



## DEBATE PACK

Number 2016/0042, 10 February 2016

# Debate Pack: Conservation of sea bass

This pack has been prepared ahead of the debate on **Conservation of sea bass and the effect of related EU measures on the UK recreational fishing industry** to take place in the Commons Chamber on Thursday 11 February 2016. The subject for the debate has been chosen by the Backbench Business Committee and will be on the motion

*That this House believes that the recent EU restrictions on recreational sea bass fishing are unfair and fail to address the real threat to the future viability of UK sea bass stocks; and calls on the Government to make representations within the Council of the EU on the reconsideration of the imposition of those restrictions.*

Please see also Library Briefing Paper, UK and European sea bass conservation measures:

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN00745>

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

Dr Elena Ares  
Nikki Sutherland

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# 1. Summary

The European seabass is an important commercial fish species. It is also one of the most important fish species for recreational fishermen in the UK due to its “famed fighting prowess”.

## **Health of the sea bass population**

The species is thought to be particularly vulnerable to over-fishing. The most recent assessment of bass stocks showed that stocks have continued decline year-on-year. The international scientific body (ICES) recommended that bass catches in 2016 should be no more than 541 tonnes in Central and South North Sea, Irish Sea, English Channel, Bristol Channel, Celtic Sea, half the UK’s 2014 catch of 1,000 tonnes.

## **Emergency measures to preserve bass stocks 2015/16**

Negotiations on the introduction of technical measures to preserve bass fish stocks have been ongoing in the European Commission since 2012. After there was no agreement on technical conservation measures at the December 2014 meeting of Ministers, the UK Government made a formal request to the Commission to take emergency measures to protect sea bass stocks.

The Commission subsequently announced a package of technical conservation measures for 2015:

- A pelagic trawling ban for sea bass (26 Jan 2015) during its spawning season—effective until 30 April 2015;
- a limit on recreational anglers of three fish per day per angler (26 March 2015);
- a maximum catch per month by gear type limiting the targeting of the vulnerable stock, agreed on 24 June 2015; and
- an increased minimum landing size (MLS) for sea bass (from 36 cm to 45cm).

Despite these emergency measures, ICES warned that bass stocks are still declining. Throughout 2015, the European Commission worked with member states on a range of measures to reduce bass fishing mortality. In December, an agreement was reached for a ban on commercial (pelagic) trawlers fishing for bass from 1 January 2016 to 30 June 2016 in the English Channel and North Sea and from 1 July 2016 to 31 December 2016 it shall be prohibited for vessels to fish quantities exceeding 1 tonne per any vessel per month of sea bass. Whilst for recreational fishermen are limited to catch and release for the first part

of the year and a one bass per fisherman per day for the second half of the year. The measures are now in force in the UK.

### **Sea angling review 2012**

In 2011, the Government launched a national survey of sea angling in England. This report assessed the number of people sea angling, catch data and the economic and social value of sea angling. This report – Sea Angling 2012 – was published on 27 November 2013. The Government also launched an assessment of seabass stocks to determine whether the MLS should be increased. The Government published the findings of this assessment in December 2014.

## 2. News items

### **Iconic small fishing boats of Cornwall face extinction warns fisherman**

The West Briton

28 January 2016

<http://www.westbriton.co.uk/Iconic-small-fishing-boats-Cornwall-face/story-28626230-detail/story.html>

### **New measures to protect bass stocks are 'unacceptable', say recreational sea anglers**

The Cornishman

21 January 2016

<http://www.cornishman.co.uk/New-measure-protect-bass-stocks-unacceptable-say/story-28578269-detail/story.html>

### **The EU is helping, not harming, UK fisheries**

The Ecologist blog

19 January 2016

[http://www.theecologist.org/blogs\\_and\\_comments/commentators/2986914/the\\_eu\\_is\\_helping\\_not\\_harming\\_uk\\_fisheries.html](http://www.theecologist.org/blogs_and_comments/commentators/2986914/the_eu_is_helping_not_harming_uk_fisheries.html)

