

NON-PAPER TO THE COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**DEVELOPMENT OF A TAC FOR SEABASS****1. Introduction**

Catches of seabass, *Dicentrarchus labrax*, have increased significantly since the early 1990's and there are indications of possible local decreases in abundance. In light of the trends observed, it would seem prudent to introduce a TAC for this species. A preliminary allocation key can be worked out based on the recorded landings by area from 2000-2010.

2. Current catches

There has been increasing commercial catches since the mid-eighties, with a recent decrease identified since 2010. Seabass are targeted commercially both as an inshore and offshore fishery. The offshore fishery operates from November to April, targeting fish on spawning areas. Inshore, seabass are taken as a by-catch and in a directed seasonal fishery. For some areas, notably France a decrease in the LPUE (Landing Per Unit Effort) data has been identified, particularly affecting coastal metiers- it is unclear if this is a decrease in abundance or a change in the spatial distribution.

3. Recreational Fisheries and regional management measures

A key aspect for the management of this species is its importance to anglers- particularly for the UK, Ireland, France. The catches of seabass from angling in France are estimated as similar to that from the commercial fishery (ICES)- some 5000t.

Member States have introduced a number of different regional management regimes, which has impacted upon the level of commercial catches reported in recent years, for example Ireland has banned commercial fishing and instigated a higher Minimum Landing Size (MLS) for recreational fishing. In the UK pair trawling for sea bass in the English Channel has been banned nationally since 2005, as a response to providing protection to cetaceans. However other Member States continue to pursue this fishery. In France a higher MLS for recreational fisheries has also been set. Other country specific measures include maximum landings limits, local closures and different MLS. This will all impact upon the development of an allocation key based on commercial landings.

While seabass move to spawning areas at age 3+ ICES notes that tagging studies demonstrate a high rate of return to regional inshore areas. However it is not possible to demonstrate if regional management regimes are impacting upon stocks, or if there is a change in distribution. For example, qualitative information from Ireland would suggest that there has been an increase in the recreational fishing opportunities, but the cause cannot be ascertained.

Member States are required under article 55 of the Control Regulation¹ to manage recreational fisheries in a manner compatible with the Common Fisheries Policy. In the present case, and given the importance of the catch levels attributable to recreational fisheries, it is crucial that Member States take the necessary measures to limit those catches so that there is compatibility with any measures the Council would decide to take in the context of the annual fishing opportunities fixed for use by commercial fishing vessels. In the absence of compatibility, the objective sought by regulating commercial catches of this species so as to conserve the stocks and ensure the sustainability of the fisheries would be impossible to attain.

4. ICES Advice

The management of the seabass stocks has to be based – at least for the time being – on precautionary considerations. In the advice issued by ICES, first in 2004 and again in 2011, it is reported that there is insufficient information to evaluate the status of this species and to develop appropriate management units or to estimate the stock structure and identity. This year, the Commission has expressly requested ICES to provide advice towards a possible regulation of commercial fishing of this species as of 2013. Accordingly, the matter has been examined by the ICES Working Group that deals with the state of conservation of stocks so far not regulated (WGNEW). The findings of this Working Group will form the base for advice issued by ICES in the coming weeks on possible management measures for seabass. ICES is expected to issue recommendations on appropriate catch levels, based on the precautionary approach. The forthcoming advice is based on management areas proposed by the WGNEW, on the assumption of discrete stocks off southern Ireland and the Bay of Biscay and are as follows;

- a) ICES Divisions IV b,c and VIId;
- b) ICES Divisions VII e,h;
- c) ICES Divisions VIIa,f,g;
- d) ICES Divisions IVa,VIa and VIIf,c,j,k and subarea XII;
- e) ICES Divisions VIIIfa,b,d
- f) ICES Division VIIIfc
- g) ICES Division VIIIfa

ICES will benchmark these stocks in October. This will include an in-depth analysis of the data and, in that light, recommended management areas which might be different from those above. ICES has indicated a willingness to consider possible management areas suggested by the Commission. As such, and without prejudice to future work on stock identity, it seems appropriate to work at this time on the basis of TAC areas that match candidate zones for multi-species management, and that also largely match the coverage of regional working groups created by the relevant Regional Advisory Bodies.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy, amending several regulations. JO nr L 346 of 22.12.2009.

