



Sustainable fisheries: Commission takes stock of progress in the EU and launches consultation on fishing opportunities for 2022

Brussels, 9 June 2021

Today, the Commission adopted the Communication ["Towards more sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2022"](#). In line with the [European Green Deal](#) objectives, EU fisheries are moving towards more sustainable, supporting the transition towards a healthy and environmentally friendly EU food system and underpinning sustainable sources of revenue for EU fishers, the communication shows. The sector's socio-economic performance remains good, despite the coronavirus crisis, also due to the swift support of the Commission.

The Communication calls for further efforts to protect marine resources, both through maintaining high levels of ambition within the EU and by striving to achieve the same high standard in the work with non-EU countries. Member States, Advisory Councils, the fishing industry, non-governmental organisations and interested citizens are invited to take part until 31 August in a [public consultation](#) and express their views on the fishing opportunities for 2022.

Commissioner Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, responsible for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, said: *"EU fisheries remain on course towards a still more sustainable use of the sea. And while the pandemic hit our fishing communities hard, it was confirmed that environmental sustainability is the key to economic resilience. The situation in some sea basins requires our particular attention, but also across all our sea basins more must be done to deliver the blue in the Green Deal. I count on everybody to play their full part"*.

The 2021 Communication shows that in the North East Atlantic especially, sustainability was almost reached for the stocks managed under the principle of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) - the maximum amount of fish that fishers can take out of the sea without compromising the regeneration and future productivity of the stock.

Healthy stocks further contributed to the sector's socio-economic performance, which thus stayed profitable despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fishing activities were hit hard by the sanitary crisis and landed value of fish is estimated to have decreased by 17% last year compared to 2019. The rapid support that the Commission provided to the sector, in particular through making €136 million of funds available under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, has helped in addressing the effects of the pandemic swiftly.

However, to ensure healthy fish stocks for future generations, efforts need to be pursued. In the Atlantic and Baltic Sea, the Commission will propose for next year to further maintain or reduce fishing mortality in line with maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for MSY-assessed stocks and to fully implement management plans that set MSY ranges of mortality. In the Mediterranean and Black Seas, although there has been a slight improvement, exploitation rates are still two times higher than sustainable levels. Strong efforts will therefore be aimed at further implementing the Western Mediterranean multiannual plan and measures adopted by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. Further improvements in the Adriatic will feature prominently in the 2022 fishing opportunities.

Member States also need to step up the enforcement and control of compliance with the landing obligation, in particular by using suitable modern control tools, such as remote electronic monitoring systems, which are the most effective and cost-efficient means to control the landing obligation at sea. The Commission will continue working with the European Parliament and Council to reach an agreement on the revised fisheries control system, which can facilitate the use of these tools. Besides, fishers are encouraged to further adopt the use of more innovative and selective gears. The [European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund \(EMFAF\)](#) can help finance such investments.

In its relations with third countries, the Commission will pursue high levels of alignment on fishing opportunities and related measures with high sustainability standards. This will be key to ensuring sustainable exploitation of resources and to achieving a level playing field for the EU industry given the strong interlinkages between fleets in the waters concerned. As regards stocks shared with the

UK, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) provides a strong basis for managing shared fish stocks sustainably, both in annual consultations on fishing opportunities and through the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.

Background

Every year, the Commission publishes a Communication outlining progress on the situation of fish stocks and launching a wide public consultation on the fixing of annual fishing opportunities for the following year. This Communication assesses the progress made towards sustainable fishing in the EU and reviews the balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities, the sector's socio-economic performance and the implementation of the landing obligation. It also sets out the rationale for the proposal on fishing opportunities for the following year.

Next steps

After the consultation, the Commission will in the autumn table its proposals for Fishing Opportunities Regulations for 2022 in the Atlantic, the North and Baltic Seas, as well as the Mediterranean and Black Seas. The proposals take into account the multi-annual plans and are based on scientific advice provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and other independent bodies, as well as the economic analysis provided by the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF).

The proposals will also incorporate adjustments resulting from the implementation of the landing obligation. Finally, the Council of Fisheries Ministers of the European Union will discuss the Commission's proposals and establish the allocation of fishing opportunities.

For more information

Communication ["Towards more sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2022"](#)

[Questions and Answers](#)

[Common fisheries policy \(CFP\)](#)

IP/21/2875

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