EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 6.6.2025
COM(2025) 296 final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

Sustainable fishing in the EU: state of play and orientations for 2026

{SWD(2025) 149 final}

1. Introduction

A competitive and economically viable fishing sector relies on healthy fish stocks and a healthy ocean. European fisheries continue the trend from previous years of gradually improving their sustainability with more fish stocks fished at sustainable levels in 2024 than 2003. However, efforts must also be made to tackle pressures other than fisheries that are increasingly affecting fish stocks. Examples include abundance of zooplankton[1] and eutrophication[2] in the Baltic Sea or climate change impact in the Baltic Sea, Bay of Biscay and Mediterranean Sea[3]. Both the EU Mission 'Restore our Ocean and Waters'[4], and the Nature Restoration Regulation[5] have a target of year 2030 for restoring nature and ecosystems.

In the context of existing challenges for the fisheries sector as well as enormous potential for sustainable fisheries, the Commission has started a comprehensive evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Regulation[6]. The evaluation is expected to be completed in early 2026. It will be the basis for establishing a 2040 vision for the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, while taking into account other policy framework initiatives, such as the European Ocean Pact and the Energy Transition Roadmap for EU fisheries and aquaculture. The ongoing comprehensive evaluation of the CFP Regulation will look, among other things, at issues stemming from the implementation of the multiannual plans, referred to in this Communication.

This Communication provides information on two key elements of the CFP: progress on achieving maximum sustainable yield (MSY) and the state of the EU fishing fleet. Additionally, the Communication provides information on the implementation of the landing obligation; the socio-economic performance of European fisheries; and the continuous path to ensuring their competitiveness, resilience and sustainability.

2. Progress in achieving maximum sustainable yield

For generations, fisheries have provided a source of livelihood for many coastal communities in Europe and are an important part of their cultural identity. Thanks to the continued efforts made by fishers and national administrations and the commitment from the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, EU fisheries continue their progress toward more sustainability. Far fewer stocks are overfished in the EU today than 20 years ago. To continue this progress and provide the best available scientific advice to decision-makers, further development is needed in science, research and technology[7]. It is also for the fishing industry to look beyond managing fisheries with fish quotas or

---

1 OSPAR: Changes in Phytoplankton Biomass and Zooplankton Abundance

2 OSPAR: Concentrations of Dissolved Oxygen Near the Seafloor in the Greater North Sea, Celtic Seas and Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast

3 COM(2024)91 final, Managing climate risks – protecting people and prosperity.

4 EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters

5 Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869 (OJ L, 2024/1991, 29.7.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1991/oj)
The EU #NatureRestoration Law

6 Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC (OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1380/oj).

7 Recital 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC

effort limitations and come up with additional measures to address existing socio-economic fluctuations, and ecosystem impacts such as eutrophication and rising sea temperatures.

Each year, the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) updates the information available on fish stocks compared to the CFP objectives.

In 2023, the ecoregions of the **Baltic Sea**, the **Celtic Sea** and the **Greater North Sea** continued the trend of reducing the average fishing pressure to what is sustainable (from 29%, 51% and 65% above the target for fishing mortality consistent with achieving maximum sustainable yield (F_{MSY}) respectively in 2003, to 54%, 48% and 23% below F_{MSY}[8] target in 2023). However, in particular for widely distributed stocks[9] the average fishing pressure had slightly increased from 2022 to 2023. For the Bay of Biscay, fishers have made significant efforts to manage fish stocks sustainably. Their efforts lead to fisheries managed in line with MSY for several years as shown by the 2022 STECF report[10]. However, despite these efforts, the fishing opportunities have had to be reduced substantially in recent years and remain at lower levels. Ecosystem development and rising water temperatures seem to play a role.

The **Mediterranean and Black Seas** are home to multispecies fisheries with many stocks shared with non-EU countries. The fishing mortality rate has approached the sustainable level for some stocks, with seven having reached F_{MSY} in 2022. However, many stocks are still fished above sustainable levels. Action must continue to reduce fishing mortality and reach the MSY objective, in particular through the Western Mediterranean multiannual management plan[11] ('West Med MAP') and the 2030 strategy of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

2.1. Fishing opportunities in 2025

Fishing opportunities are an important instrument in sustainable fisheries management. In the **Atlantic Ocean, Baltic Sea and Skagerrak/Kattegat**, fishing opportunities are mainly set as catch limits, also known as total allowable catches (TACs). In the **Western Mediterranean**, due to mixed fisheries management, fishing opportunities are set mainly in terms of fishing effort.

