MAP has provided a common approach for the relevant Member States in managing fisheries and offered an implementing tool for agreements with third countries regarding the EU legal framework.

The MAP has strengthened the close cooperation between Member States in the regional groups on discard plans, technical measures and marine protected areas, resulting in proposals agreed upon by relevant Member States and thus, broad support for the exemptions from the landing obligation, specific technical measures and closures. This procedure allows an efficient and targeted process, involving Member States and the relevant stakeholders with direct interests. The current working procedures for those joint recommendations, however, do put a very important workload on the national fisheries administrations, advisory councils, STECF and DG MARE.

The MAP is an EU only regulation and third countries are not legally bound by the content in the plan. Article 13 of the MAP offers is limited as a legal framework for the EU position

when cooperating on fisheries management on stocks shared with third countries, especially with Norway and the UK. A substantially larger number of stocks are jointly managed with third countries in the post-Brexit context, which somewhat limits the ability of the EU to use the MAP as a tool to set fishing opportunities on shared stocks. It is important to find a new joint approach with the UK and Norway to avoid unilateral plans and measures, especially through work on new long term management plans for jointly managed stocks.

ADDITIONAL MEASURES

Are there any additional measures that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

Reply:

A well-functioning fisheries sector requires that the EU fisheries legislation is simple, manageable, up-to-date and adapted to the sector, society and technological development. Predictability and transparency are important factors when aiming for a faster achievement of the objectives provided for in a article 3 of the MAP.

The Scheveningen Group calls for s transparent, speedy and stringent approach from STECF to their evaluations of joint recommendations from the regional groups.

The Scheveningen Group also sees a need for development of a robust scientific basis for implementing the objectives in Article 3.

9.8. North Sea Advisory Council

This paper was approved with consensus by the NSAC Executive Committee on 23 May 2023 via written procedure.

1. Background

The CFCommon Fisheries Policy (CFP) highlights the importance of establishing multiannual plans, taking into account the specificities of the different regions and fisheries, acknowledging that the objective of sustainable extraction of marine biological resources is more effectively achieved through a multiannual approach to fisheries management. The Regulation 2018/973 establishes a multiannual plan for the following demersal stocks in Union waters of the North Sea (ICES divisions 2a, 3a and subarea 4): cod, haddock, plaice, sole, whiting, anglerfish, northern prawn, and Norway lobster. It also applies to by-catches caught in the North Sea when fishing for the above-listed stocks.

The North Sea Advisory Council (NSAC) provided advice in 2017 on the North Sea Multi-annual Plan (MAP)²⁸ prior to its final publication in 2018, with provisions on geographical scope, socio-economic considerations, treatment of stocks, alignment with the Technical Measures Framework, scientific underpinning, enhanced data collection and knowledge-base, information processing and modelling.

The [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/973](#) stipulates that the Commission shall report to the European Parliament and Council on the implementation of the MAP by 6 August 2023. On 18 January 2023, the Commission sent a letter to the NSAC requesting its input to the public consultation, in which it called upon the Advisory Council to provide a position paper with the unified view of its constituents. Should this not be possible, individual organisations were invited to submit independent responses to the survey. This paper is an attempt to collate experience and views of the North Sea demersal fisheries organisations and other stakeholders on the implementation of the North Sea MAP.

2. Advice

The NSAC believes that MAPs are appropriate and potentially useful tools for achieving the objectives of the CFCommon Fisheries Policy. However, a more ecosystem-based and longer-term approach to MAPs is needed. The MAPs should be improved to make them regionally tailored and ecosystem-based, and to include clear environmental and socio-economic objectives, as also specified in the NS MAP. In our 2017 Advice Ref.11-1617 we mention that it is important to consider the implication of Fmsy ranges in a mixed fisheries context. Fishing contributes to food security and as such requires a better appreciation of socio-economic impacts.

(²⁸) <https://www.nsrac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/12-1617-NSAC-Response-to-the-NS-MAP.pdf>

The MAP for the North Sea entered into force at a time when the UK was part of the EU and most of the fisheries in the North Sea were regulated through the CFP Common Fisheries Policy. Following Brexit, this is no longer the case. The CFP and therefore the MAP today only apply to a minor part of the North Sea as such – the EU waters. It should be investigated whether the present wording of the plan appropriately reflects this situation. The UK and Norway are not bound by the plan despite the fact that for several of the most important stocks the UK and Norway have the major part of the stocks according to the allocation keys established between the three parties.

In general, we believe that MAPs may have contributed to an increase in the number of TACs set at MSY. In 2020, 62 out of 78 TACs are set at a level that allows a healthy future for the fish stocks' biomass, compared to only 5 out of 35 in 2009. In addition, the number of stocks fished above Fmsy in the Greater North Sea region has fallen from 12 in 2019 to 9 in 2020.²⁹ Furthermore, the overall fishing pressure ratio (F/Fmsy) has fallen below 1 for the first time in 2020, indicating a sustainable pressure. It is not clear whether the MAP was the defining factor in these improvements, as it also addresses stocks shared with the UK and Norway where TACs are set following bilateral and trilateral consultations, and therefore not necessarily determined (solely) by the MAP.

Despite overall improvements, the cost for fishing communities has been high - much higher than indicated by the simple calculations of average gross profits. The rigid way in which the theoretically sensible target fishing mortality (Fmsy) has been implemented in the plans has led to unstable quotas relying heavily on the latest stock assessments and not considering the short-term implications for fishing communities. The medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY should in theory be positive, but there are cases, such as for saithe in the North Sea, where this has not been the case. There

are also some stocks, such as haddock, where the stock dynamics calls for a more flexible approach, rather than merely setting the TAC at Fmsy yearly.

On discards (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (LO) (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), it is our opinion that the landing obligation was introduced with insufficient consideration of the consequences to the industry as well as lack of analysis of the benefits for the stocks. First and foremost, the purpose of LO is not well described. If it is to reduce the wasting of resources, why then ban the use of small fish? If it is to push fishers into using more selective gears, why then make technical regulations that

(²⁹) STECF ad hoc report: Monitoring of the performance of the common fisheries policy: https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports/cfp-monitoring/-/asset_publisher/oz5O/document/id/26714692?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fstecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu%2Freports%2Fcfp-monitoring%3Fp_p_id%3D101_INSTANCE_oz5O%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-2%26p_p_col_pos%3D1%26p_p_col_count%3D2.

force them to use the gears that generate discards? If it is to work with catch quotas rather than landing quotas, why not just make it compulsory to register it rather than force fishers to land it and then throw it out?

