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PRESS RELEASE

“Unnecessary Cuts will lead to further hardship for Irish Fishermen”

*“The EU Council of Ministers begin their annual December Council Meeting in Brussels today to decide on the fish quotas for next year. However, once again, the Commission appear to have proposed cuts for the sake of proposing cuts, which if implemented, will lead to further hardship and job losses for Irish fishermen” warned Eibhlin O’Sullivan, CEO of the **Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation.***

“There are significant reductions proposed for Cod and Haddock in the Celtic Sea of 30% and 27% on the basis of achieving Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) in 2016. While we are all aware of the importance of achieving MSY it should not be to the detriment of the survival of those fishermen who rely on stocks such as these for their economic survival and therefore we are calling on the Council of Ministers to allow these stocks reach MSY on a phased, incremental basis by 2020. This will have the dual benefit of ensuring both MSY for these two vital stocks and also that of the fishermen” commented Ms. O’Sullivan.

*“Once again, the Commission have proposed a reduction in the TAC for Prawns in the Celtic Sea in a situation where the scientific advice recommends a roll-over from last year. This is due to the differential up-take issue where some Member States such as Ireland fully utilise their quota, whereas others do not and therefore, the TAC is set higher than the “catch” advice issued by ICES on the basis that landings are significantly lower than the TAC and to date less than the catch advice issued by ICES. If the proposed reduction in TAC goes ahead it will only impact on Member States such as Ireland and will lead to actual landings in all likelihood being significantly less than those recommended by ICES. This is particularly frustrating this year as from the 1st of January there will be a discard ban in place for Prawns in the Celtic Sea and as a result of the reductions proposed by the Commission even when the quota uplift is factored in fishermen will actually have **10% less** quota available to them in this new “discard free” reality they will find themselves in from the 1st of January”.*

“In addition, once again, the Commission have proposed the continuation of the separate “of which” TAC for the Porcupine Bank Prawn stock despite scientific advice that the seasonal closure which closes this area to Prawn fishing for the month of May is a sufficient considering the stable state of this stock. We have therefore, together with our colleagues in the North Western Waters Advisory Council, called on the Council of Ministers to remove this restriction for 2016”.

“Finally, we are disappointed that the Commission has once again proposed quota reductions of 20% for so called “Data Limited Stocks” such as Pollack and Skates and Rays in situations where science is recommending a roll-over of the 2015 quota. This is particularly evident for in the situation for Skates and Rays where if the scientific advice had been implemented the same quota in place in 2012 would continue in place in 2016 but instead if the proposed 20% reduction goes through the 2016 quota will be 45% lower than the 2012 quota”.

“We are therefore, calling on the Council of Ministers to ensure the survival of both the stocks and the fishermen in deciding the 2016 quotas and in particular in relation to Cod and Haddock in the Celtic Sea adopting an incremental approach in reaching MSY on a stepped basis between now and 2020”.

ENDS

Dated this 14th day of December, 2015.

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