



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Director General

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Mr. Giampaolo Buonfiglio  
Chairman  
Mediterranean Advisory Council  
Via XX Settembre 20  
c/o MIPAAF  
00187 Roma  
ITALY

**Subject: MEDAC opinion on the Proposal for a Regulation of the EP and of the Council establishing a MAP for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea**

*Your Ref.: 189/2018 of 6 July 2018*

Dear Mr Buonfiglio,

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the MEDAC for preparing an opinion on the Commission proposal establishing a multiannual plan (MAP) for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea. I am pleased to see that the MEDAC generally agrees with the main objectives and elements of the MAP proposal. I also bear in mind the importance for the MEDAC to take into account the socio-economic sustainability of the fisheries, co-management approaches, as well as a better integration of recreational fisheries.

Concerning the suggestion to remove the landing obligation from the objectives (Article 3), the MEDAC rightly points out that it is already specified in Article 15 of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). However, the CFP also foresees the long-term implementation of the landing obligation through MAPs. The current discard plans are laid down on a temporary basis, and once expired, the MAPs would be the only legal basis for the implementation of the landing obligation; hence the need to include the landing obligation in the MAP proposal. Please also note that similar legal drafting exists in all other COM proposals for MAPs.

I take note of the MEDAC's recommendation in which the FMSY targets (Article 4) should be postponed by four years, i.e. from 2020 to 2024. With reference to your question about how the FMSY range will tackle mixed fisheries, the idea is that the ranges will provide additional flexibility and facilitate the setting of fishing opportunities

(in terms of effort limits) for most of the stocks concerned. The MAP proposal also foresees the possibility to adopt complementary technical measures in order to improve selectivity and so to decrease fishing mortality in those stocks highly overexploited.

I am pleased to see that the MEDAC broadly welcomes the proposed fishing effort regime (Article 7). Concerning the several points highlighted in the opinion, let me provide you with the following information:

- Fishing gears other than trawls were not included because it was considered more appropriate to have, as starting point, the effort regime focusing on the gear with the greatest contribution to the fishing mortality. The system would be also easier to implement (1 gear - 1 effort unit). Nevertheless, the proposal foresees the possibility to add additional gears in the future in accordance with scientific advice.
- I take note that the MEDAC is more in favour of a baseline calculated with a longer reference period (i.e. 2012-2016). I am, however, surprised to see that the year 2017, which indicates the most recent fishing effort levels, is not included in your proposed baseline. Furthermore, it is not clear why the MEDAC is proposing, as entry in force of the effort management, the 1st February instead of 1st January. In my view, a calendar year would be easier to monitor and to follow the quota consumption. This is also a common approach used in other fishing opportunities in the EU.
- Concerning the wording 'substantial reduction' and 'significant catches', please allow me clarifying that it is a normal practice not to provide any concrete number in a Regulation, given that values are not constant and can change on a case by case basis. In such situations, the Commission always asks the scientific community to provide an advice in accordance with the most updated data.
- The limitation of 12 hours per fishing day was proposed in order to have a common interpretation of a 'fishing day' between French, Italian and Spanish fishermen. A standardization is essential given the effort regime would be based on the number of fishing days. According to our information, the fishing activity of most trawl vessels would fall within the limit proposed.

I note with regret the MEDAC's suggestion to remove the possibility to introduce Total Allowable Catches in the MAP (Article 8). Please note that this article provides a safeguard plan in case the effort regime is not effective. Indeed, while we acknowledge that an effort regime is the most suitable management tool for these fisheries, we cannot overlook the failures experienced in the past in other EU basins. An alternative strategy may be therefore useful in a long perspective.

From the Opinion, I understand that the MEDAC does not support the 100 m closure area for trawls from 1 May to 31 July each year. We note that the MEDAC is more favourable to an adaptive approach where the closure areas (site and period of the year) would be defined on a case by case basis and preferably applying a co-management approach. I

also acknowledge the MEDAC suggestion to evaluate the efficiency of the already existing fisheries restricted areas.

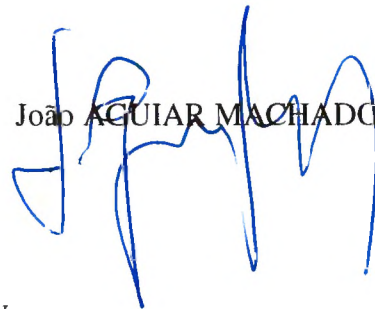
I would like to thank again the MEDAC for the good understanding of the key issues for the fishing sector the opinion provides for. I also take note of the various specific recommendations made. All this information will be taken into account in the upcoming months in the context of the discussions with the European Parliament and Council. I would like to encourage you to further disseminate your opinion, including on the MEDAC website.

For information, the STECF is about to publish a report concerning the EWG 18-09 on the effort regime for the western Mediterranean fisheries. It will be available at the following link: <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ewg1809> in the coming days.

I would like to assure you that my services will keep the MEDAC informed on the progress of this file through your regular focus groups.

Thank again for your very constructive input. I very much look forward to our continued cooperation and invite you to take contact with Ms Pascale Colson, as coordinator of the ACs (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu; +32 2 29 56273) should you have any question on this reply.

Yours sincerely,

  
João AGUIAR MACHADO

c.c.: Ms. Veits, Roller, Lainé, Colson, de Diego de la Vega