



Long Distance Fleet Regional Advisory Council

Report by the Distant Waters RAC relating to forthcoming negotiations at the annual NAFO meeting (22nd – 26th September, 2008, Vigo)

Status: Adopted by the Executive Committee of the LDRAC
Drafted in: Spanish

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Mr. Fokion Fotiadis
Director General
DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs
B-1049 BRUSSELS

Madrid, 17th September 2008

Dear Director General,

Having studied the matters discussed in the preparatory meeting of the NAFO with the EC (4th September, 2008) and attended by the LDRAC, Working Group 2 of the LDRAC, (meeting in Madrid, 17th September, 2008), would like to voice its concern regarding the subjects to be discussed in the coming annual NAFO meeting to be held in Vigo, especially in terms of the proposals for stock management and the subject of the VMES.

Regarding the proposals for management measures for Greenland Halibut, we would like the EC to take the following points into consideration:

- the stock is subject to a 15-year recuperation plan (at the suggestion of the EC), and only 4 years have currently passed;
- this species is making a strong comeback as can be proven by the experiences of the skippers catching it in the fishing-grounds;
- in spite of this, the scientists continue to recommend a reduction of the TAC, even though they themselves admit there are doubts and that their model is too inert, overestimating the mortality rate and underestimating the bio-mass;
- since the beginning of the recuperation plan in 2004, scientists have been recording an increase in bio-mass data every year in relation to previous estimates, a fact which clearly proves the inefficiency of the model;
- in spite of this they have decided not to take the increase in catch per unit of effort (which has multiplied by 4) as an indicator of abundance. Nothing, however, prevents the managers from taking this into account.



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In view of this data, LDRAC believes the recuperation plan should continue without change, and that the TAC for 2009 should at least be kept at the same level (16,000 tn) so that further reductions in the fishing effort need not be made, as this is currently only 30% of the fishing effort in 2003.

As regards the VMEs, in the special meeting of the NAFO in May 2008 it was decided that an analysis of the footprint spanning the last 20 years should be made. This would enable areas fished in the past and possible new fishing areas to be treated separately, and to determine, over the next few years, the areas with VMEs which need to be protected.

LDRAC is terribly worried about the report from the last meeting of the ad hoc Working Group of managers and scientists, which radically changes the direction taken by the NAFO Fisheries Commission in May. We completely disagree with the eventual closing of areas to fishing where fleets have been working for the last 25 years. Any measures taken should be founded on scientific evidence provided by new investigations focussed on identifying the existence of areas with relevant VMEs.

The LDRAC therefore requests that in the next annual NAFO meeting the EC maintains the criteria and line of work decided upon and approved in the meeting of the NAFO Fisheries Commission in May 2008.

I sincerely hope the EC will address these issues to the best of their ability and would like to thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'A' followed by a more complex, cursive-style name.

Antonio Schiappa Cabral
President