



## Questions and Answers on the Commission's proposal for Atlantic and North Sea fish quotas in 2016

Brussels, 10 November 2015

### The European Commission proposes fishing opportunities (Total Allowable Catches) for 2016 for the Atlantic and the North Sea.

#### 1) What's new in 2016?

From 1 January 2016 fishermen will be obliged to land all catches of certain demersal species once they have been caught. This applies for example to hake, whiting and sole in certain fisheries. To compensate the industry for the extra effort involved in landing these catches, the Commission will propose so-called "TAC top-ups" for fish stocks that fall under the landing obligation. These TAC top-ups will be calculated based on how much those fleets that come under the landing obligation in 2016 contribute to total catches and discards.

#### 2) Why are the TAC top-ups not yet included in the Commission proposal?

The Commission has asked scientific advisory body STECF for advice on the appropriate level of TAC top-up. STECF will only provide their advice in mid-November. Therefore, the stocks for which TAC top-ups are proposed are kept open in today's proposal. The Commission will table a non-paper with all the TAC top-ups as soon as possible after receiving the STECF advice.

#### 3) How many TACs will be in line with MSY next year?

This will depend on the decision taken by the Council in December. In December 2014 the EU increased the number of MSY TACs from 27 to 36 in one go. The Commission is again proposing to reach maximum sustainable yield (MSY) exploitation rates by 2016 for all stocks where scientists have given MSY advice, except for sea bass. For sea bass the situation differs in that there were no catch limits in place on EU level before 2015. The Commission is therefore proposing to achieve MSY in 2017, still well in advance of 2020. Proposing TAC at MSY levels means phasing out overfishing: the MSY rate is the amount of fishing that will deliver the highest long-term catch from a stock, so any fishing above that level is wasteful, harmful and ultimately unprofitable for the fishermen.

#### 4) Why are there so many figures missing in the proposal?

The Commission negotiates on behalf of the EU a number of quotas for fish stocks shared with third countries (Norway, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Russia). The same is the case for the stocks in international waters and for highly migratory species such as tuna, where the European Commission negotiates fishing opportunities in regional fisheries management organisations. The figures will be filled in as soon as these negotiations are concluded. In addition, for some stocks advice was received too late to include figures in the proposal.

#### 5) What is the monetary value of the 2016 proposal compared to this year's quotas?

For many TACs the proposal contains no figure yet. For those TACs where a figure is included, the monetary value was approximately 1,123,000,000 EUR in the 2015 Regulation, and is about 25m EUR less in today's proposal.

At this stage, however, comparing monetary value is rather meaningless: several high value or high volume TACs (e.g. some nephrops, sole and horse mackerel TACs) are still open in the proposal.

#### 6) How many TACs are there in the Atlantic and North Sea?

The main group of TACs proposed is included in Annex IA. This annex contains 153 TACs in the Atlantic and North Sea, 63 of which are being proposed today. In today's proposal:

- 11 take consideration of MSY advice,
- 3 TACs (Celtic Sea herring, cod in the Irish Sea and cod in West of Scotland) are in line with long-term management strategies, e.g. management plans stemming from specific CFP regulations in force, Commission proposals for management plans not yet adopted, or a management approach put forward by Advisory Councils (ACs) and found precautionary by scientific advisory bodies.

- 49 TACs concern so-called data-limited stocks. This means that scientists cannot make a full assessment. Of these 49 TACs, the Commission is proposing to keep 26 TACs at the same level as in 2015, following an agreement with the Council to keep them stable unless scientific advice shows that the stock is deteriorating. Most of these stocks are by-catches in mixed fisheries and the TACs are rather small.
- The remaining TACs are in "pm" (pro memoria), either because scientific advice is not yet available, because further analysis of the advice is necessary or because international negotiations should be concluded later in the year. For these stocks, the proposal will need to be updated when the related information becomes available.

The TACs in today's proposal include 4 increases, 5 TACs which are proposed at the same level as in 2015 ("rollover") (plus 26 "rollovers" in for stocks contained in a joint Council and Commission statement) and 28 decreases. All four TAC increases concern stocks fished at MSY levels:

Common name	TAC Unit	final TAC in 2015	Type	TAC 2016 (Proposal)	TAC change: 2015 - 2016 (Proposal)
<b>Megrims</b>	North Sea (Union waters of IIa and IV)	2083	MSY	2639	26.7%
<b>Megrims</b>	West of Scotland (Union and international waters of Vb; VI)	4129	MSY	4314	4.5%
<b>Horse Mackerel</b>	North and North West of Spain (VIIIc)	13572	MSY	17235	27.0%
<b>Horse Mackerel</b>	Portuguese waters (IX)	59500	MSY	68583	15.3%

## 7) What about sea bass?

Sea bass is a special case: real management measures for sea bass were only put in place in January 2015 and catch limits were only put in place in June 2015. The Commission is therefore building on the measures taken in 2015 to halt the dramatic decline in this important stock. Today's proposal includes a complete fishing ban for commercial vessels and recreational anglers in the first half of 2016. For the second half of 2016, the Commission is proposing a monthly one tonne catch limit for vessels targeting sea bass, and a one fish bag limit for recreational anglers. It is also proposing to maintain the closure for commercial fishing around Ireland.

### For more information:

Press Release on Commission's proposal on fishing opportunities in the Atlantic and North Sea for 2016: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-6016\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-6016_en.htm)

Questions and Answers on Quota Top-ups: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-15-6017\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-6017_en.htm)

Infographic on Quota Top-ups: [http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/publications/2015-definition-of-tac-proposals\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/publications/2015-definition-of-tac-proposals_en.pdf)

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Press contacts:

[Enrico BRIVIO](mailto:enrico.brivio@ec.europa.eu) (+32 2 295 61 72)

[Iris PETA](mailto:iris.petsa@ec.europa.eu) (+32 2 299 33 21)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](http://ec.europa.eu/europe-direct) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](tel:0080067891011) or by [email](mailto:europa-direct@ec.europa.eu)