The stocks in the **Baltic Sea** continue to be under pressure from sources other than fisheries, which have led to ecosystem failure and a degraded biodiversity[12]. Failure to implement fully EU legislation continues to be a relevant factor and the effect of pollution on fisheries is widespread in the ecoregion[13]. Pressures from agriculture, the timber industry and other land-based activities will continue to negatively affect the ecosystem in the Baltic Sea. In addition to these external pressures, shortcomings in implementing EU rules on catch reporting may also play a significant role in the decline of Baltic Sea fish stocks. Action needs to be stepped up to improve the implementation of EU legislation. While

---

8 For a detailed analysis of F_{MSY} and the biomass state of fish stocks in all sea basins, see Section 1 of the accompanying staff working document.

9 Northeast Atlantic mackerel, blue withing, Norwegian spring spawning herring, western horse mackerel, North Sea horse mackerel, Northeast Atlantic boarfish, Northeast Atlantic red gurnard and striped red mullet (in the Bay of Biscay, Southern Celtic Seas and Atlantic Iberian waters).

10 Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) - Monitoring of the performance of the Common Fisheries Policy (STECF-Adhoc-22-01)

11 Regulation (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 establishing a multiannual plan for the fisheries exploiting demersal stocks in the western Mediterranean Sea and amending Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 (OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/1022/oj).

12 HELCOM Quality status report 2023 (HOLAS 3): https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/State-of-the-Baltic-Sea-2023.pdf; ICES Ecosystem Overviews, Baltic Sea ecoregion, 26 November 2024: https://ices-library.figshare.com/articles/report/Baltic_Sea_Ecoregion_Ecosystem_Overview/27256635?file=50813523

13 In particular the Nitrates Directive, the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Water Framework Directive, the Habitats and Birds Directives, the Waste Framework Directive, the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, the Single Use Plastic Directive, the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, the integrated maritime policy and the common agricultural policy.

the Baltic Sea multiannual plan[14] provides many tools to help fish stocks recover, it is important for Member States to fully implement the relevant EU legislation and improve implementation of other regional sea conventions such as the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission Action Plan[15] in order to tackle this ecosystem failure. The commitments made in the *Our Baltic 2020* Ministerial Declaration[16] continue to be of importance.

For 2025 the number of TACs at MSY level remained at six, as in the previous year. However, for several stocks, the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) advised zero catches. As a number of these stocks are unavoidable by-catches in other fisheries, and to avoid a total closure of all Baltic Sea fisheries, by-catch allowances have been set. Measures from previous years have been kept, with spawning closures and limitations on recreational fishing also put in place for several TACs.

In the **North-East Atlantic** for the stocks managed solely by the EU, the TACs have been set in line with the policy objectives of the CFP. The only exception is cases relating to the provision in the multiannual plans, which requires fishing opportunities to be in any event fixed in such a way as to ensure that there is less than a 5 % probability of the spawning stock biomass falling below B_{lim}[17]. The Commission had proposed a targeted amendment to Regulations (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973 and (EU) 2019/472 establishing multiannual plans for certain stocks fished in the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the Western Waters, and for fisheries exploiting those stocks ('the MAPs') to address an inconsistency which arises under certain circumstances relating to the status of a given fish stock and the short-term forecast for its biomass development[18]. While the Council has expressed support for this proposal, the European Parliament decided not to continue working on it and asked the Commission to withdraw it.

As a result, the Commission announced its intention to withdraw the proposal in its 2025 work programme.

After a five-year transition period, the objective to reach and maintain MSY by 1 January 2025 for demersal stocks in the **Western Mediterranean** applies. With the MSY objective and based on best available scientific advice, there were further reductions in effort for trawlers and longliners, plus lowered catch limits for deep-water shrimps and hake caught by netters. To promote sustainable good practices and help hake stock recovery, the compensation mechanism established in the Western Mediterranean since 2022 was expanded in 2025 to encourage further voluntary measures such as increased selectivity and closure areas.[19] If implemented fully, the expanded compensation mechanism is expected to accelerate fish stock recovery and allow the sector to recover fishing days. With EU funding to support the transition to more sustainable practices, the socio-economic projections of fishing opportunities for 2025 point to similar profitability and economic performance as in previous years.

