

Recommendation n. °: 41

Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on Sustainable Fisheries in the European Union: state of play and orientations for 2024

Considering the communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Sustainable Fisheries in the European Union: state of play and orientations for 2024, the Advisory Council for the Outermost Regions (CCRUP), hereby expresses its recommendation:

2. Progress Achieving Sustainable Fishing in the EU

In the Azores, internal management measures have been implemented, such as: maximum catch limits per vessel, per tide and annual quotas; and the increase in hook size and the creation of minimum catch sizes. This indicates a concern to ensure careful management of the fishing effort, to guarantee the sustainability of resources and fishing activity.

In general, the CCRUP regrets the lack of data on sustainable fisheries practiced in the European ocean basins of the western Atlantic, eastern Atlantic and Indian ocean.

2.1. Fishing opportunities in 2023

In the Azores (Atlantic waters), the species of blackspot seabream/red seabream (*Pagellus bogaraveo*)¹ maintains its quota management plan and good stock management, with the limits per vessel and the allocation of quotas by island of the archipelago. About this specie, there is a list of vessels that are allowed to fish it and the total catches cannot be higher than 3% of the annual fishing possibility, **so we recommend that the 2023/24 Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for blackspot seabream/red seabream to be maintained.**

Beryx spp. are exploited in the Azores exclusively by hook and line gears and are one of the 8 most important species for the Azores, representing around 71% of total landings of demersal and deep-sea species. According to fishermen, the stocks of this

¹ Depending on the source, the common name changes

species are in a sustainable state, and even evidencing a progressive increase in this stock, which is thought to be related to the almost no effort in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and limited in the azorean waters. Therefore, as part of the negotiations on the **stocks shared with the United Kingdom, we recommend increasing the TAC** for *Beryx spp.*, having as reference 2022.

In general, the CCRUP regrets the lack of data on stocks in the European ocean basins of the Western Atlantic, Eastern Atlantic, and Indian ocean.

3. State of the EU fleet

The CCRUP disagrees that *Member States must keep fleets under the national ceilings set for vessel capacity*. **We recommend that there should be an exception for the small-scale fleets of Europe's outermost regions (ORs)**, allowing them to increase their gross tonnage and the power of their engines, which will not mean an increase in fishing effort; on the contrary, it will bring better conditions and safety for fishermen, and will improve the quality of the fresh fish that reaches the first sale.

4. Socio-Economic Performance

We agree that *energy is one of the major cost items for the EU fishing fleet*, particularly for the ORs and that the *EU fishing fleet is expected to cover its operational costs and maintain employment in 2023 but it will remain financially vulnerable due to: the high level of energy intensity, the dependence on fossil fuels*, which is expected to be more pronounced in the older and small-scale vessels in the ORs (many of which are still made of wood), making them more fuel consumer.

6.1. Key stages to setting the next fishing opportunities

Considering that Europe has territories in the Indian Ocean, we **recommend that the Commission should base its proposals for fishing opportunities for 2024 not only on the scientific advice provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF), but also on the of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) scientific advice.**

The CCRUP would like to highlight the need to be more involved in the negotiations within the framework of the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMO), and would like the Commission to initiate more discussions with the Advisory Councils prior to the negotiations, in order to ensure that the voices of stakeholders who sit on these bodies are heard, and better balance the participation of the public, in order to avoid that the that occasional users of the sea have the same weight as professionals and workers.

6.2. Setting fishing opportunities for different sea basins

We also **recommend that not only Member-states to** be invited to indicate the priority stocks for which they recommend TACs for two years, **but that the Advisory Councils should also be consulted on this matter.**

The CCRUP wishes to reiterate the need to improve the quality of data on the different stocks in the Indian Ocean.

7. Conclusion

The CCRUP recommends that the **EU include in its transversal communications the analysis of information concerning the ocean basins of the ORs**, namely: Saint Martin, Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guyana, Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands, Mayotte and La Réunion.

The President of the Executive Committee of the CCRUP,

(David Pavón González)