



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

Director-General

Brussels,
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Mr. Ken Skau Fisher
Chairman Executive Committee
NSAC (7th Floor)
Louis Braillelaan 80, 2719 EK
Zoetermeer,
The Netherlands
Email: admin@nsrac.org

Subject: NSAC Advice on the North Sea cod management

Your reference: 08-1920

Dear Mr. Skau Fisher,

Thank you very much for the advice of the North Sea Advisory Council dated 16 April 2020. I appreciate the efforts of the NSAC to provide this opinion, especially during these very difficult times. This adds to a number of helpful interventions already received from Member States, the catching sector and the UK and Norwegian administration. It is of course important and very welcome to have the views of the NSAC.

Under the EU-Norway framework, we committed ourselves to introducing additional measures and included a proposal in the second amendment of the fishing opportunities regulation to honour this commitment. Norway has proposed additional measures in the Norwegian EEZ and we are currently discussing these with the Norwegian administration on the basis of feedback already received from Member States. I appreciate your proposal to introduce closures for the protection of juveniles and this of course is welcome. But please note that fishing pressure on the adult component of the stock is still well above Fmsy and needs to be reduced in order to meet our MSY objectives and, critically, to help the stock recover.

While I take note of your point on the current situation, we need to address the structural problems with respect to North Sea cod. Our proposal for complementary measures will be discussed in the coming weeks with the Member States. It is important that we continue interacting on this issue during the coming weeks. We are interested in receiving detailed and technical feedback on how we should proceed, especially in terms of which areas should be subject to additional measures and what the access criteria to these should be.

As far as the COVID-19 crisis and its consequences are concerned, let me inform you that over the last weeks, my staff and I have been in close contact with Member States and with representatives of the fishery and aquaculture sector. We have listened very carefully to all concerns and requests for targeted mitigation measures to support the fishery and aquaculture sector, and are closely monitoring the developments on the market. That means that the Commission will be able to respond to new developments, which we cannot fully anticipate in this fast-moving situation. Now more than ever, the priority is to ensure the necessary support for the sector.

Regulation (EU) 2020/560 of 23 April 2020¹ amending the EMFF (European Maritime Fisheries Fund) and the CMO (Common Market Organisation) Regulations as regards specific measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID- 19 outbreak in the fishery and aquaculture sector includes the following measures:

- compensations to fishers, including fishers on foot and inland fishers, for the temporary cessation of fishing activities caused by the COVID-19 outbreak,
- financial compensations to aquaculture producers and processing enterprises for the suspension or reduction of production and sales and for additional storage costs caused by the COVID-19 outbreak,
- possibility to provide working capital to aquaculture producers and processing enterprises,
- support to producer organisations for the temporary storage of fishery and aquaculture products.

It also allows a more flexible reallocation of financial resources within the operational programme of each Member State as well as a retroactive eligibility of such measures from 1 February 2020 until 31 December 2020.

However, this is only one part of a broader package available to support the fishery and aquaculture sector, which includes:

- the adoption of a new Temporary State aid Framework, which enables Member States to grant State aid up to EUR 120,000 per undertaking until 31 December 2020, to companies facing difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to the financing of working capital in SMEs where necessary as a temporary measure.
- Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE), which provides up to EUR 100 billion in loans to Member States in order to ensure that workers receive an income and that businesses keep their staff. That temporary income support is available for employed workers but also for self-employed people, including fishers and fishers on foot.

All these instruments should be mobilised in a strategic and complementary manner by Member States to respond to the crisis in the most appropriate way. The Commission will do its utmost to mobilise all the available instruments that can support the fishery and aquaculture sector in this unprecedented situation.

¹ See OJ L 130, 24.4.2020, p.11

I look forward to our continued cooperation and would like to invite you to take contact with Ms. Pascale Colson (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu; +32 2 29 56273) should you have any further question on this reply.

Yours sincerely,

Bernhard FRIESS
Acting Director-General