Through the fishing opportunities for 2025, the EU has continued to implement related measures stemming from the **General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM)** multiannual

---

14 Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and the fisheries exploiting those stocks, amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2187/2005 and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1098/2007

15 HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan

16 Ministerial Declaration - 'Our Baltic' Conference 2020

17 For a detailed analysis of F_{MSY} and the biomass state of fish stocks in all sea basins, see Section 1 of the accompanying staff working document.
Article 4(6) of Regulations (EU) 2016/1139 and (EU) 2018/973 and Article 4(7) of Regulation (EU) 2019/472.

18 Commission proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973 and (EU) 2019/472 as regards the targets for fixing fishing opportunities (COM(2023) 771 final).

19 Twelve sustainability measures for fishers to add fishing days under the compensation mechanism

plans, as well as of the newly agreed GFCM decisions for small pelagic and demersal stocks in the Adriatic and for turbot and sprat in the Black Sea.

The **European eel** stock remains in a critical state with ICES advising to stop all fishing and other mortalities. As a result, the minimum six-month closure period for any commercial eel fisheries in all waters in the Mediterranean, and in marine and adjacent waters in the Atlantic continued in 2025, with certain exemptions already agreed in 2023 and 2024. Additionally, the prohibition of recreational eel fisheries was continued in 2025. However, most Member States have not updated their national eel management plans, which leads to a situation where pressures on eels such as loss of habitat, are not being properly tackled. Without specific action by Member States the eel stock will not be able to recover.

2.2. Agreements with Norway, United Kingdom (UK) and other coastal States

Most EU stocks are now **shared with coastal States in the North-East Atlantic**. For the more than 85 TACs **shared with the UK**, the EU and the UK reached agreement for 2025 based on best available scientific advice, within the deadline as outlined by the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement[20]. Most stocks were set in line with MSY where advice was available. ICES gave zero-catch advice for nine stocks for 2025. For all these stocks, the EU and UK agreed to set low bycatch TACs for 2025 to prevent choking situations in mixed fisheries. For one stock, the EU and the UK agreed to set a scientific monitoring TAC for 2025, following advice from ICES.

Improving management of stocks shared by the EU and UK under the framework of the Specialised Committee for Fisheries was instrumental in improving sustainability and achieving a prompt and satisfactory agreement.

Most stocks shared between the **EU, Norway and the UK** in the North Sea indicate a positive trend. For 2025, the EU, the UK and Norway agreed to set TACs for these stocks in line with MSY advice. TACs for the **stocks managed bilaterally with Norway** were set in line with the best available scientific advice.

For mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandian herring (ASH), which are widely distributed across the North-East Atlantic, the **coastal States** and fishing parties (EU, UK, Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Greenland and in the case of ASH, also the Russian Federation) agreed to set overall TACs for 2025 at MSY level. However, in the absence of sharing arrangements and due to unilateral actions by some coastal States, including excessive interannual transfers, the sum of the unilateral quotas of coastal States and fishing parties still exceeds the overall TACs agreed. This continues to undermine the sustainability of these stocks, hinders progress made in reaching agreements with coastal States, and more generally has strained the cooperation in these fora. The EU continues to actively engage in discussions with other coastal States and fishing parties with the aim of concluding new comprehensive sharing arrangements for the sustainable management of these stocks.

3. Balance between the fishing capacity of the Member States' fleets and their fishing opportunities

Member States must keep fleets under the national ceilings set for vessel capacity (in terms of gross tonnage (GT) and engine power (kW)). Member States that have fleet segments with a demonstrated

[20] The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement - European Commission

imbalance[21] must present action plans that set adjustment targets and tools to achieve balance with a clear timeframe for implementation. Any capacity withdrawn with public aid may not be replaced[22].

Different parameters are used to assess whether a fleet is in balance. For instance, unprofitable or underused fleet segments may indicate that the fleet segments are recurrently or permanently tied up and inactive. Similarly, if many vessels spend less time fishing than they could, then the fleet segment may be too large for the available resources on which the vessels rely.

