

**RECOMMENDATION No 3/2023 OF THE SPECIALISED COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES
ESTABLISHED BY ARTICLE 8(1)(q) OF THE TRADE AND COOPERATION
AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE EUROPEAN ATOMIC
ENERGY COMMUNITY, OF THE ONE PART, AND THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT
BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND, OF THE OTHER PART,**

of 4 December 2023

as regards the alignment of management areas for Plaice and Whiting

THE SPECIALISED COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES,

Having regard to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part (“the Agreement”), and in particular Article 504 thereof and Article 508(2)(d),

Whereas:

- (1) Article 504(1) of the Agreement provides that the European Union and the United Kingdom (each a “Party”, together “the Parties”) shall request advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (“ICES”) on the alignment of the management areas and the assessment units used by ICES for the stocks marked with an asterisk in Annex 35.
- (2) Those stocks are: (i) lemon sole and witch (North Sea), L/W/2AC4-C; (ii) plaice (English Channel), PLE/7DE; (iii) turbot and brill (North Sea), T/B/2AC4-C; and (iv) whiting (Celtic Sea), WHG/7X7A-C.
- (3) The Parties adopted a Recommendation as regards the alignment of management areas for lemon sole, witch, turbot and brill on 24 July 2023¹.
- (4) Article 504(2) of the Agreement provides that within six months of receipt of the advice the Parties shall jointly review the advice and shall jointly consider adjustments to the management areas of the stocks concerned, with a view to agreeing consequential changes to the list of stocks and shares set out in Annex 35.
- (5) The Parties noted the conclusion of such joint requests to ICES for the four stocks at the Specialised Committee on Fisheries meeting of 21 October 2022. Moreover, on 27 and 30 March 2023, ICES issued its advice for, respectively: (i) whiting (Celtic Sea); and (ii) plaice (Channel).

¹ Recommendation No 2/2023 of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries established by Article 8(1)(q) of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part, of 24.07.2023 as regards the alignment of management areas for Lemon Sole, Witch, Turbot and Brill.

(6) At present, whiting (Celtic Sea), WHG/7X7A-C, and plaice (Channel), PLE/7DE, are each managed under a combined TAC comprising more than one biological stock, whereas ICES provides advice on a biological stock level:

- Whiting (Celtic Sea), WHG/7X7A-C, comprises two different whiting stocks: the Celtic Sea (Western and Central Channel; divisions 7.b–c and 7.e–k), and; whiting in the Eastern Channel (division 7d), which is a part of the wider North Sea and Eastern Channel stock, where the Division 7d contribution to the WHG/7X7A-C TAC is agreed in the context of trilateral consultations between the United Kingdom, Norway and the Union.
- Plaice (Channel), PLE/7DE, comprises two different plaice stocks (Plaice Eastern Channel 7d and Plaice Western Channel 7e) that are managed under a single TAC. Moreover, this single TAC for divisions 7.d. and 7e is based on ICES predicted catches in each area that take into account immigration and emigration between stocks, including North Sea plaice that is covered by a separate TAC in Annex 36 of the Agreement (PLE/2A3AX4).

(7) In its annual stock advice of 30 June 2023 for whiting and plaice, ICES advised that management should be implemented at the stock level for whiting, and at the area level for plaice, accounting for migration. ICES advised that by mixing the biological and TAC areas for different whiting and plaice stocks, it will be difficult to achieve the objective of fishing at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) for both stocks.

(8) Article 508(2)(d) of the Agreement provides that the Specialised Committee on Fisheries may adopt recommendations in relation to cooperation on sustainable fisheries management under Heading Five (Fisheries) of the Agreement.

(9) The Parties recognise that it may be appropriate to adjust the management areas of the stocks in order to set sustainable fishing opportunities.

(10) The Parties note the potential social and economic challenges that may arise from moving to single stock management areas which follow the ICES advice area, including the application of the landing obligation. The Parties recognise that flexibilities such as exchanges of quota between the Parties could mitigate the short-term social and economic impacts and that such flexibilities may be considered in the context of the annual consultations and reflected in the annual written record between the European Union and the United Kingdom.

HAS ADOPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION:

Article 1

The Specialised Committee on Fisheries recommends that the Parties, in annual consultations under Article 498 of the Agreement, manage whiting in divisions 7.b-c and 7.e-k separately from whiting in Subarea 4 and Division 7.d by setting out, in a footnote of the Written Record of annual consultations, the maximum amounts of whiting that can be caught separately in division 7.d and in divisions 7.b-c, e-k under the Celtic Sea TAC (WHG/7X7A-C).

The Specialised Committee on Fisheries further recommends that the overall amount allocated to division 7.d corresponds to the amount of the fishing opportunities for North Sea and Eastern Channel

whiting determined in the annual trilateral consultations between the United Kingdom, Norway and the Union.

Article 2

The Specialised Committee on Fisheries recommends that the Parties, in annual consultations pursuant to Article 498 of the Agreement, manage plaice in divisions 7.d and 7.e at a single area level by setting out, in a footnote of the Written Record of annual consultation, the maximum amounts of plaice that can be caught separately in division 7.d and division 7.e under the Channel TAC (PLE/7DE).

Article 3

The Specialised Committee on Fisheries recommends that, in order to account for potential social and economic impacts, the Parties, consider mitigation measures in annual consultations pursuant to Article 498 of the Agreement.

Done at Brussels and London, 4 December 2023

For the Specialised Committee on Fisheries

The Co-Chairs

Eva Maria CARBALLEIRA FERNANDEZ

Mike DOWELL