### **Fury over gill netting for bass**

Total Fishing

29 December 2015

<http://www.total-fishing.com/fishing-news/fury-over-gill-netting-bass>

### **It's Bad News for Bass**

Flyfishing.co.uk

18 December 2015

<http://www.flyfishing.co.uk/news/news/7021-bad-news-for-bass.html>

### **'Draconian' ban on sea bass fisheries to begin in January**

Western Morning News

16 December 2016

<http://www.westernmorningnews.co.uk/Draconian-ban-sea-bass-fisheries-begin-January/story-28376725-detail/story.html>

### **Bass fishing ban by EU sparks industry anger in Wales**

BBC

16 November 2015

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-34813126>

**Sea bass stocks on brink of collapsing, warn conservationists**

Guardian

10 July 2015

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jul/10/sea-bass-stocks-on-brink-of-collapsing-warn-conservationists>

## 3. Press releases

### Marine Management Organisation

#### Clarification on fishing restrictions for Bass in 2016

**First published: 25 January 2016 Last updated: 28 January 2016**

When the European Union (EU) publishes the annual regulations allocating total allowable catch and quotas to member states (the T&Q regulation), a number of new restrictions for catches of sea bass will be introduced. This article seeks to answer the key questions surrounding the new measures for commercial and recreational fisherman.

UPDATE: The European Union has now published the annual T&Q regulation and the measures relating to catches of sea bass come into force at 00:01hrs on 29 January 2016.

#### *General information*

What are the new measures which are being introduced for commercial fisheries for sea bass?

An in depth guide to the [new measures](#) can be seen on the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) website:

When do the new measures take effect?

The new measures will be contained in the annual T&Q regulation which will become law when the EU publishes it in the Official Journal. A draft of the text of the regulation can be seen on the [Council of Europe website](#).

(N.B It must be noted that the draft text is not an official regulation of the EU until it is published and may be subject to changes).

Can I catch what I want until the regulation is published?

No. Until the publication of the 2016 T&Q regulation, the 2015 regulation (Council Regulation (EU) 2015/104 remains in force and commercial fishing vessels remain subject to conditions contained in the [fishing vessel licence](#)

How will I know when the 2016 regulation has been published?

The EU has now published the [annual T&Q regulation: Council regulation \(EU\) 2016/71](#). The measures come into force on 29 January 2016.

#### *Commercial fisheries*

What happens if I have fished up to the 2015 monthly limit before the 2016 regulation comes into force?

MMO will continue to enforce the 2015 limits on sea bass in January 2016 until the 2016 regulation comes into force.

When the 2016 regulation comes into force vessels which will be prohibited from fishing for bass must not catch any more sea bass.

For those vessels which remain eligible to catch bass (i.e. vessels using demersal trawls and catching no more than 1% bass by-catch and those vessels using hooks and lines and fixed gill nets in months other than February and March), the following rules apply:

- in the event you have fished up to the monthly limit in the 2015 regulation, but exceeded the reduced limit in the 2016 regulation you must not catch any more sea bass in January or you will be in breach of the new regulations
- any catches retained on board or landed after the coming into force of the 2016 regulation will be enforced by MMO against those limits
- if you have not yet caught up to the monthly limit in the 2016 regulation by the time it comes into force then you may continue to fish for sea bass up to the reduced limits in the 2016 regulation

What is the definition of a fixed gill net?

The legal definition of a fixed gill net is contained in European legislation, specifically article 3(g) and (h) of Council Regulation (EC) 850/1998 and reads as follows:

(g) bottom set gill nets or entangling nets shall mean any fixed gear made up of a single piece of net, fixed, or capable of being fixed, by any means to the bottom of the sea;

(h) trammel nets shall mean any fixed gear made up of two or more pieces of net hung jointly in parallel on a single headline, fixed, or capable of being fixed, by any means to the bottom of the sea;

#### *Recreational Fishing*

Can I catch what I want until the 2016 regulation is published?

No; the 2015 restrictions on recreational fisheries remain in force, as follows:

In recreational fisheries in ICES divisions IVb, IVc, VIIa, VIId, VIle, VIIf, VIIg, VIIh, VIIj and VIIk not more than three specimens of sea bass may be retained per person per day.

What happens after the 2016 regulation is published?