The size of the Member State fishing fleets continues to decrease. The number of vessels, their GT and engine power reduced by approximately 3%, 5% and 3% respectively in 2024. As a result, by 1 January 2025, the EU fishing fleet[23] comprised 69 570 vessels of 1 245 871 GT and 5 062 245 kW.

However, several fleet segments are still out of balance[24]. According to Article 22 of the CFP Regulation, Member States '*shall put in place measures to adjust fishing capacity of their fleet to their fishing opportunities over time, taking into account trends and based on best scientific advice, with the objective of achieving a* ***stable and enduring balance between them***.'. Some Member States have not presented action plans for bringing these fleet segments into balance. While trends for fishing opportunities may vary from year to year, having fleet segments with continuous non-sustainable indicators without action plans in place indicates a reluctance to ensure a reliable business model for the resilience and long-term sustainability of the fisheries sector. In addition, STECF has highlighted that some of the action plans provided do not have sufficient information to properly assess the possible impact on fleet balance.

Furthermore, some fleet segments continue to lack biological data to enable a comprehensive assessment of fleet balance. The Commission calls on Member States to increase their data collection efforts. Only with sufficient data is it possible to properly assess the balance of the EU fishing fleet to ensure its competitiveness, resilience and economic viability.

In 2024 the Commission launched a study on the evolution, challenges and future of the EU's fishing fleet. The objective of the study is to identify current and future challenges, explain how they impact the fleet's sustainability and provide insights on how to address them. The study is expected to be concluded in the second half of 2025 and will feed into the evaluation of the CFP Regulation.

4. Socio-economic outlook

After fuel prices peaked in 2022, they have gradually fallen to EUR 0.6-0.7 per litre in the first quarter of 2025. At current prices, the EU fishing fleet can expect to produce a gross value added of around EUR 2.5 billion, cover its operational costs, and maintain jobs and salaries for around 120 000 fishers.

Although overall, most national fleets are expected to be profitable in 2025, a socio-economic analysis indicates that several fleet segments in major fisheries will still face challenging conditions, particularly those which are **out of balance, depend on overfished stocks and/or use energy-intensive fishing**

---

21 COM (2014) 545: COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL Guidelines for the analysis of the balance between fishing capacity and fishing opportunities according to Art 22 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy
Article 22 of the CFP Regulation - Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC.

23 Including the fleet fishing in outermost regions.

24 'Red' indicators show fleet segments that are out of balance with the fishing opportunities. A 'green' indicator shows a fleet segment in balance with the fishing opportunities. More details may be found in the accompanying SWD.

gear. By contrast, **fleet segments that are in balance, depend on stocks fished sustainably, and have increased their energy efficiency tend to perform better and generate higher salaries for their crews**. This illustrates the major socio-economic gains in stock conservation and energy efficiency by EU fishing fleets. Whilst fuel prices have fallen, energy remains one of the major costs for the EU fishing fleets. On this front, **the Commission will present a roadmap of the energy transition in fisheries (and aquaculture) in early 2026**.

The state of the stocks and the profitability of the fisheries sector is equally important for the value chains through the coastal communities and beyond. Fisheries are the economic basis sustaining employment in auction halls, processing facilities, shipyards, transport, tourism and retail. According to the latest figures from the EU Blue Economy Observatory, an additional one million euro of output produced by the EU fishing fleet creates 30 jobs upstream and downstream in the value chain. Besides, fishers play a vital role in ensuring a healthy supply of food to the people of Europe and beyond. As well, fisheries are an essential economic sector in many coastal communities, especially where other opportunities may be more limited.

However, a resilient and prosperous coastal community cannot rely on fishing activities alone. Fishers, and coastal communities more generally, are facing increased pressures and uncertainty, including from climate change, which negatively affects marine ecosystems and displaces fish stocks. To withstand and adapt to the increasing pressures, coastal communities and fishers need to step up preparedness[25] and diversify activities where needed. Member State programmes under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) already offer opportunities for diversification and development of blue economy activities. In addition, the Commission will step up its effort to support coastal communities in strengthening their resilience and developing new opportunities[26].

4.1. Social dimension

The 'Fishers of the Future'[27] foresight study, completed in December 2024, examined the future role of fishers in society up to 2050. Looking at fishers' hopes, fears, expectations and needs is crucial to better design policies that support sustainable, thriving, and inclusive fisheries for the long-term.

The foresight study is part of the growing work on the social dimension of EU fisheries policy. In 2024 the Commission launched a baseline study on the training and skills of fishers in the EU. This baseline study will feed into an impact assessment, planned to be launched in 2025, on the possible implementation of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F)[28], as a way of tackling the issue of the fishing sector ranking amongst the most dangerous professions[29]. It is important to ensure that fishing is an attractive profession for young people and better safety conditions can play a part in this. Without generational renewal, fishing will not continue to supply healthy food to markets across Europe and help to maintain coastal communities.

5. Landing obligation

The landing obligation is a measure ensuring the sustainable exploitation of marine resources by inducing more selective fishing, so that unwanted catches are not caught. The landing obligation aims

25 EU Preparedness Union Strategy to prevent and react to emerging threats and crises

26 Mission letter from President Ursula von der Leyen to Commissioner-designate for Fisheries and Oceans Costas Kadis

27 Fishers of the future - A study that examines the future role of fishers in society up to 2050

28 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), 1995

29 Eurostat: Accidents at work statistics

at ensuring accurate recording of catches, including discards, which is essential for stock assessments and for proper fisheries management. As researchers use the data recorded in logbooks and collected under the data collection framework[30] to support scientific advice, it is essential to have accurate data. At the same time, it is essential that all catches are accurately recorded and appropriately deducted from established quotas to ensure sustainable fisheries management. As such, the full implementation and enforcement by the Member States of the landing obligation remain a priority.

In December 2023 the Commission launched a study on the landing obligation. This includes an evaluation of evidence using the Better Regulation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, and European Union added value. The study will be published in June 2025. It will then also feed into the ongoing comprehensive evaluation of the CFP Regulation[31].

6. Orientations for 2026 fishing opportunities

6.1. Key stages to setting the next fishing opportunities

The Commission proposals will be based on the best available scientific advice from ICES and STECF, subject to its availability and timing. The proposals will also draw on decisions taken during consultations with Norway, UK and other coastal States[32], decisions taken by regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) and a socio-economic analysis.

The Commission invites Member States and stakeholders to assess the advice from ICES and STECF as soon as it is publicly available. Stakeholders can provide feedback or recommendations through advisory councils, national authorities and individually to the Commission.

Moreover, the Commission is working to achieve progress on sharing arrangements for widely distributed stocks with non-EU countries that lack such arrangements, to ensure shared stocks are fished in a sustainable manner.

6.2. Fishing opportunities for the different sea basins

For stocks managed only by the EU in the **Baltic Sea, Skagerrak/Kattegat and Atlantic Ocean**, the Commission will propose TACs and quotas in line with the MSY and precautionary advice. Provided that the conditions set out in the multiannual plans are met, the Commission may propose using the upper range of MSY for healthy stocks. Where the size of fish stocks has decreased below healthy limits, the Commission will propose to rebuild these stocks and include remedial measures, in line with each multiannual plan. It will focus action on getting full MSY advice for target stocks under multiannual plans for which precautionary advice is currently issued.

The Commission will also deduct the *de minimis* or high survivability exemptions from the Fisheries Dependent Information or from the ICES advice where appropriate. The Commission will continue by-catch reduction measures adopted alongside TACs for unavoidable by-catch only, to alleviate potential choke situations. The Commission will propose more multiannual TACs for certain EU-only stocks,

[30] Regulation (EU) 2017/1004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 199/2008 (OJ L 157, 20.6.2017, p. 1).

[31] Evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation

[32] The Commission will conduct several consultations with the UK, Norway and other coastal States starting in October 2025. The aim is to conclude them in time to include their outcomes in the deliberations of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in December 2025.

where such scientific advice is available and will collaborate closely with Member States, stakeholders and ICES to this end. This will increase efficiency and predictability for the EU fishing industry.

For **shared stocks managed with the UK, Norway and other coastal States**, the objective remains to set fishing opportunities in line with MSY levels and negotiate conservation measures, where relevant, with the UK, Norway, and other coastal States. The EU will continue to cooperate with the UK in implementing the joint commitments made under the Specialised Committee on Fisheries of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. Likewise, the Commission will work with both the UK and Norway to follow through on trilateral commitments, as well as with Norway on bilateral commitments aimed at achieving sustainable fisheries and sound management of shared stocks. The EU remains committed to finding sustainable, balanced, and comprehensive sharing arrangements for widely distributed stocks that are jointly managed with other coastal States.

For the **Mediterranean and Black seas**, it is essential that Member States continue to pursue the objectives of the West Med MAP and of the GFCM MAPs. To this end, Member States should further strengthen the implementation of accompanying measures under their national EMFAF programmes, with support from the Commission where needed.

With the permanent phase of the West Med MAP in place, the Commission proposal will aim to achieve and maintain MSY for all stocks. The Commission has also launched work with relevant scientific bodies to update the best available scientific advice for hake.

Shared stocks management is also necessary to ensure sustainability in international waters and to secure a **level playing field** in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. To this end, the proposal for 2026 fishing opportunities will cover measures stemming from the GFCM that are already in force and additional measures to be adopted by the GFCM at its 2025 annual session. For Black Sea species, the Commission will propose TACs and quotas for turbot in line with the GFCM multiannual plan, and for sprat.

7. Conclusion

EU fisheries continue to improve their sustainability. While the situation in the Baltic Sea remains worrying, as commercially important stocks remain in a critical condition, the situation in the Mediterranean and Black Seas has shown significant improvement. In 2023, for the first time, average fishing mortality was below the target reference points. Although the EU sea basins show average fishing pressures below the target reference points, certain stocks remain above the target. Fisheries managers and stakeholders must continue their efforts to bring these stocks to the sustainable target levels. Vigilance must also be maintained to stop any negative trends before they cause both short-term and long-term consequences for EU fisheries.

Member States must also step up their efforts to implement fully EU legislation[33], including to tackle the pressure on fish stocks stemming from activities other than fisheries. A healthier marine environment is a condition for a more resilient and more prosperous fishing sector.

Member States should also advance on the implementation of their EMFAF national programmes with measures that will support the green and digital transition of the fisheries sector and enhance its resilience.

While factors other than fisheries continue to also have an impact on the state of marine ecosystems and fish stocks[34], it is important for fishers to continue their efforts for resilient and sustainable fish

[33] In particular: Marine strategy framework directive, Birds and Habitats directives, Water framework directive and Nature restoration regulation

[34] COM(2024) 91 final, Managing climate risks – protecting people and prosperity.

stocks. Healthy stocks are the basis for maintaining fisheries as a livelihood for current and future generations and preserving the identity and heritage of our coastal communities in the EU.

The Commission proposals for fishing opportunities for 2026 will continue to focus on enabling fish stocks to recover and maintain the progress made for stocks which have reached sustainable levels. The long-term aim is to ensure the future sustainability, competitiveness and resilience of EU fisheries. This continues to require the active engagement and support of all stakeholders – we all have a common interest to protect, preserve and profit from our seas.

The Commission invites Member States, advisory councils, stakeholders and the public to provide feedback on this Communication by 31 August 2025.

PLANNED WORK SCHEDULE[35]

When	What
May - November 2025	ICES scientific advice
June - end August 2025	Public consultation on the Communication
End August 2025	Commission adopts its proposal for fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea
Mid-September 2025	Commission adopts its proposal for fishing opportunities in the Mediterranean and Black Seas
October - December 2025	Annual consultations on fishing opportunities with parties in the North-East Atlantic
October 2025	Council meeting on fishing opportunities for the Baltic Sea Coastal State consultations on widely distributed stocks in the North-East Atlantic
End October 2025	Commission adopts its proposal for fishing opportunities in the Atlantic/North Sea
4-8 November 2025	GFCM annual session
11-14 November 2025	NEAFC annual meeting
1 December 2025	STECF stock assessment and management advice
December 2025	Council meeting on fishing opportunities in the Atlantic/North Sea Council meeting on fishing opportunities in the Mediterranean and Black Seas

[35] For RFMO-managed stocks in EU waters and certain non-EU waters, fishing opportunities are adopted after the annual meeting of the RFMOs by revising the Council regulation setting the fishing opportunities.