From a management point of view, it does make sense to ask fishers to register their total catch, as this is important for scientific assessments. Yet there is no good argument for making fishers land all their catch. Also, it should be recognized that not all stocks react in the same way to discarding and that practices vary between fisheries, areas, and seasons. It makes good sense to ban discarding of fish with a swim bladder, such as cod, haddock and saithe, but it makes no or little sense to force fishers to kill and land small plaice known to survive the release. Fishers can see that some stocks are not affected by historic discard practices (e.g. plaice), whereas others might be. Then again it must be remembered that it is not the discarding itself that has an impact, it is whether the catch is registered or not. The stock does obviously not benefit from fish being killed and landed rather than just being discarded at sea.

Further considerations on Article 15 and the landing obligation have been gathered by the NSAC in its advice on the functioning of the landing obligation, which the reader may access [here](#).

2.1 Mixed fisheries considerations

Most of the demersal fisheries target a mixture of species. The composition of the catch is determined by multiple factors such as fishing gear, area, season, and abundance of the various species. This needs to be considered with a high degree of pragmatism. Setting a low quota on an abundant species, in order to protect another species, while expecting full compliance with a landing obligation has proven a challenge. Following a request from the Commission, the ICES produces an annual paper on mixed fisheries considerations. This paper is usually published in the period when the EU, Norway and UK consultations setting the TACs for the coming year take place. However, it is very unclear how the relation between the MAP and the paper on mixed fisheries considerations is to be understood and how they align. Moreover, the stocks are shared between the EU, the UK and Norway - states and entities with different management regimes. The ICES work on the issue is not sufficiently developed to reflect the various aspects. It is important that the capability of individual fishers to adapt to apparently opposing trends and regulations is given a much higher priority as is currently the case in the present management plans.

The technical regulations prevent fishermen from increasing selectivity and the NSAC believe that more freedom to adapt gears to the individual fishers needs would reduce the incentive to discard unwanted catches. Within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, has not been sufficiently achieved, though there have been significant improvements in the efforts to implement ecosystem-based fisheries management. The rate of overfishing in the North Sea is low and has been falling, which is a direct effect of

improved management and efforts of the fishing community, as well as environmental stakeholders. We believe that the MAP has contributed to these efforts.

In view of the NSAC, the NS MAP has strengthened regional cooperation on the proposal of conservation measures through the submission of joint recommendations, together with stakeholders, though stakeholder consultations had at times been seen as a mere box-ticking exercise with limited time available for proper consideration of documentation by the NSAC members, and/or executed when the positions have already been established and were not to be diverged significantly notwithstanding the NSAC advice.

The NSAC believe that the NS MAP could be significantly improved with more focus on the role of fisheries in providing healthy, low-carbon food as well as social benefits to coastal communities, which would require a more pragmatic use of MSY. The NSAC is in favour of using the concept and supports the objective of the CFP, but believes that there are benefits to a more pragmatic use of the ranges of Fmsy. This is particularly important in respect of the mixed fisheries, but also has benefits in other cases. Therefore, the three conditions for using the Fmsy upper range should be abolished (or softened) or expanded with a socio-economic clause. A more flexible approach could even be applied, where the objective is to be within a range of fishing mortality which allows for the stock to be rebuilt over a longer period. If the stock is below target, the TAC should be set at a level that – according to scientific advice – leaves the stock closer to the target after the regulation than it was before the regulation was set.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the NSAC believes that the NS MAP has positively contributed to improved sustainability of the North Sea demersal fisheries and more pragmatic management. However, there are still some shortcomings/aspects that could be addressed to make the MAP work for and with the fisheries for an environmentally, economically, and socially viable industry. The NSAC thanks the Commission for the opportunity to comment on the public consultation on the North Sea MAP and invites any further discussion on the matter.

9.9. Citizens

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, MSY was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. *To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY*

There has been a gradual improvement in the status of stocks in relation to MSY targets in the Celtic Sea ecoregion since, amongst other things, the introduction of the MAPs <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.advice.21641312>. The recent communication from Commission regarding the orientations for the 2023 fishing opportunities recalled that in recent years, fishing opportunities have been set in line with the MSY for most stocks.

However, several cod and whiting stocks (i.e. cod in 6a, 7a and 7b-k; whiting in 7a and 7b-k) in North-western Waters remain in poor condition despite various management measures being introduced. This includes remedial technical measures implemented under Article 8 of the WWMAP for the Celtic Sea cod stock in recent years.

The MAP is an EU only regulation and third countries are not legally bound by the content of the plan. Article 15 of the MAP offers is limited as a legal framework for the EU position when cooperating on fisheries management on stocks shared with third countries, especially the UK. A substantially larger number of stocks are jointly managed with UK as a third country in the post-Brexit context, which somewhat limits the ability of the EU to use the MAP as a tool to set fishing opportunities on shared stocks. It is important to find a new joint approach with the UK to avoid unilateral plans and measures, especially through work on new long term management plans for jointly managed stocks.

2. *What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?*

It is too soon to see evidence of medium or long-term impacts associated with reaching MSY taking into account that it is also related to specificities of some fisheries (ie mixed fisheries's related species). There have been no medium or long-term socio-economic simulations to date specifically carried out for the North-western Waters.

On a short-term basis, the answer varies depending on the stocks considered and the importance of TAC fluctuations. In principle, brutal changes of TAC level, particularly in a decreasing trend, have destabilizing effects on the activities of fishing operators.

3. *What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?*

The MAPs are working well and do a good job in clarifying the understanding of how MSY is to be implemented as a management objective.

In addition, the flexibility allowed by the regulation when giving access to MSY ranges is important. Notably, it allows taking into account the specificities of mixed-fisheries, intra and inter-species dynamics and to limit TAC fluctuations to 20%.

In case of shared stocks, it is however necessary that the third Party involved also agrees to implement such ranges (which was not the case for Norway regarding the NS MAP).

However, the criteria on which the list of target stocks lies is unclear, for example when the scientific information is not sufficient to provide MSY advice (e.g., Pollack in area 7)

*On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:*

1. *To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?*
2. *To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?*
3. *What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?*
4. *What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?*

While there is evidence in a decrease in discards, it is clear that the landing obligation has not met its objective, given implementation issues, reportedly widely by Member States. Notwithstanding this, considerable efforts have been dedicated by the fisheries sector since the introduction of the landing obligation to understand and then implement this policy as well as actively engaging with research institutes to develop ways of avoiding and reducing unwanted catches, as well as improving general knowledge on these species (i.e. survivability). The considerable revolution this obligation introduced in the fishing sector should be underlined here once again.

For example, Member States have put great effort into providing scientific knowledge on survivability of fish caught in different gears. Member States are also conducting multiple research projects to develop gear that is more selective.

One of the key issues associated with the landing obligation is that it currently ignores the very different levels of discarding and very different levels of difficulty to achieve full implementation of the landing obligation. This is particularly important in Western Waters given the predominance of mixed fisheries in the region.

On regionalisation, the MAP has provided the mechanism for exemptions to the landing obligation under regionalisation so in this regard has contributed to the implementation of the landing obligation.

The Member States in the North western waters Group have continuously addressed the challenges encountered when implementing the landing obligation, particularly endeavoring to make it workable within the legal framework while encouraging a change in fishing patterns towards further selectivity.

The flexibilities introduced by the discard plans are necessary for the industry, including in the context of mixed fisheries. While some discards can be beneficial for the stocks (MS have put great effort into providing scientific knowledge on survivability of fish caught in different gears), others cannot be avoided when selectivity cannot be increased or that a full implementation of landing obligation leads to disproportionate costs (de minimis exemptions).

Requesting derogations from the landing obligation or technical measures requires extensive work by national administrations, but these exemptions and derogations provide necessary practical flexibility for fishermen to mitigate challenges, while continuing trying to further develop more selective gears.

However, how the MAP has contributed to the elimination is unclear. The provision for FMSY ranges included in the MAP provides some scope to reconcile different fishing opportunities in mixed fisheries and reduce discards. However, there are few, if any examples of where the full MSY ranges have been used with the objective of reducing discards in North-western Waters.

Since the inception of the landing obligation, choke species have been considered as the biggest risk to the viability of the fishing industry in particular in mixed fisheries. The Council has regard for unavoidable by-catches in mixed fisheries, using the flexibility provided for in the WWMAP when setting TACs and this has contributed to limit the incidence of choke situations to date in most cases. Given the predominance of mixed fisheries, there is a constant concern that choke situations will develop, closing critically important commercial fisheries (for example influence of –77% reduction TAC for PLE in ICES area 7fg for some fisheries).

Since 2020, the fishing sector has been impacted by several significant economic shocks – Covid, Brexit and the conflict in Ukraine. Any economicsocioeconomic impacts observed are almost certainly attributable to these factors rather than the landing obligation. For instance, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and UK has resulted in significant transfers of quota to the UK as part of this Agreement. These quota transfers have put added pressure on the economic viability of certain fleets from 2021 onwards and will continue to do so up until 2025.

From a socio-economic perspective, it is also vital to ensure a smooth process for development of more selective gears that decrease unwanted catch as much as possible while

keeping the Catch per Unit of Effort (CPUE) for the wanted part of the catch as high as possible.

An evaluation of the landing obligation, which also looks at possible alternatives that are more workable and therefore contribute better to the policy objectives of the landing obligation, is therefore desirable.

*On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:*

1. *In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?*

In general, implementation of the Ecosystem-based approach across fisheries in western waters has been limited and it is unclear whether Good Environmental Status (GES) has been achieved by 2020 in North-western waters. The WWMAP was introduced in 2019 and according to ICES there has been a trend of declining fishing mortality since the mid-1990s for the benthic and demersal stocks with known stock status. The average F/F_{MSY} ratio is below 1 for assessed benthic stocks and just above for the assessed demersal stocks. The trend for stock size in assessed benthic and demersal stocks has been increasing over the same period. The average F/F_{MSY} ratio is below 1 for the crustacean stocks, and the average biomass has been above 1 in the past decade. The average F/F_{MSY} ratio for pelagic assessed stocks has been above 1 in recent years, and the average stock size indicator is declining in recent years but remains above $MSY B_{trigger}$.

2. *To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?*

Article 3(3) of the WWMAP sets out one of the objectives of the plan is to implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in order to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimized. However, the plan contains few specific measures associated with the ecosystem-based approach, other than the measures to set Fishing Opportunities in accordance with the CFP.

3. *What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?*

See question 1.

4. *What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?*

Currently, the fisheries sector in all Member States are facing challenges from the economic impacts of COVID-19, Brexit, high fuel prices as well as increased logistics costs and higher prices for equipment due to the conflict in Ukraine. This combination of external drivers makes it difficult for fishermen to focus on implementing the ecosystem-based approach. Therefore, at this stage, we have not yet seen the full impact.

*In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation on the proposal of conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?*

This regulation provides a legal basis for adopting the discard plans, which is the topic that mainly occupied MS groups when they developed their joint work. In that regard, the MAP contributes to the “bottom-up” approach promoted by the CFP.

Regional groups then progressively explored other topics, such as technical measures. However, the specific impact of the MAP in that regard is unclear since the number of regionally specific measures that have put in place under the WWMAP have been limited. This is partially due to the relationship between a article 9 of the WWMAP and a article 15 of the technical measures’ regulation (Reg. 2019/2041), as well as articles 8 (fish stock recovery areas) and a article 11 (ecosystem measure) of the CFP.

The WWMAP does allow for the development of regional management measures but the process to adopt such measures remains complex and is lengthy.

While it cannot be directly attributed to the MAP itself, the governance structure is unduly complex and cumbersome, in particular in the process of renegotiating the exemptions to LO every year. When possible, this should be simplified going forward to increase the utility of the MAP.

However, based on the experiences of regionalisation thus far, as well as the changes to the decision-making process arising from the UK’s departure from the EU, a review of regionalisation is required to reinvigorate and realign to the new reality that now pertains. the new decision-making process in operation following from the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the EU and the UK, whereby the negotiations are carried out by the Commission and the UK create challenges for the NWW Member States Group.

The ability of the Group to agree joint recommendations now develops in a smaller geographical area, as there is no certainty or obligation on the UK to agree such measures.

A new governance equilibrium is needed to clarify the articulation between MS group and the work conducted within the SCF, both for the coherence of management considerations and the need to preserve a level playing field benefiting to EU fleets. In any case, this new governance needs to allow Member States at regional level to feed effectively into the EU/UK negotiations organised at EU level by the Commission. Discussions both at DG MARE technical meeting with MS and at MS Group level may be one option, provided that sufficient human and technical resource is provided in this respect, and without prejudice to MS individual positions in the bilateral EU – UK fisheries negotiations.

Regarding stakeholders, the MAP only provides that ACs may recommend to the Commission a management approach that seeks to limit year-to-year variations in the fishing opportunities for a particular stock listed in Article 1(1). Such advice may be taken into account by the Council when fixing fishing opportunities.

*Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?*

The main changes needed to the WWMAP are in relation to the governance structures, which are complex and have become heavier since Brexit and need to be articulated

Some thought should therefore be given on how to update the MAP if necessary.

9.10. North Western Waters Advisory Council

North Sea MAP

According to the North Sea MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any additional measures that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

The NWWAC recognises and welcomes the long-term progress made overall towards more sustainable EU fisheries reflected in the Commission's Communication COM(2022)253. This is especially true in the Northeast Atlantic EU waters, where "thanks to the efforts made by the sector, in 2020 the overall fishing mortality ratio fell below 1 for the first time". Overall, the NWWAC notes that for all the NWW stocks the FMSY has been the reference for setting TACs & quotas.

By defining ranges of fishing mortality based on the best available scientific advice, the Western Waters Multi-Annual Plan (WW MAP) allows a certain flexibility in setting fishing opportunities. However, the NWWAC notes that the FMSY ranges provided by the MAP have not been put into use in TAC & quota setting for NWW stocks.

Moreover, ICES has not been requested to assess under which conditions Article 4.5 a and b could apply, regarding the setting of fishing opportunities for a stock in accordance with the upper range of FMSY available.

The NWWAC agrees that while the NWW MAP can help clarify how MSY is to be implemented as a management objective, the list of targeted stocks included in the plan is too rigid and with no clear criteria on what constitutes a target stock. A clear example in the NWW is pollack in area 7, which is not a targeted species and for which scientific information is insufficient to provide MSY advice.

Another limitation of the MAP is the lack of measures to be taken when a stock falls below Blim, other than following the ICES advice for zero catch. This needs to be addressed urgently through the development of rebuilding plans with clear targets and timeframes for stocks below Blim based on best available scientific advice.

On discards (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the **landing obligation** (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

With the full implementation of the landing obligation, significant progress has been made in advancing the understanding of chokes, and several measures have been identified, including technical gear modifications and avoidance measures informed by advanced knowledge on the spatial distributions of choke species and unwanted catches.

However, avoiding choke issues, and thus a premature closing of a fishery, remains one of the biggest challenges in the mixed and dynamic NWW fisheries. This is explained in detail in the NWWAC advice “Addressing choke risk in the NWW after exemptions” submitted on 9 December 2022. As mentioned in the advice, it remains clear that the implementation of the CFP in a mixed fisheries context requires creative and innovative solutions involving spatial management, technical measures, and in some cases balancing short- and long-term socio-economic trade-offs.

In this regard, the NWWAC welcomes the focus on avoidance of unwanted catches characterising Article 3.2 of the WW MAP. Indeed, frequently the AC has stipulated that avoidance and minimisation of unwanted catches are baseline tools to achieve the selectivity objective. For this reason, it is important to emphasise the role of Article 14 of the CFP, whereby Member States may conduct pilot projects with the aim of fully exploring all practicable methods for the avoidance, minimisation and elimination of unwanted catches in a fishery. This has incentivized research on more selective fishing methods and promoted the prioritization of measures which minimise the amount of unwanted catches, ensuring survivability of fish escaping the net.

The NWWAC believes that, in order to improve the practical implementation of the landing obligation, avoidance and minimisation of unwanted catches should be better incentivised and that more achievable objectives should be fixed, recognising stocks and individual fisheries’ peculiarities.

The NWWAC acknowledges that the flexibility in TAC setting afforded by the implementation of FMSY ranges would represent a relevant element in the implementation of the landing obligation. However, it is important to take into account the implications of using FMSY ranges provided for by the WW MAP in a mixed fisheries context. The additional flexibility provided by these ranges for a stock may be constrained by other, more limiting stocks. Indeed, it is already apparent that the zero-catch advice for several stocks continues to pose significant challenges this year

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Article 3.3 of the WW MAP states that “The plan shall implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in order to ensure that negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimized”. NWWAC members believe that MAPs could be an opportunity to allow for ecosystem-based measures to be implemented at the scale of a regional basin. However, two important aspects need to be considered:

- 1) The concept of ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management embeds all three pillars of sustainability - environment, social responsibility, and economic – and this should be accounted for in the MAPs. Indeed, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, “the purpose of an ecosystem approach to fisheries is to plan, develop and manage fisheries in a manner that addresses the multiple needs and desires of societies, without jeopardizing the options for future generations to benefit from the full range of goods and services provided by marine ecosystems” . In order to effectively implement the CFP, the NWWAC believes that the socio-economic dimension of the policy should be strengthened and wishes to point out the importance of CFP article 2.1, which at all times should be taken into account when vetting any management measure.
- 2) When considering the impacts on the marine ecosystem, the MAP should not only take into consideration fishing pressure on fish stocks but adopt a holistic approach considering impacts from all the pressures on the marine environment (climate change, pollution and other anthropogenic impacts).

The need for more flexibility in the implementation of the WW MAP is also justified to ensure an adaptive management of NWW fisheries, which are highly dynamic and currently subject to ecosystem changes which can result in distributional shifts in fish species. Changes in stock biology and natural phenomena, such as recruitment pulses prevalent in gadoid species, may create choke situations not originally forecast. In light of this, modifications to the targeted species list should be allowed with clear conditions and criteria establishing why a stock should be listed as a target species. This approach would allow accounting for not only the impacts of environmental variables, and thus make fisheries management more resilient and adaptive to climate change, but also for changes in food production requirements.

Furthermore, the NWWAC notes the importance of implementing FMSY ranges if scientific advisory bodies are to integrate the ecosystem indicators to adjust the target fishing mortality, for example as suggested by ICES WKIRISH

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

The NWWAC recognises the role of the WW MAP in providing the framework for Member States having a direct interest in the NWW to cooperate among themselves at the level of the regional sea basin through the submission of joint recommendations. Accordingly, the NWWAC regularly provides advice on joint recommendations produced by the NWW MS Group on technical measures and discard plans in the NWW. In this regard, the NWWAC emphasises the continued need for good communication and recommends strengthening collaboration between the Member States and the AC.

The scope of the WW MAP is very wide covering a large area encompassing North Western Waters, South Western Waters and CECAF zones around Madeira and the Canary Islands. These areas include a wide range of diverse fisheries and cover most of the demersal stocks and deep-sea stocks. By combining the areas and stocks into one plan, it moves away from the regional definitions included in Article 4 paragraph 2 of the Basic Regulation (i.e. there is no differentiation between the NWW and SWW). It also does not acknowledge the differences in the stocks and fisheries considered by the NWWAC and SWWAC. Furthermore, the NWWAC notes there are overlaps for several stocks included in this plan with the North Sea MAP. For instance, megrim in divisions 4a and 6 and hake in subareas 4, 6, and 7 are included in the WW MAP, whilst other stocks such as haddock and saithe in divisions 4 and 6a, as well as Anglerfish in subareas 4 and 6 are included in the NSMAP. This overlapping creates management difficulties and complicates regional cooperation, while MAPs' scopes should coincide with the regional structure established in the CFP.