The [new rules](#) must be complied with from that point onwards.

## **Marine Management Organisatoin**

### **New commercial and recreational fishing restrictions for Bass in 2016**

**First published: 30 December 2015 Last updated: 28 January 2016**

The MMO will issue a variation to all fishing vessel licence holders setting out the measures.

Throughout 2015 the European Commission has been working with member states and their scientific advisors on a range of measures to reduce bass fishing mortality. However, stocks are continuing to decline and further measures have been put in place to protect bass. In 2016 additional restrictions have been implemented on both commercial and recreational fishermen, and those restrictions are contained in the new [TACs and Quotas Regulation](#).

The MMO will issue a variation to all fishing vessel licence holders setting out the measures, which include:

For commercial fisheries:

- a continued closure throughout 2016 to all commercial bass fishing in ICES Areas VIIb, VIIc, VIIj, VIIk and outside the UK 12nm in areas VIIa and VIIg;
- From 1 January to 30 June 2016 a prohibition on commercial vessels fishing for bass in ICES Areas IVb, IVc, VIIa, VIId, VIle, VIIf, VIIg, VIIh except for:
  - Demersal trawls and seines which are permitted a 1% bass by-catch; and
  - Hooks and lines and fixed gill nets which are permitted 1,300kg per vessel in January, April, May and June (NB: this does not include drift net fisheries). The fishery is closed in February and March.
- from 1 July to 31 December 2016 monthly catch limits apply to all vessels in ICES Areas IVb, IVc, VIIa, VIId, VIle, VIIf, VIIg, VIIh
  - 1,300kg per vessel per month for hooks and lines and fixed gill nets (NB: this does not include drift net fisheries)
  - 1,000kg per vessel per month for all other gears

The catch limits apply to a single vessel and cannot be transferred between vessels or between one month and another.

For recreational fisheries

In ICES Areas IVb, IVc, VIIa, VIId, VIle, VIIf, VIIg, VIIh

- from 1 January to 30 June 2016 catch and release only permitted
- from 1 July to 31 December 2016 one bass per fisherman per day

In ICES areas VIIj and VIIk

- from 1 January to 31 December 2016 one bass per fisherman per day

Recreational fisheries include fishing from the shore.

If you have any queries please contact your [local marine office](#).



## **Fishing Ministers accused of ‘shameful conservation con trick’ over bass stocks**

### **BASS (British Anglers’ Sportfishing Society) and Angling Trust Statement**

**17 December 2015**

Organisations representing Britain’s 800,000 sea anglers have reacted furiously to the news that EU Fisheries Ministers, including the UK’s George Eustice, have caved into pressure from commercial fishing interests and granted exemptions to the highly damaging bass gill net fishery. This sector, described by Eustice as ‘low impact’ is actually responsible for by far the greatest over-fishing of threatened bass stocks in the UK. It will now only be closed for two months of the year rather than six as was planned in the proposed European moratorium on commercial bass fishing during the spawning period. For the UK alone, this represents an increase in gill net landings of 131 tonnes compared with the scientists’ recommendation of a maximum of 541 tonnes of landings in 2016 for the entire Northern bass stock. Furthermore the gill net monthly catch limit per vessel has been raised from 1.0 to 1.3 tonnes, making a nonsense of claims to be conserving bass stocks in line with the evidence and best scientific advice.

At the same time, the £200 million recreational bass sector will see a zero bag limit in the first 6 months and in the second half of the year the bag limit for anglers will be reduced from three fish a day to just one. Whilst anglers were pleased to have retained catch and release fishing for bass during the first half of the year, they claim that the overall package has unfairly targeted the one activity that is most sustainable and creates the greatest economic benefit, in favour of allowing what is virtually ‘business as usual’ for the netters. Prior to this week’s Council of Ministers meeting in Brussels to consider the Commission’s proposals, both the Angling Trust and the Bass Anglers Sportfishing Society (BASS) lobbied George Eustice to retain Catch and Release angling from January to June, to remove the gill nets and make bass a hook and line fishery only.

