

**European Association of Fish Producers Organisations**  
**Association Européenne des Organisations de Producteurs dans le secteur de la pêche**



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**PRESS RELEASE**

**EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING ON AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES 18-19  
DECEMBER 2012:**

**EAPO CALLS UPON COUNCIL TO ADDRESS THE UNJUSTIFIABLE TAC  
REDUCTIONS IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL**

In advance of the December Fisheries Council 2012 the EAPO President Sean O'Donoghue said:

*“EAPO recognises that when the state of the stock requires it, there must be reductions in the fishing opportunities for particular stocks. However there are a large number of reductions in the Commission's TACs and quotas proposals for next year that are both unjustifiable and unacceptable. Unfortunately in its TAC & Quota proposals to the Council the Commission deviated from its own stated principle to work on the MSY in transition over the next three years thus targeting to meet MSY status in 2015 where possible. Instead it has based its proposals for a number of stocks on meeting MSY status in 2013. This has led to unjustifiable and unacceptable adjustments for example for different Hake and Monkfish stocks.”* He added; *“The key drivers for a viable fishing industry are the sustainability of stocks and stability in catching opportunities. Unfortunately the Commission's proposals do not deliver on these and I am calling on the Council to address these during the meeting.”*

EAPO has highlighted about 30 different issues in the Commission's TACs and quotas proposals that require to be amended and has circulated these to Council Members. Some of the key concerns are:

- The year on year reduction in the days at sea allocation in the areas subject to the Cod recovery and/or the Sole and Plaice management plan is recognized by many to lead to a unnecessary hampering of the fleets' flexibility to perform sustainable fisheries, without having a positive effect on the objectives of the plans. EAPO therefor calls on the Council to find a way to implement the required freeze.
- In anticipation of a new bilateral arrangement between the EU and Norway – to be concluded hopefully in January 2013 – EAPO has already recommended that the mackerel TAC should be set at a level in conformity with the scientific advice upper boundary level resulting in a TAC of 542,000 tonnes. In addition to this EAPO is requesting that the Commission immediately brings forward effective sanctions

measures against Iceland and Faeroes in accordance with the regulation agreed by Council and Parliament.

- For Nephrops in ICES area VII and more particularly in the Functional Unit 16 containing the Porcupine Bank, EAPO has addressed a position paper to the Commission and to the Member States of which vessels operate in the area. That paper refers to the updated ICES advice and uses this positive advice to modify existing arrangements as regards the closure period and the TAC constraint. In the Functional Units 23 and 24 for Nephrops in the Gulf of Biscay, regulations and management measures already in place have significantly improved the stock situation. Scientific simulations have demonstrated that a fishing mortality equal to the current one will provide a further increase in total biomass. Based on this EAPO finds that the 2013 TAC should be a roll over from 2012.
- The proposed substantial reduction for the West of Scotland Haddock TAC is a consequence of a very large revision downwards of the scientific advice in September compared to the advice issued in June which recommended an increase. As the proposed management plan is considered precautionary by scientists EAPO is of the firm view that the plan should be followed.
- EAPO acknowledges that for Cod West of Scotland an appropriate rebuilding plan is required. Setting the TAC at zero as proposed by the Commission, however, will not lead to a rebuilding of this stock. Initial proposals on new and innovative ways of trying to rebuild the stock have been forwarded to the Commission and it is hoped that with the support of Council these can be actively progressed during 2013.
- The Hake stocks in the European waters are subject to unrealistic proposals by the Commission, based on reaching the MSY objective in 2013. EAPO advocates that the scientific advices based on MSY in transition to 2015 should be followed particularly as the biomass has been increasing since 1998 and the fishing mortality has been decreasing over the last number of years.
- For the Celtic Sea Haddock TAC a substantial reduction is proposed even though the scientific advice states that the stock size is ten times greater than the precautionary level. The impact of the recently implemented EU regulation to improve selectivity in the Celtic Sea following an advice by the NWWRAC has not been assessed yet. The introduction of this measure has allowed juvenile haddock to escape from the nets. The large reduction proposed by the Commission will only increase other regulatory discards. Based on this EAPO recommends that a roll over TAC accompanied by a Council Declaration to further investigate, develop and implement measures to improve selectivity could offer a more appropriate way forward.
- In respect of Sole in the Irish Sea EAPO finds that a proposal to reduce the TAC by 80% is not an acceptable management tool. We do acknowledge that a tighter management of the stock is required and we support the industry initiative to finalize such a plan early in 2013. Based on this the TAC should not be reduced by more than 20%. EAPO refers to the fact that the biomass level of the Sole Gulf of Biscay stock is the highest since 1998. A scientific review of the management plan for this stock established that a fixed TAC of 4,100 tonnes can result in a MSY status by 2015. Therefore EAPO recommends to the Council to set this TAC based on the scientific advice at the established fixed level for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015.

**===== Ends =====**

*The EAPO represents 34 Producers Organisations from 10 EU Member States, with approximately 10,000 vessels, 3.5 million tonnes of landings and a first sale value of € 3 billion.*

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