

The North Sea Advisory Council

NSAC Secretariat
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The Netherlands



Mr Bernhard Friess, Director-General
Directorate General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Cc: Member State Members of the Scheveningen Group

26 November 2019

Subject: Scientific evaluation of the North Sea plaice box

Dear Director-General Friess,

The NSAC would like the European Commission to carry out a scientific evaluation of the plaice box closure in North Sea.

We note that this measure was first introduced in 1989 as a means to protect juvenile plaice and aid the recovery of the plaice stock.

We further note that the new Technical Measures regulation – (EU) 2019/1241, Annex V, Part C, paragraph 2 – calls for a 'closure to an area to protect juvenile plaice in ICES subarea 4'. This is a direct copy of the text in article 29 of the previous Technical Measures regulation (EC) 859/98. In the relevant paragraph exemption possibilities are listed.

The NSAC is of the opinion that it would be prudent to review the effects of the current conservation measure before deciding on how and where to implement the new measure, particularly as it may have had unintended and unforeseen impacts, which are not fully understood.

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NSAC is supported by the European Union

We therefore ask for a scientific assessment of the effect of the plaice box on its objective to protect juvenile plaice and, more generally, on the state and resilience of the North Sea plaice stock. Furthermore, the assessment could establish the effect of the closure on biodiversity and the wider ecosystem components, including benthic habitats, non-target fish species and seabirds and the possible effect climate change may have on the shifts in fish distribution in the area.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of the above.

Looking forward to your response.

Kind regards,



Kenn Skau Fischer

Chairman of the North Sea Advisory Council