The NWWAC also wishes to point out that its remit area includes four different subregions, each with specific characteristics, issues and needs in terms of fisheries management, ecosystem dynamics and socio- economic aspects. Having different MAPs for West of Scotland, Irish Sea, English Channel and Celtic Sea could be a further step in the regionalisation approach strengthening fisheries management.

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

In relation to Article 3.4 a and b, the NWWAC refers to its joint advice with the North Sea Advisory Council on the MSFD review from 22 March 2022, which contains recommendations aiming at ensuring that the MSFD descriptors are measurable and regionally coherent in their progress towards GES, that measures are effective and their impact quantified, and coordination within and across marine regions improved.

Regarding Article 3.5, the NWWAC invites the Commission to reflect on the definition and criteria of “best available scientific advice”, to ensure this provides the most accurate stock assessment. The NWWAC also recommends following the developments of the application of the Management Strategy Evaluation, which is becoming an increasingly popular tool for developing, testing, and implementing fisheries management regimes, utilizing participatory modelling.

Letter from NWWAC to DG MARE C Director

Dear Mr Donatella,

Subject: Targeted consultation on the Multiannual Plans for the North Sea and the Western Waters

The North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) welcomes the letter received on 18 January 2023 consulting AC members on their assessment of the Western Waters Multiannual Plan (WW MAP) performance in meeting its objectives and identifying any weaknesses that undermine its effectiveness.

Following instructions, the NWWAC has provided its response to the targeted online survey. However, members felt that an official reply to your letter should also be submitted, allowing for reflection on a number of overarching aspects setting the context for the questionnaire exercise. The response to the online survey is also attached to this communication for completeness of information.

The NWWAC agrees with the principle that MAPs should offer a legislative basis to manage certain fisheries targeted by the plan (mainly the most important ones commercially) in a dedicated sea basin in the long term. Management measures include mainly MSY ranges, implementation of the landing obligation and technical measures. For the NWWAC, the added value of the MAPs would be to provide regional long-term ecosystem-based management of those fisheries that allow for stability, visibility and flexibility for the stakeholders concerned. Whereas that is a very virtuous principle, it seems that, in practice, the full ambition of the Western Waters MAP is not achieved. Focus appears to be TACs & quotas management and on delegated acts for the implementation of the Landing Obligation.

As the NWWAC agrees with the principle of the MAPs, we recommend investigating how to use their full potential.

Another important aspect to consider relates to the post-Brexit landscape, which cannot be ignored when reflecting on the effectiveness of the WW MAP. As a consequence of Brexit, the dynamics in terms of achieving sustainable fishing have inevitably changed. EU-UK bilateral consultations have become a key step towards setting Fishing Opportunities for the 75 shared fish stocks, whose majority are in the North Western Waters. It is also important to note that the UK has not transposed the MAP nor the MSY objective in its national regulations. Thus, it would be desirable to consider measures in the MAP evaluation which integrate EU and UK fisheries management. Therefore, the NWWAC wishes to point out that the reporting exercise on the implementation of the WW MAP should not be done in isolation but should take the Trade and Cooperation Agreement into account.

A final point relates to the consultation process for this reporting exercise. The NWWAC would like to point out that this exercise relates to complex matters, as demonstrated by the questions included in the survey, and thus requires time and focus to be properly addressed. The AC would like to recall that all its advice aims to make submissions that are based on consensus. To reach this, all AC members need to be consulted in a thorough and appropriate manner, which takes time. Therefore, the NWWAC would appreciate to be given more time for considerations, especially of complex issues such as this.

Thank you for your attention on this matter. We remain at your disposal to further elaborate on this exercise should this be necessary.

Yours sincerely,

NWWAC

9.11. Member of STECF

Member of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries

North Sea MAP

According to the North Sea MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. Beneficial
2. Very Beneficial
3. Beneficial

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. Neutral
2. Neutral
3. Neutral
4. Beneficial

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. Beneficial
2. Neutral
3. Neutral
4. No opinion

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

Very beneficial

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any additional measures that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Beneficial

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. Beneficial
2. Beneficial
3. Neutral

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the **landing obligation** (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. Negative
2. Beneficial
3. Negative
4. Beneficial

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. Negative
2. Neutral
3. Neutral
4. Negative

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

Very beneficial

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

Beneficial

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

9.12. Member of STECF

Member of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries

North Sea MAP

According to the North Sea MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. beneficial, the importance of following the MSY advice in setting the final TAC has increased.
2. beneficial when in the context of mixed fisheries all stocks are fished at MSY.
3. neutral, generally the Fmsy value and not the ranges is the objective for setting the final TAC in the most recent years.

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. negative.
2. negative. The procedure of adopting delegated acts is in many cases essential to avoid closure of the fisheries.
3. negative.
4. neutral.

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. neutral
2. neutral
3. neutral
4. neutral

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

beneficial

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any additional measures that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Multispecies/ecosystem based advice

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?

2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. beneficial, the importance of following the MSY advice in setting the final TAC has increased.
2. beneficial when in the context of mixed fisheries all stocks are fished at MSY.
3. neutral, generally the Fmsy value and not the ranges is the objective for setting the final TAC in the most recent years.

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the **landing obligation** (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. negative.
2. negative. The procedure of adopting delegated acts is in many cases essential to avoid closure of the fisheries.
3. negative.
4. neutral.

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?

2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1. neutral
2. neutral
3. neutral
4. neutral

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

beneficial

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Multispecies //ecosystem based advice

9.13. SWWAC

Avis 163 : Consultation sur le plan de gestion des eaux occidentales

Par cet avis, les membres du secteur du CC SUD (France, Espagne, Portugal) ont souhaité prendre part à la consultation de la Commission européenne sur le plan de gestion des Eaux Occidentales (règlement (UE) 2019/472), ils travaillent en effet depuis la création, et même depuis sa préparation (Avis 98, 103, 120 de 2015 à 2018), à sa bonne mise en œuvre (Avis 134 en 2019), et notamment concernant la mise en place de mesures de long terme pour les stocks du golfe de Gascogne et des eaux ibériques permise par son article 6 (Avis 153 en 2021).

