

BSAC recommendations for western Baltic cod quota allocation

In light of the Council decision to reduce the western Baltic cod quota by 56%, in an attempt to safeguard the stock and improve the future commercial viability, the severe socio-economic consequences must now be mitigated.

The Baltic Sea Advisory Council recommends that the 5597 tonnes is allocated to those fishers that are most vulnerable, in terms of jobs and income, and to those who have the lowest environmental impact.

We have cross-sectoral support for such a proposal and strongly recommend that Member States take such socio-economic criteria into consideration when allocating the quota.

Commissioner Vella said that the quota cut would have been deeper but for “the socio-economic impact on fishermen and coastal communities...and in particular on the artisanal fleet”.

DFPO chairman Svend-Erik Andersen said the TAC reduction “will particularly affect coastal fishing because the quota in 2017 eroding their revenues and thus fishermen’s incomes dramatically.” Therefore, the reallocation of quotas is necessary to support the coastal fishery during 2017.

This view is supported by a report from The Department of Food and Resource Economics at University of Copenhagen¹, which states that a large number of especially the smaller vessels below 15 meters are expected to leave the fishery during 2017 during high quotas reductions, as the vessels are so small that it will be difficult for them to shift to other areas or go further to sea in case it is possible for them to purchase quotas in other areas.

President of Europêche, Javier Garat responded to the Council decision, stating that “fishermen must be given the economical opportunity to make ends meet...but there will not be local fishermen to catch them after 2017.”

It is precisely these local, low impact fishermen, who do not have alternative catch options that now need to be protected and prioritised. One of the primary objectives of the CFP is to “promote coastal fishing activities, taking into account socio-economic aspects” (CFP article 2.5.i).

BSAC urges Member States to utilise article 17 of the CFP to this effect, in particular the concluding line to prioritise fishing opportunities for “fishing vessels deploying selective fishing gear or using fishing techniques with reduced environmental impact”. Such practices will also lead to an increase in the volume of fish caught for human consumption, and thus in light of the landing obligation represents the most efficient use of the limited quota available.

The Commission have highlighted that under Articles 16 and 17 “Member States have ample room for manoeuvre on decision related to the social/economic model of their choice to exploit their allocated fishing opportunities”.

Therefore BSAC urges Member States to apply Article 17 when distributing quota to their fishermen in 2017 and mitigate the significant consequences of the TAC reduction.

¹ http://static-curis.ku.dk/portal/files/163936396/IFRO_Commissioned_Work_2016_16.pdf