The only UK commercial sectors that look like seeing any significant reduction in catches are the trawlers and seiners which account for only 15% of all UK bass landing, whereas gill netting is responsible for over half of total UK bass catches each year and so should be the major target of these restrictions.

The figures recommended by the scientists at ICES in order to rebuild European bass stocks were for an 80% reduction in landings in 2015 and a 90% reduction in 2016 down to 541 tonnes in total. By watering down the Commission’s proposals, through an increase in the monthly vessel catch limits for both line fishing and gill netting and restricting their closure period to just February and March, the impact is now likely to deliver a little more than a 20% reduction in mortalities. By contrast anglers will be expected to return every bass they catch from January to June and then see their bag limit for the remaining six months slashed by 66%.

Angling Trust Campaigns Chief Martin Salter said:

“This is nothing more than a conservation con trick by politicians who have ignored the science and capitulated to commercial pressure from the very sector that has caused the decline of bass stocks in the first place. Anglers are supposed to feel grateful for being allowed to return our bass to the sea during the first half of 2016, whilst for four months of that period gill netters will actually see their catch limits increased. And how gill netting, which is responsible for more than half of all commercial UK bass landings and catches two and a half times more than any other method, can be labelled ‘low impact’ simply beggars belief.

For George Eustice to describe what has been agreed as ‘a good result’ for bass whilst at the same time claiming on TV that his local netmen will be virtually unaffected by ‘this generous exemption’ is downright disingenuous and deeply insulting to Britain’s anglers and anyone else who cares about sustainable fish stocks.”

Nigel Horsman of BASS added:

“Once again, our politicians have ignored the scientific advice, ignored the economic facts, thought only about the short term and given in to the bullying tactics of the commercial fishing sector, shafting the future bass fishing prospects of hundreds of thousands of sea anglers in the process. The rapid decline in bass stocks will continue under this deal, giving a real risk that the whole bass fishery for everyone will have to be shut in the next year or two, just as we warned the Minister directly last week. A major plank in the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy was to take politically motivated, short term dealing out of fishery management and replace it with long term decision making based on ecological, economic and social evidence. Our politicians have just driven a coach and horses through their own new rules, proving again, that they are not to be trusted with anything to do with fishery management. Sea anglers are justifiably furious with this outcome for not only threatening their future sport, but also for the blatant disregard for any fairness or justice in allocating these “fishing opportunities” between anglers and commercial fishermen. This is a shameful result.”

Long standing bass campaigner and Angling Trust Ambassador Malcolm Gilbert said:

“The recreational sea angling sector has been well and truly screwed over by the politicians. This year, we have had a bag limit of 3 bass. In 2016, whereas, gill netters can now fish during four of the first six months and retain/land up to 1300 kilos in each of those months, recreational anglers have a zero bag limit. For the second half of the year, again whilst gill netters can retain/land 1300 kilos each month, recreational sea anglers are subject to a one bass bag limit. [Defra must have told the Minister that in 2014 only 111 vessels out of 1,331 in the UK managed to catch 1000 kilos of bass in a month, so the vast majority were unaffected by such a limit, yet the Minister has seen fit to increase the limit to 1300 kilos for gill netters, effectively dismissing the

scientific advice with similar contempt with which he has treated the recreational sea angling community.

This debacle is not only grossly unfair to recreational sea anglers but even more importantly, the bass resource itself is going to be subjected to far higher levels of fishing mortality than the scientists recommend. In the long term it is a catastrophic outcome for all of us who crave restoration of bass stocks with truly sustainable long term exploitation.”

The Angling Trust will now be briefing MPs on the consequences of these latest decisions on bass and is hoping to see a debate in the Commons in order to hold the minister to account for this failure to deliver meaningful conservation measures and some of the extraordinary claims that he has made in defence of unsustainable fishing methods.

## **NFFO (National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations)**

### **Bass: Repeating the mistakes of the past**

**10th December 2015**

Everyone makes mistakes. A measure of intelligence is how quickly we learn from those mistakes. We label as stupid, people who fail to learn the lessons of their past errors. How then to describe the European Commission’s failure to learn the lessons of the past? The history Common Fisheries Policy contains a litany of failed measures. In many respects, the current positive outlook for our stocks has been achieved in spite of, rather than because of, management measures. We have gone down so many blind alleys that the law of averages dictated that we would eventually stumble in the right direction. But the journey has been much more painful and taken much longer than necessary.