Les membres du CCSUD considèrent que l'adoption de cet outil législatif a permis d'ouvrir de nombreux débats et possibilités de gestion pour les pêcheries mixtes de ses eaux de compétences, cependant la désillusion quatre années après est grande. C'est ce paradoxe qui est détaillé ci-après par les membres du secteur du CCSUD. Les membres des ONG environnementales ayant préféré répondre individuellement à la consultation en ligne.

A. Possibilité de pêche, RMD et fourchettes de captures.

Le plan de gestion des eaux occidentales s'est appuyé sur la possibilité d'utiliser des fourchettes de captures autour du RMD (Art. 4), afin de prendre en considération la complexité de gestion des pêcheries mixtes, particulièrement présentes dans les eaux occidentales sud. Toutefois, l'objectif politique du RMD s'est traduit de manière trop précautionneuse, en actant que la fixation des possibilités de pêche ne pouvait dépasser, sauf rares et insuffisamment mises en œuvre exceptions, la valeur du TAC associée à Frmd médian, pour tous les stocks. Ce choix politique devrait utilement être corrigé afin que les possibilités de pêche soient à l'avenir fixées au sein d'une « fourchette » de valeurs de F permettant la bonne gestion globale des pêcheries du point de vue des écosystèmes et socio-économiques. Le CIEM propose ainsi des scénarios avec des probabilités d'au moins 95% d'atteindre le RMD, offrant ainsi de très larges marges de manœuvre pour faire évoluer la gestion des pêcheries dans une zone RMD, tout en y intégrant les enjeux socio-économiques. Cette intégration des aspects socio-économique étant essentielle dans les eaux occidentales sud, comme mentionné à plusieurs reprises par le CC SUD, notamment dans son avis 153.

Cependant, le constat est que ces possibilités n'ont pas été saisies par la Commission Européenne dans ses propositions annuelles, qui se concentrent toujours uniquement sur les aspects halieutiques de manière mono-spécifique, avec un respect strict des avis du CIEM. En effet, le plan de gestion (Art.4, 7, 8) contraint les décisions. Il n'est plus possible pour les décideurs de s'en écarter, quand bien même les avis présenteraient des problèmes méthodologiques (benchmark trop ancien dans le temps, absence de campagne, données manquantes...). De même, il n'autorise pas ou très difficilement de logiques pluri-annuelles. Les interprétations juridiques de l'Article 8, ont de plus imposé des contraintes de gestion unimaginables (chalut décollé pour le cabillaud VII, -37% pour la sole VIII). Le plan n'a donc pas permis, ou trop peu, de tenir compte des enjeux socio-économiques, dans la fixation des possibilités de pêche.

B. Obligation de débarquement et rejets

Si les membres du CCSUD estiment que l'obligation de débarquement a permis, à sa mise en place, de lancer de nombreux programmes pour améliorer la sélectivité et réduire les prises non désirées, ce qui s'est donc avéré positif. Il est cependant noté que cette norme ne prend ni en compte les impacts socio-économiques, ni la réalité des pêcheries : son impact sur certaines flottilles a alors été disproportionné.

En effet, l'obligation de débarquement a affecté l'ensemble des pêcheries quel que soit leur niveau de sélectivité, cette obligation ne tenant pas compte des quotas attribués à chaque État,

a entraîné des situations d'étranglement, les exemptions à l'obligation de débarquement devenant alors essentielles pour ne pas dégrader les exploitations. C'est le cas par exemple des palangriers par exemple, dans la flotte espagnole avec du cabillaud ou du merlan.

De même, l'application du plan de gestion n'a que très peu tenu compte de la dimension multi-spécifique des principales flottilles évoluant dans le territoire du CC Sud, au moment de déterminer les possibilités de pêche. Les membres de l'industrie du CC Sud recommandent de mettre en œuvre l'article 4.5.a dans cette perspective, et qu'ainsi, les travaux du CIEM nécessaires soient développés. L'obligation de débarquement est donc devenue un objectif en soi et non plus un moyen d'amélioration de la sélectivité, elle réduit la visibilité de certaines pêcheries avec des impacts socio-économiques négatifs sans avoir de plus-value pour la ressource car certaines captures restent inévitables. Dans le contexte actuel, la mise en œuvre de l'obligation de débarquement est donc devenue négative.

C. Approche écosystémique

Alors même que la plupart des stocks des eaux occidentales sont dans une situation optimale, l'approche écosystémique n'a été que très partiellement utilisée, notamment par manque de connaissances et de données sur les différentes pressions anthropiques, et leur hiérarchisation rationnelle. Aujourd'hui, on se contente donc de faire de la pression de pêche la variable d'ajustement pour maintenir (à court terme) une exploitation au RMD sans agir suffisamment sur les autres causes de dégradation des écosystèmes. Cette situation ne peut pas donner de la visibilité aux acteurs socio-économiques des pêcheries, pourtant conscients de la nécessité de maintenir ou restaurer un bon état écologique du milieu.

Les membres du CC SUD recommandent donc :

- D'améliorer les connaissances sur l'ensemble des facteurs anthropiques (dont les effets sont par ailleurs affectés par le changement climatique qui s'opère) impactant les zones fonctionnelles halieutiques.
- D'utiliser pleinement les dispositions du plan de gestion, en demandant au CIEM les expertises scientifiques nécessaires à l'application de l'article 4.5.b.
- De hiérarchiser l'impact des différents facteurs anthropiques sur le renouvellement des ressources et le maintien ou la restauration d'un bon état écologique ;
- Sur la base de ces connaissances, de réduire l'impact de l'ensemble des facteurs anthropiques ayant une responsabilité majeure dans le renouvellement des ressources et le maintien ou la restauration d'un bon état écologique en général ;
- De permettre le cas échéant le maintien d'un minimum d'exploitation (minima socio- économique à définir) lorsque l'impact du facteur pêche est reconnu comme mineur dans le renouvellement de la ressource ou dans le maintien/restauration du bon état écologique

D. Coopération régionale

Malgré son adoption tardive, le plan de gestion a favorisé la coopération régionale selon les membres du CC SUD, permettant d'ouvrir de nombreux sujets et débats, notamment au sein des conseils consultatifs, comme le révèle le nombre d'avis et de réunions du CC SUD dédié à ce sujet. Cependant comme démontré précédemment ces débats non que peu aboutis à des mesures concrètes, suffisamment étayées scientifiquement pour être retenues par la Commission européenne face aux rigidités réglementaires.

