

Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

April 2012

INFORMATION NOTE ON PILOT COMMUNITY QUOTA GROUPS AND REALIGNMENT OF UNUSED QUOTA

As part of the Government's plans for domestic fisheries reform, three voluntary pilot quota management groups are to go ahead to test the impact of a more local approach to quota management. These will be based in the ports of Lowestoft, West Mersea and Ramsgate.

These groups are currently working closely with the Marine Management Organisation to meet certain recognition criteria with the aim of taking on full quota management responsibilities from 1 May 2012, supported by three Coastal Liaison Officers (CLOs).

Three additional groups that have chosen not to take on local quota management responsibilities hope to continue to work together for marketing and development purposes and achieve many of the secondary objectives set for the quota management pilot groups.

The three pilots will generate invaluable information on whether or not the local collective management of annual quota allocations by groups of fishermen can be effective and generate added benefits for the members of those groups. Information from these pilots could play a critical role in our journey towards fundamental reform in placing English inshore fisheries on a sustainable footing, along with the rest of the fleet.

Quota for the pilot groups has been allocated from the under 10m pool based on the vessels' track records during 2007-10, topped-up by a temporary topslice from all English POs. While the pilot groups will still be able to benefit from swaps and gifts into the under 10m pool, there will be no diluting affect on those fishing against the pool because the pilot group's basic allocations of quota were based on the opening under-10m pool figures, rather than the closing figures.

The 3% topslice from the proportion of quota held by English vessels within each Producer Organisation (PO) for stocks that have increasing Total Allowable Catches (TACs) in 2012 was originally calculated based on an equal distribution among the 89 potential individual participants. The total number of vessels now taking part in the pilots now stands at 24 and the total amount of quota to be 'topliced' to provide foundation quota for the pilot groups will therefore reduce correspondingly.

Separately, to try to ensure that as much of the annual quota allocated to us is utilised to the fullest extent, the greater proportion of quota allocations that had a large or valuable part left unused at the end of every one of the four years from 2007 – 2010 has been moved to the under-10m pool for this year. Further analysis and consideration will take place before a permanent transfer of FQAs to the under-10m pool from 2013. A proportion of this realigned quota has been allocated to the pilot groups based on their track records during 2007-2010.

The POs have been consulted at every stage of developing the methodology for calculating this realignment, in both correspondence and via discussions at the Industry Working Groups on 22 July 2011, 20 September 2011, 7 November 2011 and 17 January 2012. We wrote to all POs on 6 October 2011 about our proposed methodology and received a number of comments. This correspondence also requested information so that the realignment could be applied to individually held quota, but this information was not forthcoming. We therefore decided to apply the realignment at collective PO level.

We also drew on the quota management expertise of the Marine Management Organisation.

A number of points made by the POs and other fishery stakeholders were taken into account before the POs were written to on 10 February 2012 setting out the calculation methodology used and the levels of quota which we intended to realign. The POs were invited to provide evidence to support any appeal against these amounts by 9 March 2012 and downwards adjustments were accordingly made in the cases of a number of successful appeals, including where quota was associated with Scottish vessels. Where appeals were unsuccessful, clear explanations were provided in writing.

In addition to taking into account the responses from individual POs, we also accepted two appeals concerning the effect of banking and updated membership data, which resulted in further downward changes to the final realignment figures for all POs because the issues raised were applicable to all. As a result of the appeal process, the total quota that will be realigned this year has fallen by around 236 tonnes from 994 tonnes to 758 tonnes.

It was made clear that any appeals received after the deadline would not be considered for 2012 allocations but will be reviewed along with any other pertinent information before enacting permanent transfer of FQAs for 2013.