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Hubert Gambs

Director General

Directorate D Mediterranean and Black Sea

Cc Valerie Lainé

D/2 - Fisheries conservation and control Mediterranean and Black Sea

Subject: Discards management plans "for fisheries characterised by target species" (entering into force on 1st January 2017)

The MEDAC Working Group 1, which deals with management plans in the framework of the landing obligation, met in Almeria on 16th March and based the meeting's discussion on the analysis of the STECF study (Landing Obligation - Part 6 (Fisheries targeting demersal species in the Mediterranean Sea) (STECF-15-19) on the aforementioned fisheries. The following conclusions emerged from an in-depth analysis: the STECF template identifies the main fisheries by fishing gear/main target species/GSA.

Taking into consideration the latter, it was possible to see that in only two GSAs (7 and 17) we can identify the same fisheries with species that are shared by more than one Member State. In all the other GSAs the Member States are alone. More specifically, only in GSA 17 can we find a fishery that is shared between Slovenia and Croatia, which is sole fishery using trammel nets. In the same GSA the Italian fleet targets sole with gillnets.

In GSA 7, France and Spain do not carry out fisheries of the same type. We can thus conclude that, other than in GSA 17 where there is a shared fishery that does not, however, present problems related to undersized bycatch, we do not have the necessary conditions to proceed with regionalised discards management plans according to article 18 of the Basic Regulation which should see the involvement of more than one MS.

It ensures that the MEDAC could only be called to action if expressly requested by the MS in the context of the discards management plans, for individual MS and for individual fisheries, but not within the framework of article 18.

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The same STECF study also suggests the adoption of a different approach (by species or by area) if the aim is to maintain the regionalised nature of the management plans in question, perhaps this suggestion should be duly evaluated. In this context it should be noted that, in the STECF study several inconsistencies were evident, in particular:

- Fisheries in which the species noted represent 90-100% of the catch (which suggests an almost mono-specific fishery);
- Fisheries which associate fishing gear with apparently incompatible species (sea bream caught with fyke nets or sole caught with hydraulic dredges).

Where these issues are concerned, the delegations of the MS participating in the MEDAC WG will verify the reliability of the information in the STECF study, but before initiating contact between MEDAC and the MS, we consider it appropriate to clarify that the direction taken by STECF places the MEDAC in a position to take action only in a non-regionalised sense, restricted to those fisheries which present issues of undersized bycatch, not forgetting all the uncertainties and different interpretations about which we sent a letter requesting clarification on 1st March. We attach the forms divided by Member State with the fisheries indicated by the STECF drafted by the coordinator of the Working Group1.

We are available for further comment or clarification while we look forward to receiving your comments before putting these same issues to the Member States.

Yours sincerely,

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