E. Propositions de mesures supplémentaires pour atteindre les objectifs

L'atteinte des objectifs ne peut être accélérée sans analyser la situation mondiale actuelle et les répercussions que d'autres politiques ont sur l'espace maritime et le secteur de la pêche. La poursuite de l'amélioration des connaissances scientifiques est primordiale et nécessaire pour la mise en place effective de l'approche écosystémique. Mais aussi pour éviter l'utilisation, parfois abusive, de l'approche de précaution, préjudiciant grandement les exploitations par manque de données et non pas par une dégradation du stock (par exemple le merlu du sud - HKE/8C3411).

Conclusion

Selon les membres du secteur du CC SUD, les opportunités offertes par le plan de gestion des eaux occidentales sud n'ont pas été saisies. D'un côté, son application a principalement porté sur la fixation des possibilités de pêche, de manière trop précautionneuse, et sans prise en compte des impacts socio-économiques ou de la dimension multi-spécifique des captures. De l'autre, il n'a pas permis la mise d'une réelle approche écosystémique limitant efficacement l'ensemble des impacts anthropiques ou facilité l'obligation de débarquement qui n'a eu qu'un effet très limité sur l'amélioration de la sélectivité. Il n'a enfin pas permis non plus d'améliorer la durabilité socio-économique des entreprises de pêche en mettant en place des mesures de long terme.

Les membres du secteur du CC SUD considèrent que tant que la gestion des pêches restera basée uniquement sur des critères halieutiques annuels et mono-spécifiques, elle ne permettra pas d'évolutions majeures pour faire face aux défis à venir.

Dictamen 163: Consulta sobre el Plan de Gestión de las Aguas Occidentales

Con este dictamen, los miembros del sector del CCSUR (Francia, España, Portugal) han querido participar en la consulta de la Comisión Europea sobre el plan de gestión de las Aguas Occidentales (Reglamento (UE) 2019/472), e incluso desde su elaboración (Dictámenes 98, 103, 120 de 2015 a 2018), a su correcta aplicación (Dictamen 134 en 2019), y, en particular, en lo relativo a la aplicación de medidas a largo plazo para las poblaciones del Golfo de Vizcaya y aguas ibéricas que permite su artículo 6 (Dictamen 153 en 2021).

Los miembros de la CCSUR consideran que la adopción de esta herramienta legislativa ha abierto muchos debates y posibilidades de gestión para las pesquerías mixtas en sus aguas

jurisdiccionales. Sin embargo, cuatro años después hay mucha desilusión. Esta paradoja es la que detallan a continuación los miembros del sector CCSUR. Los miembros de las ONG ecologistas prefirieron responder individualmente a la consulta en línea.

A. Posibilidades de pesca, RMS e intervalos de capturas.

El plan de gestión de las aguas occidentales se ha basado en la posibilidad de utilizar intervalos de capturas en torno al RMS (art. 4), con el objetivo de tener en cuenta la complejidad de la gestión de las pesquerías mixtas, especialmente presentes en las aguas suroccidentales. Sin embargo, el objetivo político del RMS se ha traducido de manera demasiado cautelosa, mencionando que la fijación de las posibilidades de pesca no podía ir, salvo raras y insuficientes instauraciones de exenciones, más allá, el valor del TAC asociado a Frms mediano, para todas las poblaciones. Esta opción política tendría que corregirse de manera útil para que, en el futuro, las posibilidades de pesca se fijen dentro de un «intervalo» de valores de F, permitiendo la buena gestión global de una pesquería, desde un punto de vista ecosistémico y socioeconómico.

Así pues, el CIEM propone situaciones con una probabilidad de al menos el 95% de alcanzar el RMS, lo que ofrece márgenes de maniobra muy amplios para desarrollar la gestión de la pesca en una zona de RMS, integrando al mismo tiempo las cuestiones socioeconómicas. Esta integración de los aspectos socioeconómicos es esencial en las aguas suroccidentales, como ha mencionado en varias ocasiones el CCSUR, especialmente en su Dictamen 153.

Sin embargo, es evidente que la Comisión Europea no ha recogido estas opciones en sus propuestas anuales, que siempre se centran únicamente en los aspectos pesqueros de manera mono específica, con estricto cumplimiento de los dictámenes del CIEM.

De hecho, el plan de gestión (Art. 4, 7, 8) condiciona las decisiones. Ya no es posible que los responsables de la toma de decisiones se desvíen de ella, incluso si los dictámenes presentan problemas metodológicos (referencias demasiado antiguas en el tiempo, ausencia de campaña, falta de datos, etc.). Asimismo, no permite, o solo con gran dificultad, lógicas plurianuales. Además, las interpretaciones jurídicas del artículo 8 han impuesto limitaciones de gestión inimaginables (arrastre relevado para el bacalao VII, -37% para el lenguado VIII). El plan no ha permitido tener en cuenta las cuestiones socioeconómicas, o no lo suficiente, a la hora de fijar las posibilidades de pesca.

B. Obligación de desembarque y descartes

Los miembros de la CCSUR consideran que la obligación de desembarque, cuando se puso en marcha, dio lugar numerosos programas para mejorar la capacidad de selección y reducir las capturas no deseadas, algo que ha sido positivo. Sin embargo, se observa que esta norma no ha tenido en cuenta ni las repercusiones socioeconómicas ni la realidad de las pesquerías: su impacto en determinadas flotas ha sido, por lo tanto, desproporcionado.

De hecho, la obligación de desembarque ha afectado a todas las pesquerías, independientemente de su nivel de selectividad. Esta obligación no tiene en cuenta las cuotas

asignadas a cada Estado y ha provocado situaciones de estrangulamiento, haciendo imprescindibles las exenciones de la obligación de desembarque para no degradar las operaciones. Es el caso, por ejemplo, de los palangreros de la flota española con el bacalao o el merlán.

Del mismo modo, la aplicación del plan de gestión solo ha tenido poco en cuenta la dimensión multi-específica de las principales flotillas que faenan en el territorio del CC SUR, en el momento de determinar las posibilidades de pesca. Los miembros de la industria del CC SUR, recomiendan la instauración de artículo 4.5.a en esta perspectiva, y también que se desarrollen trabajos necesarios del CIEM.

Determinadas capturas siguen siendo inevitables. La obligación de desembarque se ha convertido, así, en un objetivo en sí mismo y ha dejado de ser un medio para mejorar la selectividad, reduciendo la visibilidad de determinadas pesquerías, a las que le supone repercusiones socioeconómicas negativas, sin tener ningún valor añadido para el recurso. En el contexto actual, la aplicación de esta obligación se ha vuelto, por tanto, negativa.