5. Allocation Key

A preliminary allocation key has been prepared (Annex I) for the following management areas, based on ICES recorded catches per Member State² between 2000 and 2010. These areas are

1. ICES Area VIIa (Irish Sea);
2. ICES Area IV abc, VIId (North Sea and Eastern Channel);
3. ICES Area VIIbc, VIa (West of Scotland and West of Ireland);
4. ICES Area VII e-k (Celtic Sea);
5. ICES Area VIIIabd (Bay of Biscay);
6. ICES Area VIIIc, IXa (Iberian Waters).

There is still work underway, as already mention, to verify the catch data and cross official statistics with ICES estimates. Principally, the sharing of catches between recreational and commercial fisheries must be verified. For the purposes of this exercise, the ICES landing estimates are used to calculate possible Member State quotas in the various areas.

The calculation consists in working out the percentage share of the catches for each Member State per year for the relevant area. The average of this percentage over the 2000-2010 reference period is used to determine the quota.

Member States are invited to verify the figures and the calculations carried out in the annexed tables. Member States are also invited to provide feedback on the suggested approach regarding management areas. Finally, Member States are encouraged to engage in discussions towards an agreed allocation key which the Commission could take as a basis for proposing fishing opportunities for these stocks as of 2013.

² Norway also has a very small fishery for seabass in Area IV that has no bearing on this exercise.

Annex I

Area	VII a
Belgium	0.122127
France	0.012668
UK	0.862532
Ireland	0.002674

Area	IVa,b,c VIId
Belgium	0.049902
Denmark	0.001482
Netherlands	0.130402
UK	0.174037
France	0.644177

Area	VIIb,c,IVa
France	0.378788
Spain	0.045455
Belgium	0.045455
Ireland	0.090909
UK	0.393939

Area	VII e-k
UK	0.328254
Belgium	0.024193
Netherlands	0.003266
France	0.644016
Spain	0.000196
Ireland	0.000057

Area	VIIIa, b,d,
Belgium	0.000098
France	0.948317
Spain	0.050812
Netherlands	0.000130
UK	0.000642

Area	IXa and VIIIc
Denmark	0.000102
Portugal	0.646040
France	0.015754
Spain	0.338104
	1.000000

ANNEX II

Area		VII a									
Country	Belgium	Percentage of total	France	Percentage of total	UK	Percentage of total	Ireland	Percentage of total			
2000	0	0.000000	0.5	0.062500	7.5	0.937500	0	0.000000			
2001	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	16	1.000000	0	0.000000			
2002	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	6	1.000000	0	0.000000			
2003	2	0.117647	0.5	0.029412	14	0.823529	0.5	0.029412			
2004	2	0.285714	0	0.000000	5	0.714286	0	0.000000			
2005	3	0.500000	0	0.000000	3	0.500000	0	0.000000			
2006	2	0.125000	0	0.000000	14	0.875000	0	0.000000			
2007	3	0.122449	0.5	0.020408	21	0.857143	0	0.000000			
2008	1	0.054054	0.5	0.027027	17	0.918919	0	0.000000			
2009	1	0.047619	0	0.000000	20	0.952381	0	0.000000			
2010	1	0.090909	0	0.000000	10	0.909091	0	0.000000			
Allocation Key	0.122127		0.012668		0.862532		0.002674				
Average Catch per year	1.36		0.18		12.14		0.05				
Average area catch per year	13.73										

IVa,b,c
Vild

Area	Country	Belgium	Percentage of total	Denmark	Percentage of total	Netherlands	Percentage of total	UK	Percentage of total	France	Percentage of total
	2000	0	0.000000	5.5	0.005587	60	0.060945	218	0.221432	701	0.712037
	2001	0	0.000000	2.5	0.002545	74	0.075318	205	0.208651	701	0.713486
	2002	0	0.000000	1.5	0.001245	94	0.078041	251	0.208385	858	0.712329
	2003	133	0.075056	1.5	0.000847	159	0.089729	272.5	0.153781	1206	0.680587
	2004	119	0.067023	1.5	0.000845	188	0.105886	308	0.173472	1159	0.652774
	2005	149	0.079594	1	0.000534	319	0.170406	277	0.147970	1126	0.601496
	2006	150	0.083589	2.5	0.001393	299	0.166620	257	0.143215	1086	0.605183
	2007	128	0.060377	2	0.000943	373	0.175943	276	0.130189	1341	0.632547
	2008	118	0.061812	1	0.000524	375	0.196438	395	0.206915	1020	0.534311
	2009	125	0.049781	0.5	0.000199	389	0.154918	373.5	0.148746	1623	0.646356
	2010	175	0.071692	4	0.001639	391	0.160180	419	0.171651	1452	0.594838
Allocation Key			0.049992		0.001482		0.130402		0.174997		0.644177
Average Catch per year		99.73		2.14		247.36		295.64		1115.73	
Average area catch per year											1760.59

