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re: submission on final proposals for fishing opportunities for 2017

The Irish Wildlife Trust (IWT) is an Irish non-profit organisation concerned with the conservation of Ireland's biodiversity. As an island nation our marine and fisheries resource is a vital component of our natural and cultural heritage. Its sustainable use is therefore an essential element in preserving our rich biodiversity as well as our economic well-being. Article 2(2) of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation states that "the CFP shall apply the precautionary approach to fisheries management, and shall aim to ensure that exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species **above** levels which can produce the maximum sustainable yield" (my emphasis). Allowing fish stocks to grow beyond their current levels is an essential component of building sustainable fisheries and repairing damaged marine ecosystems.

To meet these targets it is essential that the Irish government takes a strong position in adhering to scientific advice across all stocks.

The IWT has particular concerns with regard to the continued overexploitation of sea fish stocks in Irish waters. It seems no effort is being made to rehabilitate once abundant stocks of cod, whiting, plaice or sole. The mismanagement of haddock in the Celtic Sea and West of Scotland areas is very worrying while the steep decline of boarfish in such a short space of time surely indicates the failure of the current system.

The Irish Sea has suffered serious and chronic ecological damage and the decline in commercial fish stocks is just one indicator of this. The Irish government should resist calls to exceed scientific advice as a first step in reversing decades of mismanagement.

Yours sincerely,

Pádraic Fogarty