One of the fundamental lessons that we should have learnt but don't seem to have, is that in general, in fisheries management, *drastic changes should be avoided*. Extreme measures tend to generate unintended consequences. Often they just displace the problem into an adjacent area/fleet/ fishery/ stock. Fishing businesses large and small need time to adapt. The active or tacit support of fishermen, that is the foundation of successful management, is hard to achieve against the background of confusion and hostility.

Cod recovery has been the classic example of drastic management measures – huge TAC reductions, savage days-at-sea restrictions – when seen in retrospect, were big mistakes. At point one cod was being discarded in the North Sea for every cod retained on board – a reflection of a clumsy and blundering policy. It wasn't until that policy morphed into something more intelligent – avoidance and improved selectivity – that real progress was made in rebuilding the biomass.

Despite regionalisation, which at present has its hands full implementing the landings obligation – possible the most poorly thought-through CFP measure of all - the Commission seems addicted to these flamboyant,

dramatic, gesture politics that contain within them the seeds of their own failure.

Bass today is facing the same dilemma. It is clear that something needs to be done. Initial steps have been taken – catch limits, an increased landing size and bag limits for recreational anglers. But rather than assess the impact of these measures and adjust accordingly, the Commission has now jumped the rails and proposed what amounts to a moratorium on fishing for bass. Already it is possible to foresee some of the consequences: a huge increase in discarded bass in mixed fisheries where bass is a bycatch, where before there was no discard problem; an alienated fleet, forced to throw over the side the box or two of the most valuable species in their catch; fishing operations with nowhere else to turn in their struggle to earn a living.

Why do they do it? Why do our political masters fail to learn the lessons of the past? Is it because they don't know? Do they not have the depth of background understanding? Are they in fear of vilification by the media, always keen to sensationalise and accuse? Is it because their time horizons are so short?

All of these explanations are in the mix but it is not good enough.

Until the fundamental lessons are taken on board, we in the industry will have to deal with the aftermath of intemperate and fundamentally stupid decisions. By the time the evaluations tell the same sad old story of failure, the commissioners, ministers and officials who sign up to these measures will have left the stage, no doubt feeling that they have done their duty by creating another piece of legislation. The reality is that they will have failed us again, and it will be fishermen who pick up the pieces.

It's not as though we don't know how success works. Get the right people in the room: fisheries scientists, fisheries administrators and fisheries stakeholders. Identify the basic problems, fleet by fleet, region by region; design and agree appropriate responses. Implement those measures carefully, incrementally, and in continuous dialogue. It's not spectacular. It's not flamboyant. But time after time it's the model that delivers when drastic measures merely shift the problem.

It is only to be hoped that at this late stage, as the December Council rapidly approaches that a flicker of recall will remind the Commission and the Council of Ministers what has worked in the past and what has failed.

## Fish Update

### Don't over-react on sea bass curbs, Minister told

**December 1, 2015**

THE National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO) has written to the UK Fisheries Minister George Eustice calling for a proportionate response to the management of the sea bass stock around the UK.

The NFFO said that while it may need action, it does not want to see over-reaction. There have been reports that sea bass quotas are to be drastically reduced next year – with catching of this popular restaurant fish possibly suspended for a period.

The NFFO said it wanted to make four points as the industry moved towards the December EU Council and critically important decisions on bass. They are:

1. The emerging scientific advice on bass indicates that successive below average year classes and an overall fishing mortality that is too high, requires remedial action;
2. Landings statistics make plain that a very large number of fishermen, using a range of gears, depend on bass for a significant part of their annual income;
3. The history of the CFP is littered with examples where clumsy measures have made things worse rather than better;
4. The Commission's proposal, which amounts in effect to a moratorium on bass, is driven by the legally binding but wholly arbitrary requirement to reach maximum sustainable yield by 2016 or 2020 at the latest.

'Against this background we consider that it is important that the UK takes a measured and proportionate position at the December Council,' an NFFO statement added.

