

Northern Fishing Alliance Cod Group

XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX
XXXXXXX
XXXXXX

November 17th, 2022

Cod (*Gadus morhua*) in Subarea 4, Division 7.d, and Subdivision 20 (North Sea, eastern English Channel, Skagerrak)

Dear XXXXXX

The Northern Fishing Alliance, Cod Group last wrote to you in July of this year. In that note we set out our thoughts regarding the June ICES advice, which we very much welcomed. We also indicated that having listened to the fishermen, and their accounts of the widespread abundance on the grounds, we believed that the IBTSQ3 survey would similarly recognise that abundance. We also held the belief that it would lead to a reopening of the advice.

We viewed the advice in July (+44%, increase of 7,035t) as a small step in the right direction and view the latest advice (+63%, increase of 10,097t) as a further small step. Whereas the advice may look significant in percentage terms, in tonnage terms, the increase is less impressive.

Our group remain confident that the stock is returning to good health, a position that is supported by several factors, such as the wide range of age groups that the fishermen are seeing, cod now being caught further South than seen for some years (although still absent from the southernmost areas), and significant catches of cod in the inshore waters, which is a returning feature of the stock.

The fishermen are very much comforted this year that the most recent available data is being used to provide the advice, we were rightly critical of the situation last year where certain challengeable assumptions left a sense of bewilderment.

In recent years the situation with North Sea cod has been the driver for constraining TACs for several other key commercial species such as haddock and whiting amongst others. There is now a reason to remove or significantly reduce those constraints, which would allow several TACs to be set more in line with the advice.

The fishermen view the positive advice this year as partially recovering catch opportunities that should have been available to them in 2022. Our group was rightly very critical of that situation aware of the economic impact it would have on the various fleets during 2022. With that in mind we urge fisheries managers to apply the full 63% uplift in the Cod TAC for 2023.

Yours Sincerely

Michael Park
On behalf of the NFA Cod Group