**COMMISSION SERVICES NON PAPER**

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*This document serves as a basis for discussion at the Working Party on Internal and External Fisheries Policy. It cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the Commission. It is intended solely for those to whom it is addressed.*

Updates to Commission proposal COM(2017) 645 for a Council Regulation fixing for 2018 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union vessels, in certain non-Union waters

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1. AMENDMENTS REGARDING EUROPEAN SEABASS

1. The recital 8 is replaced by the following:

"According to scientific advice, European seabass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*) in the Celtic Sea, Channel, Irish Sea and southern North Sea (ICES divisions 4b, 4c and 7a, 7d–7h) remains in a perilous state and the stock continues to decline further, despite the measures taken in previous years. These measures have not delivered the desired reduction in commercial fishing mortality (only -17% instead of the expected -50%). Recreational fishing mortality on the Northern stock is now considered to be far more significant than previously calculated and is estimated to have exceeded that from commercial sources in 2016. This also includes post-release sources of mortality. Therefore, the fishing mortality of the Northern stock has to be decreased significantly in order to allow for a small increase in the biomass. Fishing for European seabass should thus not be allowed in ICES divisions 4b and 4c, and in ICES subarea 7.

In order to mitigate the social and economic impact of the above measure, limited fisheries using hooks and lines should be permitted, while providing for a two months closure to protect spawning aggregations. Whilst there could be certain unavoidable by-catches from other fishing gears, the stock status is so severe that it is no longer possible to allow these by-catches to be landed, and any encounters with the stock should be avoided. Also, there will need to be further restrictions on recreational fishing, including a prohibition for the first six months of the year and catch-and release only for the remainder of the year. Taking into account ICES advice to further reduce fishing pressure on the stock of European seabass in the Bay of Biscay, a lower daily bag limit for recreational fisheries should be fixed in that area."

1. Article 9 is replaced by the following:

"Article 9
Measures on European seabass fisheries

1. It shall be prohibited for Union fishing vessels, as well as for any commercial fisheries from shore, to fish for European seabass in ICES divisions 4b and 4c, and in ICES subarea 7. It shall be prohibited to retain on board, tranship, relocate or land European seabass caught in that area.
2. By derogation from paragraph 1, in January 2018 and from 1 April to 31 December 2018, Union fishing vessels using hooks and lines[[1]](#footnote-1) that have recorded catches of European seabass over the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 September 2016 using those gears may fish for European seabass in the following areas and retain on board, relocate, tranship or land European seabass caught in those areas, not exceeding 4 tonnes per vessel per year:
	* + 1. In ICES divisions 4b, 4c, 7d, 7e, 7f and 7h;
			2. In waters within 12 nautical miles from baselines under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom in ICES divisions 7a and 7g.
3. The catch limits set in paragraph 2 shall not be transferable between vessels. Member States shall report to the Commission all catches of European seabass per type of gear not later than 15 days after the end of each month.
4. In recreational fisheries, including from shore, in ICES divisions 4b, 4c, 7a and in from 7d to 7k:
	* + 1. it shall be prohibited to fish for European seabass and to retain on board, tranship, relocate or land European seabass caught in that area from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2018;
			2. only catch-and-release fishing for European seabass shall be allowed from 1 July 2018 to 31 December 2018. During this period, it shall be prohibited to retain on board, relocate, tranship or land European seabass caught in that area.
5. From 1 January to 31 December 2018 in recreational fisheries in ICES divisions 8a and 8b, a maximum of three specimens of European seabass may be retained per fisherman per day."
6. In Annex I the comparative tables of Latin name and common names are amended as follows:

a) the entry for sea bass in the table of Latin names is replaced by the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Dicentrarchus labrax* | BSS | European seabass |

b) the entry for sea bass in the table of common names is replaced by the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| European seabass | BSS | *Dicentrarchus labrax* |

1. All long lines or pole and line or rod and line fisheries, including LHP, LHM, LLD, LL, LTL, LX and LLS. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)