



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

ATLANTIC, OUTERMOST REGIONS AND ARCTIC
FISHERIES CONSERVATION AND CONTROL ATLANTIC AND OUTERMOST REGIONS

Brussels,
MARE.C/MK/Ares(2015)

Dear Madam, dear Sir,

During the past months Commissioner Vella received many e-mails from citizens in which you voice concerns about the issue of sea bass management. The Commissioner has asked me to reply on his behalf via this letter.

The scientific advice by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) advised us to reduce landings considerably for the northern stock of sea bass, because of the dire situation of that stock. We are taking this advice very seriously.

The European Commission has therefore consulted the Advisory Committees, comprising commercial fishermen, NGOs and other stakeholders and also the Member States, on the best possible measures to take for 2016. I would like to reassure you that we have evaluated all information carefully in order to prepare our proposals for the management of sea bass for 2016 thoroughly.

The Commission's proposal was discussed by the Fisheries Ministers from all 28 EU Member States on 14 and 15 December last at a meeting of the Council of Ministers in Brussels. The Council has taken a decision on the Commission's proposal and for 2016 we will now have further measures in place. These measures cover:

- A fishing closure for all vessels, except for hooks and lines and set gillnets, from 1 Jan to 30 June 2016. During this closure trawlers and seiners are allowed to have 1% of their catches made up of unavoidable catches of sea bass so as to avoid having to throw overboard small amounts of sea bass that are caught in the nets and are already dead.
- A fishing closure for hooks, lines and set gillnets for February and March and a 1,3 tonne monthly catch limit for 2016 for these vessels outside the closed period.
- A 1 tonne monthly catch limit for 1 July to 31 December for all other vessels.
- A fishing closure in waters around Ireland for the whole of 2016.
- For recreational anglers a catch and release fishery for the 1st half of the year and a 1 fish bag limit for the second half of the year.

These measures are far reaching and we are convinced that they will over time help to bring sea bass back to previous high levels and this will benefit the commercial fishing industry as much as the recreational one.

During the ministerial meeting on 14 and 15 December last the Council of Ministers and the European Commission have further weighed these measures and taken into account their impact on small scale and artisanal fisheries like hooks, lines and set gillnets. As a result the closure period was shortened for these latter segments.

Let me in the end again thank all those who have expressed their concern for their active involvement in finding solutions to manage this stock sustainably.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bernhard Friess', written in a cursive style.

Bernhard Friess