



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/C1/UK/ms

Subject: Recommendation 41

Dear President,

Thank you very much for your recommendation 41.

In order to work towards sustainable fisheries, I welcome the Azores implication on selective fishing and control and management of fisheries.

I fully share with you the view that good data are essential for good advice. I can only encourage you to send all data you gather from your sector to the national scientific institutes through the Portuguese authority.

With regard to the improvement of data, the Commission will continue supporting and helping Member States in their data collection efforts, and to find practical solutions that can match everyone's needs. We have asked the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) to assess alternative data collection methods that Outermost Regions could use and that would be acceptable for the Commission. In June, the Committee came with proposals and recommendations and we are evaluating them. And again, the EMFAF foresees, as well, support for data collection measures. I invite you to fully make use of the opportunities offered by the fund to that extent.

As regards the quota for blackspot seabream, I would like to inform you that this is a deep-sea species for which a TAC is set every two years. The TAC was set at the 2022 December Council for 2023 and 2024. I use this occasion to remind you that improved data collection and scientific work from the Azores on red seabream would be needed. This was agreed at the December 2022 Council with Portugal. It is good news that the ICES advice is now MSY. However, it is continuously decreasing. This shows again that deep sea fishing is a very sensitive fishery and sustainable management is crucial.

As regards Alfonsinos, it is the same as for red seabream: the TAC is set for 2023 and 2024. Please be aware that the setting of TAC for this species depends on the outcome of negotiations with the UK, and again, the TAC depends on the ICES advice, which depends on good quality data from the Member States national scientific institutes.

M. David Pavón González
President of the Executive Committee of the CC RUP
Rua de São Paulo n.º 3
9760-540 Praia da Vitória
Açores - Portugal

With regard to the involvement of the IOTC advice in the quota setting, please bear in mind that ICES does not provide advice on tuna and consider that the discussion on the criteria for quota allocation in IOTC is being discussed in a dedicated technical committee on allocation criteria. In the meantime, specific catch limits are defined by the Scientific Committee of the IOTC. While these have been fully implemented for bigeye tuna, in the case of yellowfin it has not yet been possible to find an agreement to revise the existing rebuilding plan.

With regard to your point on vessel capacity, let me say that in 2022 we have adopted with Member States the operational programmes for the EMFAF. For the first time, there is a specific plan for each outermost region, which allows for more flexibility and a regional and specific approach to your territories. In total, it is an envelope of **more than EUR 300 million allocated to the outermost regions**. EMFAF finances investments which do not increase the fishing effort.

The rules of the fund are very flexible for the vast majority of actions like:

- feasibility studies on new technology,
- energy efficiency audits,
- development, test and trial of new technology,
- improving energy efficiency through better hydrodynamic, gear efficiency and alternative fuels.

However, for certain sensitive actions stricter conditions apply. For example, investments that increase the capacity of a vessel are only eligible for funding under EMFAF if they increase energy efficiency or safety on board, and comply with specific conditions (i.e. below 24 meters, only if the fleet segment has no overcapacity and increases are offset by an equivalent decrease elsewhere). These limiting conditions intend to prevent harmful effects such as overcapacity; and are also important for an environmentally and economically viable fleet in the long term.

State aid can also be used to renew the fleet. This is an exceptional derogation for the Outermost Regions. However, this can only be done under certain conditions, in line with the core principles of the Common Fisheries Policy. The regions and Member States concerned must demonstrate, with scientific evidence, that there is balance between fishing capacity and fish stocks, in order to avoid overfishing.

On 4 October 2023, the amendment of the Fisheries “de minimis” regulation was adopted which exempts small aid amounts from State aid control¹. This should allow the renewal of artisanal vessels in many outermost regions where this renewal is most urgent, therefore contributing to secure safer working conditions for fishermen, as well as increased opportunities to better manage these fisheries.

You refer as well to cooperation with RFMOs in your letter. Let me say that the Commission systematically consults the Advisory Councils before negotiations and provide regularly updates of the follow-up to these negotiations. We would also invite

¹ Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2391 of 4 October 2023 amending Regulations (EU) No 717/2014, (EU) No 1407/2013, (EU) No 1408/2013 and (EU) No 360/2012 as regards de minimis aid for the processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products, and Regulation (EU) No 717/2014 as regards the total amount of de minimis aid granted to a single undertaking, its period of application and other matters - [EUR-Lex - 32023R2391 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

CCRUP to attend on a more regular basis annual meetings of the relevant RFMOs to ensure its full involvement and realise all the efforts put forward to defend the EU positions in at time conflictual contexts.

Last but not least I can confirm to you that your advice on multiannual TACs will be heard. However, it is of utmost importance that here as well we base our decisions on the advice ICES can provide.

I hope that I was able to clarify all the matters you raised in your recommendation.

Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia RUBECK via the functional mailbox of the Advisory Councils MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

Charlina VITCHEVA