



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 7/14/2003

GAIN Report Number: E23133

European Union

Fishery Products

Long-term recovery plan for northern hake - EU Proposal

2003

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Report Highlights:

On June 27, 2003, the European Commission proposed a long-term recovery plan for northern hake, similar to the one proposed earlier for cod. Similar plans will be proposed for southern hake, some stocks of sole and Norway lobster.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Brussels USEU [BE2]
[E2]

European Commission proposes long-term recovery plan for hake

Intro

On June 27, 2003, the European Commission proposed a long-term recovery plan for northern hake, similar to the one proposed for cod in May. The northern hake stock is on the verge of depletion because catches are too high in relation to the size of the available stock. As for cod, the recovery plan involves low catches, reduced fishing effort and specific enforcement measures. The recovery plans confirm the application of a long-term approach agreed under the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) to help restore and maintain fish stocks at safe biological levels. The estimated time frame for achieving the recovery objectives for northern hake is 5 to 10 years. The Commission will propose to switch from a recovery to a long-term management plan when, on the basis of scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and after consultation with the Scientific, Economic and Technical Committee for Fisheries (STECF), the target level (min. 143,000 MT) has been reached for two consecutive years. This recovery plan is the second in a series. Similar plans will be proposed for southern hake and for some stocks of sole and Norway lobster.

The proposal can be downloaded from the Internet at http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2003/com2003_0374en01.pdf

Stocks covered

The areas covered by the Commission's proposal are the North Sea, Kattegat and Skagerrak, the Channel, the West of Scotland, the Irish Sea, the Celtic Sea, West of Ireland and the Bay of Biscay.

Total Allowable Catches (TACs)

The proposal includes guidelines for the setting of TACs based on estimations of actual stock sizes by scientists. If this estimated stock is below the recommended level (143,000 MT) but above or slightly below the minimum level (103,000 MT), TACs will be set aiming for a 10% increase in the in stock size in the following year. If the estimated stock size is well below the minimum level, more severe measures will apply. TACs for associated species will unavoidably be affected by the northern hake recovery plan. Additional conditions are built into the rules as safeguards: restrictions to prevent large fluctuations in TACs, overshooting the recovery target, exceeding the precautionary fishing mortality and dealing with the possibility of unexpectedly small stock size.

Limiting Fishing Effort

The proposal also provides for the management of a fishing effort limitation scheme. Limitations of fishing effort are essential to recovery plans, especially in mixed fisheries. As for cod, restricting the time that vessels may spend fishing will be calculated in kilowatt-days (the engine power of a vessel multiplied by the days spent out of port). First the overall fishing effort of all vessels catching northern hake is calculated over a three-year reference period (2000, 2001 and 2002). Then the reduction in fishing effort required to match the related TAC is determined. The resulting kilowatt-days distributed to member states will be proportional to the quantity of northern hake they landed during the reference period in comparison to the total EU landings. Member states will distribute the allocated kilowatt-

days among their vessels within the geographical area to which they will apply. Some parts of the areas covered by the northern hake recovery plan coincide with areas covered by the cod recovery plan. The proposed effort limitation scheme only applies to the areas where the majority of the northern hake stock resides: West of Ireland, the Celtic Sea, Bay of Biscay and the western Channel. The Commission considers that the small northern hake stocks found in the other areas are sufficiently protected by the measures taken to protect cod.

Control and Monitoring Rules

The proposal also provides for specific measures to improve monitoring, inspection and control of the vessels covered by the effort management scheme. These measures include special reporting requirements, the requirement to land northern hake in designated ports and conditions for the weighing and transport of landed hake. Rules on the use of the satellite Vessel Monitoring System will be addressed in a separate proposal.

EU Financial Aid

A 32 million EUR “scrapping fund” has been established to help those member states mostly affected by the recovery plans. This adds to the funds already available for decommissioning vessels under the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) over the 2000 to 2006 period. Aid from this new fund will be available for vessels whose fishing effort has to be reduced by 25% or more. Premiums for the permanent removal of these vessels will be 20% higher than those already available under the FIFG.

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