



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

FISHERIES POLICY ATLANTIC, NORTH SEA, BALTIC AND OUTERMOST REGIONS

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Mr Björn Stockhausen
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Subject: Documentation on the calculation of top-ups

Dear Mr Stockhausen.

Thank you very much for your letter of 24 November 2016 concerning your request for access to documents on the calculation of top-ups. After the agreement of the Council of Ministers on the 13th December 2016 the lawyer-linguists of the Council undertook a final check of the regulation before it is published in the Official Journal. This publication has taken place on 28 January 2017.

The process followed this year for the calculation of top-ups to the TACs was the same as last year; top ups were added to the fishing opportunities to support the change in discarding behaviour by the fishing industry as a result of the landing obligation. Scientific support on the development of these top ups was requested from our Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). The data submitted by Member States was examined and presented in the autumn plenary of STECF¹. The supporting data for STECF assessment is published on the relevant meeting overview page. As this is a substantial file I recommend that you access it directly from the STECF website, to which I am providing the link below².

On the basis of the data compiled by the STECF the Commission calculates the relevant top-up percentage. To this end we followed the same methodology as last year; taking the total catch advice provided by ICES³, allowing for the discarding that will continue under the approved de minimis exemptions and then determining the overall change to discarding practices that will occur as a result of the landing obligation. I attach a separate note on the methodology⁴.

¹ STECF 53rd Plenary (24-28th October)

https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/43805/1550528/2016-11_STECF+PLEN+16-03_JRCxxx.pdf

² <https://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/plen1603>, please access background document for STECF PLEN 16-03, directory TAC top ups (72 MB)

³ International Council for the Exploration of the Seas

⁴ TAC top up methods-explanation.docx

The recommendations of the Member State groups apply the landing obligation on a progressive basis. This means that they include fisheries on the basis of certain thresholds, for example all vessels catching more than a certain percentage of a target species. Hence the landing obligation may apply only to particular vessels on the basis of their gear or catch history. In the absence of vessel specific discard rates we have to make an estimation of the change of behaviour. Last year this was based on either the number of vessels of a gear type or on the percentage of the landings now under the landing obligation. Both methods have different advantages and disadvantages depending on the fishery. In 2016 STECF were requested to examine effort as an alternative option, but this too had disadvantages.

In our initial calculations we used the number of vessels as a proxy for the change in discarding. In several instances, Member States identified rightly that this gave an outcome that does not represent the actual change in behaviour and this led us to revise the top up calculation.

The top up calculations were provided as supporting material to a number of non-papers circulated to the working party of the Council. Please find attached a copy of these non-papers and relevant copies of the supporting calculations in the North West Atlantic waters and in the North Sea. There are three relevant non-papers dated the 21st and 30th November and 8th December and three supporting calculation sheets. In addition there is a separate calculation sheet for shared stocks, which are calculated during the annual Norway / EU consultations.

Please note that these supporting calculations are copies of working documents and are not edited for publication. You will note that there are some revisions to the calculations as a result of discussion within the preparatory meetings. A final calculation sheet is provided⁵. Dates of revisions are noted. Finally we have included a summary of all top-ups applied⁶, indicating the TAC as agreed by the Council.

I trust this addresses your request, but should you have any further questions on the substance of the calculations please feel free to contact my colleague (Robert.griffin@ec.europa.eu) for further explanations.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Maja Kirchner
(Head of Unit)

⁵ TAC top up worksheets final 24 Jan.pdf

⁶ Summary of pre and post top up TACs.xlsx