



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/C1/JE/sd/Ares (2020)

Mr Pim Visser
President
European Association of Fish
Producers Organisations
H. Baelskaai 20
B-8400 Oostende, Belgium

Subject: Your letter of 2 December 2020

Dear Mr Visser,

Thank you for your letter dated 2 December 2020 providing EAPO's views on the "Taste the Ocean" campaign and on a possible carrying over of 2020 fishing opportunities to 2021.

On the communication campaign, thank you for your support. We are working intensely with the Commission representations to ensure a broad dissemination across the relevant Member States, and will revert in time to you to inform and activate your members.

You also request an increase in inter-annual flexibility to 25% in 2021, to allow fishing operators to use in 2021 the quota that remains underutilised this year as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Commission's internal analysis has shown different realities across fleet segments and Member States. While it is true that some TACs remain underutilised in 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, other TACs show comparable levels of uptake, and – in certain cases – even higher levels of uptake than in 2019. Underutilisation of certain fishing opportunities may therefore have been compensated by increased fishing on other stocks. As a result, we believe that a one-size-fits all approach, as you request, is difficult to justify.

As you are aware, banking of 10% is already possible under the current framework, and the Commission remains convinced that this will go a long way to addressing the concerns that you raise. Increased inter-annual flexibility could undermine the CFP objectives, as the case may be, of maintaining stock biomass at levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (MSY) or of managing stocks in line with the precautionary approach. In some cases, the excessive flexibility might also jeopardise the fast recovery of stocks to safe levels of biomass, as required by the multiannual plans.

The Commission therefore considers that the most suitable way of taking into account a possible lower quota uptake in 2020 is for ICES to incorporate this element into their scientific models and issue scientific advice for subsequent years on that basis. This approach would ensure science-based management and sustainability for fish stocks concerned.

I hope that I was able to clarify the matter for you.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA