Final greenlight on new technical and conservation measures in fisheries

A new and comprehensive legislative framework setting out the practices and conditions under which fisheries activities can be carried out across all EU waters will soon enter into force.

The Council today signed off on a regulation on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures.

The adopted measures cover issues such as the taking and landing of fisheries resources, fishing gears and mesh sizes, closed areas and seasons. They are intended to minimise the impact of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem and environment, but also to bring simplification and decision-making closer to fishermen and coastal communities, through enhanced regionalisation and a bottom up approach.

The new rules, covering mostly commercial fishing and where applicable recreational fishing, will increase the selectivity of fishing gears. They will also introduce quantitative indicators to help reduce unwanted catches of marine species below minimum conservation reference sizes, and by-catches of non-commercial and sensitive marine species including mammals such as whales, dolphins and porpoises, seabirds and marine reptiles. The fishing of rare species such as certain sharks and rays will be prohibited.

The regulation also introduces a total ban on electric pulse trawl fishing from 1 July 2021, with the possibility for member states to immediately prohibit or restrict this type of fishing in their coastal waters. A phasing-out period to allow the sector to adapt is nonetheless foreseen.

Other fishing methods such as explosives, poison, stupefying substances, electric current, pneumatic hammers or other percussive instruments which could damage any type or coral will be prohibited.

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