

Translations of the note 5134426 of the 2017/10/20 of the European Commission.

Brussels, 20/10/2017
ADV D3 (2017)

Conseil Consultatif Sud
Monsieur Aurelio Bilbao
6, rue Alphonse Rio
56100 Lorient
France

**Subject: Management of sea bass in the Canaries
- Request for the removal of the minimum size from the European regulation**

Your reference: Opinion 115 of 30/05/2017- E-mail of 22 September 2017

Dear Mr Bilbao,

Thank you for your two opinions validated by the SWWAC Executive Committee. Please find our reply to Opinion 115 below.

As you know, there are sea bass in the four zones identified by the ICES, one of which corresponds to the Iberian waters of the Atlantic (ICES divisions VIIIe and IXa). However, the natural limits of sea bass stocks have not yet been completely identified and this species mixes, to a certain degree, with other species in the different zones. Therefore, it is necessary to give the same level of protection to these stocks in all the distribution zones. The minimum size measure imposed by (EC) Council regulation no. 850/98 of 30 March 1998 meets this objective and also helps to prevent false declarations. The Commission's proposal for a new regulation on the technical measures maintains the reference minimum size and proposes the size of 42 cm for sea bass in the south west waters.

Aquaculture practises relating to alien species and locally absent species are governed by (EC) Council regulation no. 708/2007 of 11 June 2007 (as amended in 2011). Article 3.7 of the present regulation provides a definition of "locally absent species" and specifies that the Member States, who are responsible for implementing the regulation, also have the most appropriate knowledge and expertise for assessing and managing the risk of movement of the locally absent species in closed aquaculture installations. If the risks are not negligible and may affect the other Member States, the regulation allows the possibility of consulting the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) to obtain advice in the field of aquaculture and environmental protection.

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In this regard, it should be noted that STECF, at its 44th plenary meeting was already asked to make a statement on the question of whether croaker (*Argyrosomus Regius*, one of the species mentioned in your opinion) should be considered as indigenous, alien or as a locally absent species in accordance with Regulation 708/2007.

The STECF had concluded that "according to the definitions of alien and locally absent species given in article 3 of the Council Regulation (EC) 708/2007, the common croaker (*Argyrosomus regius*) cannot be considered as an alien or locally absent species in the Canary Islands waters. According to the information set out above, and taking account of the fact that the presence of *Argyrosomus regius* in the Canary Islands waters has been recorded in the period preceding the beginning of aquaculture production of *Argyrosomus regius*, the STECF concludes that *Argyrosomus regius* originates from the coastal waters of the Canary Islands". You will find a link to the report in question hereunder:

https://stecf.irc.ec.europa.eu/documents/43805/662804/2013-1_1_STECF+PLEN+13-03+Final+Report_JRCxxx.pdf

We understand from your recommendation that, from your point of view, further research must be carried out in order to understand the effects of escaping bass better.

We therefore appreciate and encourage your active participation in the research projects and future discussions with all the stakeholders concerned, including the NGOs and the competent Spanish authorities.

I thank you once again for your constructive contribution and would ask you to contact Mrs Pascale Colson, the coordinator of advisory councils, (pascale.colson@ec.europa.eu - +32.2.295.62.73) for any further information regarding this letter.

Yours faithfully.

Joao AGUIAR MACHADO

c.c.: Mrs Veits, Mrs Roller, Mrs Kirchner, Mrs Zito, Mrs Georgitsi, Mrs Colson, Mrs de Diego de la Vega

Mr. Leinemann, Mr Lindebo, Mr Dubolino (DG MARE)

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