'A moratorium would have devastating social and economic consequences. The science on bass gives cause for concern; but it does not justify overreaction.

'Catch limits, an increased minimum conservation reference size and bag limits have been in place for under a year; it takes time for the effect of measures to work through.'

The NFFO is urging the minister to:

1. Reject the Commission's proposal;
2. Support proportionate step-wise measures – but only after the efficacy of those measures that have already been put in place have been properly evaluated;
3. Recognise the multi-faceted dimension of the bass fishery and therefore the need for measures tailored to the specifics of each fishery;

4. Take account of the potential for unintended consequences, not least the scope to generate a significant discard problem where none existed.

'On this latter point, it is important to learn the lessons of the recent past, where ministers have not infrequently agreed eye-catching blanket measures that deliver much less than hoped for.

'The obvious example is North Sea cod. Ministers' actions resulted in a dramatic increase in discards, which can only have impeded recovery. A more intelligent and effective approach only emerged later. We think that this is an important lesson that has significance for bass.

'The most important step to be taken in the present circumstances is to establish an effective dialogue between fishermen who rely on bass for their livelihoods, fisheries scientists and fisheries administrators as to what measures would work and which not work in their fleet sector.'

## 4. Parliamentary material

### Written statement

#### **Marine Licensing Recovery Policy**

**HC Deb 13 October 2015 | HCWS233**

**George Eustice:** Following a consultation exercise led by my Department in early 2015, the Government has made an amendment to the Order delegating the exercise of certain marine licensing functions to the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). These changes took effect on 1 October 2015.

The marine licensing system was introduced by the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The exercise of most licensing functions in England and the offshore areas of Wales and Northern Ireland have been delegated by the Secretary of State to the MMO.

The purpose of the amending Order is to strengthen democratic accountability on the most complex marine licence applications by providing an opportunity for locally accountable bodies (i.e. Local Planning Authorities, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities) to seek an independent inquiry into certain marine licensing applications, with the final decision taken by Ministers directly accountable to Parliament. It will also enable Ministers to determine certain applications which involve activities of national significance but in relation to which there is no or insufficient planning policy guidance.

The Order includes the criteria according to which the Secretary of State will consider whether to “recover” an application. In this context “recover” means that an application is to be determined by the Secretary of State

The Government’s intention is that the policy will be highly selective and that only a very small proportion of marine licensing cases will be recovered.

The Secretary of State has issued statutory guidance to the MMO setting out how it should apply the policy, including providing indicative targets for each stage of the process. A copy of the guidance has been placed in the libraries of both Houses.

The Government will review the effectiveness of the policy and consult with stakeholder groups in October 2016.

## Debates

### [Fisheries Policy](#)

**HC Deb 03 December 2015 | Backbench debates | Westminster Hall | Vol 603 cc179-226WH**

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm151203/halltext/151203h0001.htm#15120365000001>

### [The North Sea under Pressure \(EUC Report\)](#)

Lords motion to take note of the report of the European Union Committee on The North Sea under pressure: is regional marine co-operation the answer? (HL 137).

[

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201415/ldselect/lducom/137/137.pdf> ]

**HL Deb 30 November 2015 | Vol 767 cc1001-1024**

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldhansrd/text/151130-0002.htm#15113021000164>

Westminster Hall debate: [Common Fisheries Policy \(Reform\)](#)

**HC Deb 10 September 2015 | Vol 599 cc159-184WH**

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150910/halltext/150910h0001.htm#15091024000002>

## PQs

### [White Fish: Fishing Catches](#)

**Asked by: Cunningham, Alex**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make it her policy to publish sea bass landing data by metier for 2014.

**Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) publishes annual data which includes total landings by UK vessels for bass in the UK Sea Fisheries Annual Statistics Report 2014. In conjunction with this report, the MMO publishes two more detailed datasets online which show bass landings by, for example, year, month, port of landing, vessel nationality, gear category, over/under 10m, area and rectangle. This information is available at the link below.



<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/uk-sea-fisheries-annual-statistics-report-2014>.

