

Sea Bass Q&A

Latest News

What has the Agriculture and Fisheries Council adopted on 13 December 2016 on sea bass?

On 12-13 December the fisheries ministers of all 28 EU member states discussed a Commission proposal with measures for sea bass as part of the annual TACs (total allowable catches) and quotas regulation. The Commission had previously consulted the North Sea and the North Western Waters Advisory Councils and the member states on the best possible measures to take for 2017. All views received were carefully evaluated to prepare proposals for managing sea bass in 2017.

On 13 December the Council adopted the following measures for 2017:

- no fishing for sea bass by commercial vessels targeting sea bass, except for long lines, pole and lines who will have a closure of two months in February and March 2017 and a maximum catch limit of 10 tonnes per year;
- a monthly limit of 250 kg for vessels deploying fixed gillnets and traps to cover unavoidable by-catches;
- a small by-catch allowance of 3% and a maximum of 400 kg is envisaged for demersal trawlers and seiners.

The decision of the Council takes into account that artisanal hooks and line fisheries depend on sea bass to a greater extent and may not have other alternatives to catch.

Recreational anglers are asked to practise a catch and release fishery in the first half of the year and to limit their catches to one fish per day in the second half of 2017.

The Council also decided to close an area around Ireland for commercial fishing, namely the Celtic Sea, Irish Sea, south of Ireland and west of Ireland (ICES areas VIIa,b,c,g,j,k outside the UK 12 mile zone). This extends a national measure, which Ireland has had in place for Irish vessels since 1990, to cover all EU vessels active in the area.

When will this decision take effect?

The decision takes effect from 1 January 2017.

What happens in the long term?

The Commission intends to include sea bass in a multi annual management plan (MAP). This MAP would cover also other stocks and be based on scientific advice. It would provide a framework to manage sea bass in a sustainable manner in line with maximum sustainable yield (MSY). Member states will then implement the necessary measures for example by agreeing on concrete technical measures for sea bass fisheries. This is the new process of regionalized governance which is a key element of the Common Fisheries Policy.

This regionalisation process, which includes consultation of stakeholders, offers the possibility for member states to take tailor-made decisions for the various fishing

segments active in the sea bass fishery. A decision on giving priority to particular fisheries over other fisheries may also be taken by the member states in the regionalisation process.

Is the Commission considering the potential economic impact of a further decline of sea bass?

Yes. Halting the decline of sea bass and rebuilding this valuable stock is the objective of the Commission. Numerous jobs in the UK, France, Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe depend on commercial and recreational sea bass fishing and there are many small scale fishermen involved for whom sea bass is often their main source of income¹.

Recreational fishing (everything from angling equipment to boat rentals) plays an important role as well. There are more than 1,3 million recreational anglers in France and another 800.000 in the UK generating a lot of added value.

Estimates from various surveys² suggest that the downstream value added is considerable. A potential collapse of this stock would have a very serious impact on the livelihoods of many fishermen and coastal communities. It is therefore vital to rebuild sea bass for the benefit of both commercial fishermen and recreational anglers.

¹ Section 3.5 STECF 2014. Request for Services - Sea bass. Commitment No. SI2.680348. Paper for STECF July2014 Sea bass fisheries in Europe and their management. Mike Armstrong (contract lead) and Mickael Drogou, Independent scientific experts, UK and France (background documents on: <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/plen1402>).

² Armstrong, M. A. Brown, J. Hargreaves, K. Hyder, S. Pilgrim-Morrison, M. Munday, S. Proctor, A. Roberts, K. Williamson “Sea Angling 2012 – a survey of recreational sea angling activity and economic value in England” Defra,2013
<http://www.marinemangement.org.uk/seaangling/finalreport.htm>
And
Blue Marine Foundation: Defining the Economic and Environmental Values of sea bass- Link to publication [here](#)