C. Enfoque ecosistémico

Aunque la mayoría de las poblaciones de aguas occidentales se encuentran en una situación óptima, el enfoque ecosistémico solo se ha utilizado de forma parcial, debido, sobre todo, a la falta de conocimientos y datos sobre las distintas presiones antropogénicas y su priorización racional. Por lo tanto, hoy nos contentamos con hacer de la presión pesquera la variable de ajuste para mantener (a corto plazo) la explotación en el RMS, sin tomar medidas suficientes sobre las demás causas de degradación del ecosistema. Esta situación no puede dar visibilidad a los agentes socioeconómicos de la pesca, que sin embargo son responsables de la necesidad de mantener o restaurar un buen estado ecológico del medio ambiente.

Por consiguiente, los miembros del CCSUR recomiendan:

- Mejorar el conocimiento de todos los factores antropogénicos que repercuten en las zonas de pesca funcionales (cuyos efectos también se ven afectados por el cambio climático).
- Utilizar plenamente las disposiciones del plan de gestión, pidiendo al CIEM los peritajes científicos necesarios a la aplicación del artículo 4.5.b
- Priorizar el impacto de los diversos factores antropogénicos en la renovación de los recursos y el mantenimiento o la restauración del buen estado ecológico;
- A partir de esta información, reducir el impacto de todos los factores antropogénicos que tienen una gran responsabilidad en la renovación de los recursos y el mantenimiento o la restauración del buen estado ecológico en general;

- Permitir, en su caso, el mantenimiento de un nivel mínimo de explotación (mínimo socioeconómico por definir) cuando se reconozca que el impacto de la pesca es menor en la renovación del recurso o en el mantenimiento/restauración del buen estado ecológico.

D. Cooperación regional

A pesar de su tardía adopción, el plan de gestión ha fomentado la cooperación regional según los miembros del CCSUR, abriendo numerosos temas y debates, sobre todo en el seno de los consejos consultivos, como demuestra el número de dictámenes y reuniones del CCSUR dedicados a este tema. Sin embargo, como se ha demostrado anteriormente, estos debates no han desembocado en medidas concretas, respaldadas, lo suficiente, por pruebas científicas, para que la Comisión Europea las adopte frente a las rigideces normativas.

E. Propuestas de medidas adicionales para alcanzar los objetivos

La consecución de los objetivos no puede acelerarse sin antes analizar la situación global actual y el impacto que otras políticas tienen en el espacio marítimo y el sector pesquero. Es esencial y necesario seguir mejorando los conocimientos científicos para aplicar eficazmente el enfoque ecosistémico. Pero también para evitar el uso, a veces abusivo, del criterio de precaución, que perjudica enormemente las explotaciones por falta de datos y no por degradación de la población (por ejemplo, merluza austral - HKE/8C3411).

F. Conclusión

Según los miembros del sector del CCSUR, no se han aprovechado las oportunidades que ofrece el Plan de Gestión de las Aguas Occidentales. De un lado, su aplicación ha llevado principalmente sobre la fijación de las posibilidades de pesca, de manera demasiado cautelosa, y sin tomar en consideración de los impactos socio económicos o la dimensión multi específica de las capturas. Por otro lado, no ha permitido la instauración de un verdadero enfoque ecosistémico, que limite eficazmente todas las repercusiones antropogénicas, o facilitado la obligación de desembarque, que ha tenido un efecto muy limitado en la mejora de la selectividad. Tampoco ha permitido mejorar la sostenibilidad socioeconómica de las empresas pesqueras mediante la aplicación de medidas a largo plazo.

Los miembros del sector del CCSUR consideran que mientras la gestión de la pesca siga basándose únicamente en criterios pesqueros anuales y mono específicos, no permitirá grandes cambios para hacer frente a los retos que se avecinan.

9.14. Member of the SWWAC

Member of the South Western Waters Advisory Council

North Sea MAP

According to the North Sea MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. Out of the 11 stocks covered by the MAP, the ICES provides an analytical assessment for 9 stocks. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values, which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the landing obligation (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the North Sea, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?

3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened regional cooperation on the proposal of conservation measures through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Are there any additional measures that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

Western Waters MAP

According to the Western Waters MAP, **MSY** was to be achieved for all relevant stocks by 2020. In your opinion:

1. To what extent has the MAP contributed to increase the number of TACs set at MSY?
2. What is the medium to long-term socio-economic impact on the fisheries concerned when a TAC is set at MSY?
3. What change was brought by the establishment of the target fishing mortality (F) that corresponds to the objective of reaching and maintaining MSY as ranges of values which are consistent with achieving MSY (FMSY)?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

1 - neutro

2 - benéfico; 3 - benéfico

On **discards** (unwanted catches that are returned to the sea) and the **landing obligation** (Article 15 of the CFP Regulation), in your opinion:

1. To what extent discards have been eliminated and the landing obligation has been actually implemented?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to achieving the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation? More specifically, to what extent does the MAP allow taking into account the management

of mixed fisheries – management of by-catch stocks and avoidance of choking situations?

3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the elimination of discards and implementation of the landing obligation on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

benéfico

On the **ecosystem-based approach** to fisheries management, in your opinion:

1. In general, within the context of fisheries management in the Western Waters, to what extent has the objective of implementing an ecosystem-based approach, and notably of achieving good environmental status by 2020, been achieved?
2. To what extent has the MAP contributed to the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach?
3. What is the impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the relevant stocks?
4. What is the socio-economic impact of the current situation in terms of the ecosystem-based approach on the fisheries concerned?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

benéfico

In your opinion, to what extent has the MAP strengthened **regional cooperation** on the proposal of **conservation measures** through the submission of joint recommendations, including with stakeholders?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral, negative, very negative, no opinion

muito benéfico

Are there any **additional measures** that would contribute to the faster achievement of the objectives provided for in Article 3 of the MAP?

very beneficial, beneficial, neutral,
negative

sem opinião

10. Glossary

AC: Advisory Council

CFP: Common fisheries policy

CNPMEM: Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins

FMSY: Fishing mortality consistent with maximum sustainable yield

ICES: International Council for the Exploration of the Sea

MSG: Member States Group

MAP: Multiannual plan

MSY: Maximum sustainable yield

NWW: North Western Waters

NWWAC: North Western Waters Advisory Council

NSAC: North Sea Advisory Council

SSB: Spawning stock biomass

STECF: Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries

SWW: South Western Waters

SWWAC: South Western Waters Advisory Council

TAC: Total allowable catch