



An Comhchoiste um Thalmhaíocht, Bia agus Muir

An Cion Polaitiúil maidir le Plean Ilbhliantúil Beartaithe Farraigí Iartharacha AE

Bealtaine 2018

Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Political Contribution on the Proposed EU Western Waters Multiannual Plan

May 2018

Introduction

The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine (the Committee) has undertaken consideration of COM(2018)149 – Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual plan for fish stocks in the Western Waters and adjacent waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 establishing a multiannual plan for the Baltic Sea, and repealing Regulations (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) 509/2007 and (EC) 1300/2008.

The Committee agreed to submit a Political Contribution to the EU Institutions at its meeting on 22 May 2018.

Considerations forming the opinion of the Committee

Background

The Western Waters Multi Annual Plan (Plan) is of significant importance to Ireland, as it relates to the whitefish and prawn stocks. The Plan is welcomed in certain quarters as the Committee heard that it should provide greater flexibility when setting total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas in the context of the fishing mortality maximum sustainable yield (FMSY) levels as prescribed by the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). It is understood that this sets fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield. The Plan also supports the introduction of technical measures to support more selective fishing based on the recommendations of regional Member State groups.

The Committee understands that there a number of concerns, which include whether the stocks listed are target stocks or by catches, the treatment of recreational catches and the treatment of the sea bass sector.

Seabass

The treatment of seabass within the proposed Plan is of concern to the Committee. The Committee understands that the Plan does not differentiate between the waters around Ireland where commercial fishing for seabass is prohibited and other areas in western waters where commercial fishing is allowed.

The Committee is acutely aware of the vulnerability of Irish stocks and is of the view that the final regulation should also take account of the need to continue to protect and for the long term sustainability of the stock in Irish waters.

Maximum Sustainable Yield (FMSY)

The proposal states an objective for all species listed in Article 1(1) of the proposal to be fished at maximum sustainable yield (FMSY) rates by 2020, with stocks set within the lower range of maximum sustainable yield. The FMSY ranges introduce new flexibilities when setting TACs and quotas, which the Committee supports. This replaces an approach where TACs are set with reference to a particular FMSY point.

The role of the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) in being requested for FMSY ranges is also to be welcomed, although reference to national scientific data could also be considered. This, in the view of the Committee, may assist in applying the Plan to local conditions. Similar to the issue on seabass, the Committee believes that flexibility for local conditions should also be considered.

Landing Obligation / Discards Ban

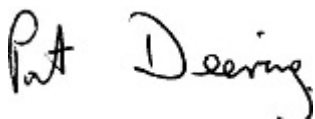
A serious notable element of the landing obligation is the position in relation to “chok species” (which refers to by-catches in target fisheries limiting those fisheries because the quota for the bycatch species has been exhausted).

While the Committee is in broad support of ending the practice of discarding, applying rules which may assist the EU’s fishing community in addressing by-catches and avoid being restricted by reaching quota on such by-catches is also welcomed.

Decision of the Committee

The following is the opinion of the Committee –

- I. The Committee is of the opinion that local conditions and stocks be accounted for with respect to non-commercial species. In the Irish context, one such species is seabass. The Committee recommends that the proposed regulation and Plan clearly accounts for stocks that are vulnerable at a local and Member State level;
- II. The Committee recommends that the high level of stakeholder consultation is continued.
- III. The Committee supports the need for greater flexibility in the setting of TACs and quotas in the fishing sector, viewing the FMSY ranges proposed as a possible solution to the challenges faced by fishermen in this regard; and
- IV. The Committee believes that the application of measures in applying the discards ban should account for local conditions, in particular areas where there are mixed fisheries present.



Pat Deering T.D.

Chairman

25 May 2018