



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels, 24 OCT. 2016
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Mr Ivan Lopez van der Veen
LDAC Chair
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28036 MADRID
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Subject: LDAC Observations and Comments to the annual meeting of NAFO, Varadero (Cuba), 19-23 September 2016

Your ref: R-06-16/WG2

Dear Mr Lopez,

Thank you for the LDAC advice regarding the NAFO Annual Meeting 2016, which took place from 19 to 23 September in Varadero, Cuba. The LDAC advice, coupled with the discussions held at technical meetings on 25 August 2016 in Brussels and in the margins of the NAFO Annual Meeting, provides an important element in the process of defining an EU position and early submission prior to the meeting is essential.

The results of this year's NAFO Annual Meeting are very positive from the EU perspective and we hope that LDAC and its members share this view. NAFO decided on Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for stocks under the purview of NAFO based on scientific advice. Other key decisions were to adopt further measures improving the protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) by closing a new sea pen area to bottom fishing for two years, on a precautionary basis. NAFO Contracting Parties decided to continue work on improving the data base for stock assessments, as well as the development and review of risk based management strategies. As for shark management, the EU's preparatory work led to the adoption of a naturally-attached-fins policy in NAFO; this is a success for the EU, and takes us one step closer to a global level playing field regarding shark conservation and science.

Most decisions on stocks are in line with the LDAC advice and will give the EU fleet good fishing opportunities: most importantly, NAFO decided to roll over the Greenland halibut 2+3KLMNO TAC, keeping it at 14,799 tonnes, a decision that was facilitated by EU questions to the Scientific Council. Also in line with LDAC advice, the EU obtained

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commitments in the form of an ambitious plan to conclude the review of the Greenland halibut management strategy evaluation by 2017. However, you should be aware that this may affect the roadmap for the development of an MSE for cod in Division 3M.

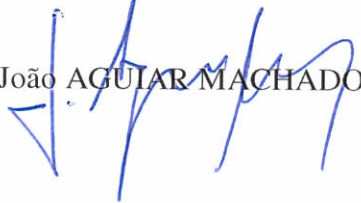
A two year TAC for skates in divisions 3LNO was rolled over at 7,000 tonnes, in spite of concerns expressed regarding recruitment for this stock. This should provide stability to the industry. As regards redfish in divisions 3LN, we consider the 37% increase as a positive development. The same goes for the rollover of the TAC for redfish in division 3O at 20,000 tonnes. For American plaice in divisions 3LNO and witch flounder in 2J3KL, NAFO decisions are in line with LDAC advice to extend the moratorium for two and three more years, respectively. For squid in subareas 3 and 4, NAFO kept a 34,000 TAC for the 2017-2019 period, also in line with LDAC suggestions. As regards shrimp in division 3M, existing scientific advice is clear and did not warrant any fishery to take place at this stage. The LDAC advice to allow for a 100 fishing days of shrimp in division 3M seems to run contrary to the precautionary approach framework of NAFO for stocks below Blim.

Apart from stocks, there was also good progress on the issue of discards with continuing work of the Working Group on By-catch, Discards and Selectivity (BDS) on an all-encompassing action plan for the reduction of discards and by-catch in NAFO as well as the increase of selectivity. We count on your support for the very technical questions that this work will raise as well as on continued selectivity testing for cod in Division 3M.

As regards activities other than fishing, NAFO had a good discussion on and encouraged more coordination between the different organisations that regulate economic activities in the NAFO area, e.g. the International Seabed Authority. In this context, NAFO decided also to facilitate the implementation of the information exchange arrangement between Canada and the NAFO Secretariat on oil and gas exploratory activities through the possibility for the ad hoc transmission of VMS positions in anonymised and aggregated form, so that oil and gas exploration and exploitation activities can better avoid traditional fishing areas. We share your concern about the potential impact that oil and gas exploratory activities may have, in particular if they are undertaken in vulnerable marine ecosystems that are closed to fishing and raised this in the context of the closure proposal for sea pen areas.

Thank you again for your constructive input and continuous support. If you have any question on this reply, you can contact Ms Evangelia Georgitsi, coordinator of the Advisory Councils (evangelia.georgitsi@ec.europa.eu; +32.2.295.04.43).

Yours sincerely,


João AGUIAR MACHADO