Area	VIIb,c,IVa										
	Country	France	Percentage of total	Spain	Percentage of total	Belgium	Percentage of total	Ireland	Percentage of total	UK	Percentage of total
	2000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	1	1.000000
	2001	0.5	0.500000	0.5	0.500000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
	2002	1	0.666667	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0.5	0.333333
	2003	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0.5	1.000000
	2004	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0.5	0.500000	0	0.000000	1	1.000000
	2005	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
	2006	2	1.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
	2007	0.5	1.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
	2008	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0.5	1.000000
	2009	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	1	1.000000	0	0.000000
	2010	3	1.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
Allocation Key			0.378788		0.145455		0.045455		0.090909		0.990909
Average Catch per year		0.64		0.05		0.05		0.09		0.32	
Average area catch per year											1.14

Area VII e-k

Country	UK	Percentage of total	Belgium	Percentage of total	Netherlands	Percentage of total	France	Percentage of total	Spain	Percentage of total	Ireland	Percentage of total
2000	312.5	0.275330		0.000000	0	0.000000	822.5	0.724670	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
2001	317	0.255233		0.000000	3	0.002415	922	0.742351	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
2002	456	0.385461		0.000000	2	0.001691	724.5	0.612426	0.5	0.000423	0	0.000000
2003	384.5	0.347492	19	0.017171	5	0.004519	698	0.630818	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
2004	463	0.375812	38	0.030844	3	0.002435	727	0.590097	1	0.000812	0	0.000000
2005	452	0.340618	54	0.040693	8	0.006029	813	0.612660	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
2006	497.5	0.311424	59	0.036933	9	0.005634	1031	0.645383	0	0.000000	1	0.000626
2007	579	0.422936	47.5	0.034697	3	0.002191	739.5	0.540175	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
2008	525	0.481210	69	0.063245	5	0.004583	491	0.450046	1	0.000917	0	0.000000
2009	409	0.234116	47	0.026903	6	0.003434	1285	0.735547	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
2010	452	0.181162	39	0.015631	8	0.002994	1996	0.800000	0	0.000000	0	0.000000
Allocation Key		0.328255		0.024795		0.003266		0.640016		0.000196		0.000057
Average Catch per year	440.68		33.86		4.73		931.77		0.23		0.09	
Average area catch per year												1411.36

Villia,
b,d,

Area	Country	Belgium	Percentage of total	France	Percentage of total	Spain	Percentage of total	Netherlands	Percentage of total	UK	Percentage of total
	2000	0	0.000000	2081	0.968808	67	0.031192	0	0.000000		0.000000
	2001	0	0.000000	2025	0.966126	68	0.032443	3	0.001431		0.000000
	2002	0	0.000000	1943	0.914353	182	0.085647	0	0.000000		0.000000
	2003	0.5	0.000170	2814	0.956005	127	0.043146	0	0.000000	2	0.000679
	2004	0.5	0.000188	2561.5	0.961524	96	0.036036	0	0.000000	6	0.002252
	2005	0	0.000000	3192	0.976147	74	0.022630	0	0.000000	4	0.001223
	2006	0	0.000000	3322	0.951181	168	0.048103	0	0.000000	2.5	0.000716
	2007	1	0.000326	2985	0.973422	79	0.025762	0	0.000000	1.5	0.000489
	2008	0	0.000000	1508	0.910903	146	0.088191	0	0.000000	1.5	0.000906
	2009	1	0.000393	2341	0.920566	201	0.079041	0	0.000000		0.000000
	2010	0	0.000000	2333	0.932454	167	0.066747	0	0.000000	2	0.000799
Allocation Key			0.000398		0.948317		0.050612		0.000130		0.000542
Average Catch per year		0.27		2464.14		125.00		0.27		1.77	
Average area catch per year											2591.45

Area IXa and VIIIc

Country	Denmark	Portugal	France	Spain
2000	0	410.5	2	403
2001	0	374.5	0.5	255
2002	0	370.5	8	121
2003	0.5	332	1	113
2004	0	372	39	256
2005	0	477	57	219
2006	0	659	2	268
2007	0	659.5	1	342.5
2008	0	478.5	8	252
2009	0	448	8	212
2010	0	511	2	286
Allocation Key	0.000102	0.646049	0.015754	0.336104
Average Catch per year	0.05	462.95	10.95	247.95
Average area catch per year	721.91			