**HC Deb 14 January 2016 | PQ 21666**

[White Fish: Fishing Catches](#)

**Asked by: Cunningham, Alex**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of (a) the effect of measures announced at the December 2015 Fisheries and Agriculture Council on sea bass mortality in 2016 and (b) whether those measures will meet the 90 per cent quota reductions for 2016 recommended by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea.

**Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The UK's top priority for the bass negotiations at December Council was to agree measures to allow us to achieve sustainable fishing at EU level by 2018, and the package agreed puts us on the right path to do so.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea's advice for bass in 2016 reflected its standard advice format for achieving the sustainable fishing standard the following year. The target year of 2018 agreed at the December Council for bass, however reflected the fact that the management of this stock through EU measures only began in 2015, which meant that it was necessary to take a more incremental approach, to reach sustainability in the fewest years realistically achievable.

**HC Deb 11 January 2016 | PQ 20832**

[White Fish: Fishing Catches](#)

**Asked by: Murray, Mrs Sheryll**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the level of stocks of sea bass since the implementation of restrictions on landing that fish by (a) commercial and (b) recreational fishermen in 2015. [PQ 16783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what changes she proposes to introduce to the regulation of recreational sea anglers who capture sea bass for the period from 1 July to 31 December 2016. [PQ 16564]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what changes she proposes to introduce to the regulation of recreational sea anglers who capture sea bass for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2016. [PQ 15653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proposed measures are being introduced for the fishing of sea

bass by commercial fishermen in the period from 1 July to 31 December 2016. [PQ 16562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what measures she proposes to introduce to regulate commercial fishermen catching sea bass for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2016. [PQ 16561]

**Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The European Commission has issued proposals[1] on fishing opportunities to be agreed for 2016, which includes EU bass management measures for the commercial fishing and recreational sea angling sectors consisting of a moratorium on fishing for bass in the first six months, and reduced catch limits for the latter half of the year. The UK response to these proposals is being considered in advance of negotiations at the December Fisheries Council.

The latest available assessment of the bass stock, from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, was published in June this year before the full set of EU bass management measures for 2015 was finalised in September. Its next assessment is due in June 2016.

[1] [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:f4d9701d-87b1-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1.0011.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:f4d9701d-87b1-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1.0011.02/DOC_1&format=PDF)

**HC Deb 24 November 2015**

[White Fish: Fishing Catches](#)

**Asked by: Cunningham, Alex**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what use she plans to make of the granting of (a) exemptions and (b) increased vessel limits for gillnetting of sea bass to achieve quota recommendations from the International Council for Exploration of the Sea.

**Answering member: George Eustice | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

The package of EU bass measures agreed at the December Fisheries Council included derogations and differentiated catch limits for fixed gillnets. The legislative arrangements do not include a mechanism for granting or withholding such provisions by Member States, although Member States may impose more stringent standards at national level if considered appropriate.

With regard to the recommendations from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016, PQ UIN 20832.

**HC Deb 13 January 2016 | PQ 21368**

## 5. Useful links and further reading

Marine Management Organisation: *Bass Fishing: catch limits, minimum size and where you can fish* (incl. Restrictions Maps 2016) February 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bass-fishing-catch-limits-closures-and-minimum-size>

European Commission: *How is the EU protecting sea bass?*

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing\\_rules/sea-bass/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/sea-bass/index_en.htm)

[includes q&a

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/publications/documents/2016-01-20-sea-bass-q-and-a\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/publications/documents/2016-01-20-sea-bass-q-and-a_en.pdf) ]

House of Lords European Union Committee *The North Sea under pressure: is regional marine co-operation the answer?* HL 137 2014-15

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201415/ldselect/ldeucom/137/137.pdf>

CEFAS Jan 2009 study *Bass gillnet selectivity*: This FSP programme (No. 8) investigated the selective characteristics of gillnets over a range of mesh sizes in relation to the European seabass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*).

[http://www.cefias.defra.gov.uk/media/168267/fsp\\_2008\\_09\\_prog\\_08\\_bass\\_gill\\_net\\_selectivity\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.cefias.defra.gov.uk/media/168267/fsp_2008_09_prog_08_bass_gill_net_selectivity_final_report.pdf)

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