

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 15-16
DECEMBER 2011:**

**EAPO CALLS UPON COUNCIL TO AVOID UNREALISTIC AND ARBITRARY
MEASURES PROPOSED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Prior to the commencement of the December Fisheries Council 2011 the EAPO President Sean O'Donoghue said: *"The Commission has issued a set of unrealistic TAC and quota proposals for 2012 with arbitrary cuts across a large number of stocks. I am calling on the Council of Fisheries Ministers to reject these and replace them with a set of workable proposals that will enhance the sustainability of the stocks"*.

In particular EAPO wishes to highlight a number of key concerns it has with the Commission proposals.

Despite the scientific analysis that the cod recovery plan is not working the Commission states not having the possibility to deviate from the plan and proposes another substantial reduction of fishing effort in the cod recovery areas. This will bring several fleets to a halt without good reason and EAPO fears a tremendous socio-economic impact without any advantages to the state of the cod stocks. EAPO therefore has called upon the Commission not to implement the proposed reduction in effort for 2012. It is widely acknowledged that effort control has not been effective in securing recovery of cod stocks and therefore to impose a further reduction which would result in extreme hardship for fishing vessels without any benefit to stock status does not make sense. An EAPO member said: *"Continued cuts in effort (days at sea) by the Commission are unjustified. North Sea stocks including cod are continuing to improve under the current regime; further reductions in the time vessels can be at sea coupled with reduced quota will damage this recovery. What we need is common sense; fishermen don't want to be forced to target small fish because they don't have enough time to go further afield to catch bigger fish and they don't want to have to discard good fish because the regulations require them to do so"*.

In relation to the proposed 19% reduction in the TAC for Area VII Nephrops EAPO rejects same and believes based on the most recent scientific data that this TAC should in fact be increased. In addition, EAPO finds that the sub-area TAC currently in place in the area known as the Porcupine Bank should be removed. While there have been difficulties with the Nephrops stock in this area in the past, the seasonal closure put in place at the suggestion of

the Industry in 2010 and again in 2011 has proved extremely effective with the most recent survey data of the area showing a significant improvement in stock abundance levels.

EAPO notes in the Commission proposals that for many stocks the MSY objectives are brought forward in time or an arbitrary reduction is proposed when a lesser or more substantial part of the scientific data is missing. EAPO confirms having no problem with the MSY principle as set out in the Johannesburg Declaration, however we do envisage difficulties in its implementation particularly in mixed fisheries. Bringing forward the timing of the ultimate target means additional difficulties to reach this target. It is EAPO's view that a straightforward reduction of TAC under a so-called precautionary approach will be in many cases completely opposite to the sustainability targets. This means promoting the discarding of perfectly consumable fishery products or creating a socio-economic disaster by needlessly forbidding fishermen to perform their job, when they would not be allowed to continue to fish. Examples of these principles can be found in the proposals for stocks in the Bay of Biscay (*Nephrops in contradiction with the last available scientific advice or Pollack, Whiting and Megrin TAC reductions without any justification*) and for Plaice in the Skagerrak. EAPO therefore calls upon the member states to take a more realistic and sustainable approach for the TACs concerned.

In respect of mackerel EAPO's Northern Pelagic Working Group and the Norwegian industry representatives have already highlighted the irresponsible and reckless behaviour of both Iceland and the Faroe Islands in increasing their catches of mackerel from less than 6% in 2006 to almost 45% in 2011. EAPO is requesting that the Council give a very strong message to the Commission that this behaviour cannot be rewarded with conceding unwarranted shares to both Countries when the Coastal States meeting resumes in January in Iceland.

===== 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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