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PRESS RELEASE

EAPO CALLS UPON THE COUNCIL OF FISHERIES MINISTERS TO AVOID SETTING UNREALISTIC MEASURES ON FISHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2010

EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING ON AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES 14-16 DECEMBER 2009:

EAPO is calling on the Council of Fisheries Ministers to avoid setting unrealistic measures at the Council meeting starting today in Brussels and to use the opportunity to set sustainable and realistic fishing opportunities that reduce rather than increase discarding. EAPO strongly objects to the reduction of TACs without any scientific advice (e.g. blue ling) and is very concerned that the collapse of the EU/Norway negotiations will put an unnecessary constraint on Community fishermen at the start of the year.

EAPO President Sean O Donoghue said in advance of the meeting “ This year with the coming into affect of the Lisbon Treaty on the 1st December affords the Fisheries Ministers more time to deal specifically with TACs and quotas and hopefully to set realistic fishing opportunities for 2010. The stakeholders have been actively involved in putting forward sustainable and realistic solutions over the last number of months for next year’s TACs and I am calling on the Fisheries Ministers to take these on board.”

Key issues for EAPO

Rays and Skates

The actual situation with these stocks is difficult to assess, even for scientists, and accordingly there is no ground to apply a decrease in TACs. In the current circumstances this appears to only have a detrimental socio-economic impact on the livelihood of fishermen. EAPO is also calling not to maintain the landing bans for some species. This is a clear example of the increasing discards.

Nephrops (Norway lobster) ICES-areas VII and VIII.

Specifically in area VIII it is commonly known and even confirmed by scientists that the stock is in a good shape. Accordingly there appears to be no reason for reducing the TAC based on the catch average from 2005 tot 2007. In area VII the 30% reduction in the TAC is not scientifically justified and here is a clear example of the stakeholders coming forward with a sustainable and workable solution. EAPO advocates that this solution is adopted by the Council.

Celtic Sea Cod

The reduction in the TAC proposed by the Commission does not reflect the advice by the European institutions scientific organisation (STEFC). Furthermore this is one of the many examples where accurate data are missing to publish a thorough assessment of the stock and establish the results of measures taken to preserve it. EAPO therefore calls upon the Council to demand clearer information by listening to the stakeholders and not adversely affect the fishing opportunities in this area.

West of Scotland Haddock

Unfortunately as a fall out of the Fisheries Council in November the unrealistic technical measures and catch composition rules imposed in Area VIa (West of Scotland and North West Ireland) this year have been extended for a further eighteen months. This effectively means that the fishing industry will again be unable to prosecute the mixed whitefish fisheries in this area. EAPO is requesting that the Council act on this serious situation and put in place an interim solution recognising that co-decision is now required.

Mackerel

As a consequence of the breakdown in the EU/Norway negotiations last week the Commission is proposing that unnecessary and potentially very damaging catch limitations are imposed on Community mackerel fishermen. EAPO is calling on the Council to ensure that this unjustified situation does arise and instead to make a very strong statement on the irresponsible behaviour of Iceland, Faroes and Norway of setting enormous autonomous mackerel quota far in excess of the scientific advice which will ultimately lead to the depletion of the stock.

===== Ends =====

The EAPO represents 28 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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