



**SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC  
COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF)**

**RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FROM THE  
EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON FISHING  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2010 FOR SOLE IN ICES  
DIVISION VIIe**

AUGUST 2009, WRITTEN PROCEDURE

Edited by John Casey & Hendrik Dörner

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## **OPINION OF THE SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE**

### **Response to a request from the European Commission on fishing opportunities for 2010 for sole in ICES division VIIe**

**AUGUST 2009**

#### **Background**

Based on the most recent assessment and advice from STECF and according to ANNEX II of the Commission's Communication on fishing opportunities for 2010 (COM(2009) 224) the stock of sole in ICES Division VIIe can be classified as a category 7 stock. The decision rule for category 7 stocks states that the TAC should be reduced by up to 15% and STECF should be asked to advise on the appropriate level of effort.

#### **Request to STECF**

Taking into account the above background, STECF is requested to advise on the most appropriate TAC for VIIe sole in 2010 that is likely to be consistent with achieving sustainable exploitation with a fishing mortality target of  $F=0.27$

#### **STECF response**

STECF notes that the objective of the management agreement for VIIe sole (Council Regulation (EC) No. 509/2007) is to achieve and maintain fishing mortality at a rate of 0.27 on appropriate age groups. In part 1 of its review of advice for 2010 for stocks of Community interest and based on the most recent assessment information from ICES on sole in VIIe, STECF concluded that in the absence of any estimate of the recent level of fishing mortality or stock size, STECF is unable to estimate the catch that corresponds to the management plan harvest rule

In response to the current request STECF carried out a simple catch curve analysis based on commercial catch data. The results indicate that total mortality ( $Z$ ) since 2002 appears to have been on average in the region of  $Z=0.42$ . Assuming that the natural mortality ( $M$ ) for VIIe sole is 0.1, this implies that on average, fishing mortality ( $F$ ) in recent years has been about  $F=0.32$ . Hence to achieve a target fishing mortality rate of  $F=0.27$  in 2010, would imply a reduction in fishing mortality of about 15 % over recent average levels.

STECF therefore advises that if the objective for managers is to achieve  $F=0.27$  in 2010, fishing mortality on VIIe sole in 2010 should be reduced by about 15%. STECF notes that according to Article 5 of the management agreement for sole in VIIe (Council Regulation (EC) No. 509/2007), this implies that the permitted numbers of days at sea for the vessels to which Article 5 applies, should be reduced by 15%.

With regard to the most appropriate TAC that corresponds to a fishing mortality rate of  $F=0.27$ , this cannot be deduced with the available data and information.

In order to reduce any immediate negative economic impacts on the fleets that exploit sole in VIIe through loss of fishing opportunities, STECF proposes that managers adopt a pragmatic approach to reduce fishing mortality towards the target rate of  $F=0.27$  through stepwise annual reductions in fishing effort until the target is reached. In the absence of a reliable relationship between fishing mortality and fishing effort, STECF suggests a 1:1 ratio be assumed. The magnitude of the annual reductions required depends on the speed at which managers wish to achieve the objective of  $F=0.27$ .

STECF has insufficient information available at this point in time to compare the estimated economic impact on the fishing fleet of a single large cut in effort with a more stepwise reduction in effort over a few years. However, a more stepwise reduction of fishing days is likely to allow the fleet to adjust to the new regime over time.

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**Abstract**

The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) gave its opinion by written procedure in August 2009 on request by the European Commission on fishing opportunities for 2010 for sole in ICES division VIIe.

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