

FACTSHEET: Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel mixed flatfish Fisheries Management Plan (FMP)

Why an FMP for flatfish?

Flatfish fisheries in the Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel are a commercially important group of species in the English Waters. They contribute socially and economically to the coastal communities. However, there is currently a variety of evidence levels across all the stocks and a need to ensure that the stocks are continuously fished within sustainable limits.

What does the Flatfish FMP do?

The FMP collates evidence to assess the status of flatfish stocks and fisheries around in English waters of the Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel. It identifies existing management measures and sets out short- and long-term actions for the sustainable management of these fisheries.

Summary -----

Current Management

The flatfish within this plan are a mixture of quota and non-quota stocks. The quota stocks are subject to international negotiations with other coastal states and managed through Total Allowable Catches (TAC).

There are no technical measures specifically designed for the stocks within this FMP except for common sole and plaice. However, directed fisheries for flatfish in areas 4b and 4c should have a mesh size of at least 90 mm for fixed nets. Directed fisheries for flatfish in area 7d should have a mesh size of at least 100 mm for fixed nets.

Goals for the FMP

This FMP sets out objectives to deliver sustainable fishing of flatfish, for which a number of approaches to management have been proposed. The plan also addresses the wider environmental impacts of the fishery on the marine environment and sets out plans to mitigate impacts.

Proposed Actions in the FMP

The FMP proposes precautionary management measures in the short-term whilst more evidence is gathered, to protect the stocks that are potentially not being fished sustainably at present.

- Set out principles for TAC setting

- Improve evidence base
- Short- and long-term measures focusing on non-quota stocks in ICES area 7d. MCRS for lemon sole, turbot and brill and exploring gear-based measures.
- Recommendation of 7d sole survey

Environmental Impacts

The flatfish FMP identifies three potential environmental risks a) seafloor integrity b) bycatch and c) marine litter. The FMP sets out national objectives and schemes to address these risks and layouts long term goals to mitigate these.

What does this mean for me?

This is an opportunity for you to have your say in the future of flatfish management in the Southern North Sea and Eastern Channel. We want to receive your input and views throughout the consultation and beyond.

Give us your views

Find the consultation online at:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/fisheries-management-plans-1/flatfish-fmp-consultation/>

or scan the QR code to visit the page.

The consultation is open to 23:59 on 1 October 2023.



What happens next?

Your feedback will be analysed and considered as part of the consultation process. Following this the plans will be updated as appropriate.

The aim is to have the final plan published in early 2024.