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knowledge on deep-sea species and habitats; preventing significant adverse effects on VMEs within the framework of deep-sea fishing and ensuring long-term conservation of deep-sea fish stocks; and ensuring that Union measures are consistent with the relevant provisions in UN GA Resolutions 61/105 and 64/72.

Differently from the previous regime in force until 2016, which covered a larger geographical area of the whole ICES area and Union waters of CECAF areas 34.1.1, 34.1.2, 34.1.3 and 34.2, the new regime applies to the Union waters of the North-East Atlantic and CECAF areas 34.1.1, 34.1.2 and 34.2. The reason for excluding the international waters of the North East Atlantic from the new regime was that NEAFC adopted a recommendation on deep-sea fisheries in the NEAFC Regulatory Area with appropriate management measures in respect of VMEs, which are implemented in the EU Technical Measures Regulation.

The deep-sea access regime includes the following definition of deep-sea species, based on the FAO definition: “species that occur in deep-sea waters and that are characterised by a combination of the following biological factors: maturation at relatively old ages, slow growth, long life expectancies, low natural mortality rates, intermittent recruitment of successful year classes and spawning that may not occur every year”. The list of the deep-sea species caught in the geographical area covered by the regime is set out in Annex I of the Regulation.

Fishing for deep-sea species is subject to a fishing authorisation: targeting fishing authorisation (vessels that in a calendar year recorded more than 8% of deep-sea species in any fishing trip, but excluding vessels that caught less than 10 tonnes) and by-catch fishing authorisation for vessels that have by-catches of deep-sea species fishing for other species. Fishing vessels not holding any fishing authorisation are prohibited from fishing for deep-sea species in excess of 100 kg in each fishing trip. The capacity of fishing fleets of each Member State of the European Union is capped at the maximum yearly capacity in years 2009-2011.

The deep-sea access regime limits deep-sea fishing activities to those areas where deep-sea fishing has already taken place. The footprint is established on the basis of VMS data of where such data is not available on the basis of other verifiable data from fishing activities in 2009-2011. Activity outside the footprint can only take place in line with the provisions for exploratory fishing, as set out in Article 8 of the Regulation. Exploratory fisheries are subject to a prior impact assessment in accordance with the standards set out in the 2008 FAO International Guidelines for the management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas. When submitting a request for exploratory fisheries, the Member State has to indicate the estimated duration of exploratory fisheries and the estimated number of vessels taking part and their capacity. It also has to propose mitigating measures to prevent an encounter with or effectively protect VMEs.

Deep-sea fishing activities are limited to a depth of 800 meters and cannot take place in deeper waters. When a vessel fishes with bottom gears below a depth of 400 metres and where, in the course [illegible]

Scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) on the footprint and the VME areas is expected in November 2020. The adoption of the legal acts establishing the footprint and the closed areas where VMEs are known to be present should take place in the first half of 2021.

The EU deep-sea access regime also contains reinforced control measures, such as the system of designated ports, prior notification before landing, reporting catches on a haul-by-haul basis, withdrawal of fishing authorisation for at least two months for certain infringements. There is also a required observer coverage of at least 20% for bottom trawls and bottom set gillnets and at least 10% for other vessels catching deep-sea species.

Regulation (EU) 2016/2336 foresees that by no later than 13 January 2021, an evaluation of the impacts of the measures should be carried out. Such evaluation is on-going.

, applies to all EU vessels operating in EU waters (including outermost regions) as well as to vessels of third countries operating in the EU waters. The regulation applies beyond EU waters to the EU vessels operating in certain areas, i.e. NEAFC, GFCM and Black Sea (Art. 2 and 5). With regard to the prohibited gears and methods, Art. 7 will apply to the Union vessels in non-EU waters except where the rules adopted by multilateral fisheries organizations, under bilateral or multilateral agreements specifically provide otherwise.

This regulation is largely aimed at reducing catches of juveniles, improving selectivity, reducing discards and minimising the negative impacts on habitats. Having entered into force 14 August 2019, it provides a novel approach to technical measures by granting Member States (with the involvement of various stakeholders through the Advisory Councils) a right to come up with equally or more-stringent technical measures to reach CFP objectives through the so-called regionalisation process.

It aims at minimising impacts of fishing gears on marine ecosystems (Art. 3) and uses the concept of "sensitive habitat" with its own definition (Art. 6). Reference is made to the VME Regulation to include VMEs as defined by it into the concept of "sensitive habitats" and with a view to restricting fishing in certain defined areas (Annex II) and allowing Member States to establish closed areas or other conservation measures in accordance with Art. 11 CFP (Art. 12.3).

Technical measures for each region have to fulfil the objectives of this regulation, amongst which minimizing negative impacts on marine habitats (Art. 15.4). In particular, joint recommendations relating to innovative fishing gear should assess the likely impacts on sensitive species and habitats and innovative gears should not be permitted if they lead to significant negative impacts on sensitive habitats and non-target species (Art. 20).

As a consequence of the need to quantify the progress of this regulation, the review and reporting entails a close look at the most important elements in order to know the starting point and identify those areas in which more action from the EU Member States is required.

The Commission will produce the first report on the progress of implementation of this regulation by December 2020. Efforts will focus on the most important measures, their status and identify those fields in which more effort are to be put. Following the publication of the report, EU Member States will have 12 months to submit a plan setting out the actions to be taken to contribute to achieve the objectives and targets of this regulation.

(SMEFF) was adopted to strengthen oversight on fishing activities of EU vessels fishing outside EU waters and third country vessels in EU waters. It also aims to establish similar standards for Union vessels fishing outside and inside Union waters. This regulation also requires third country vessels fishing in Union waters to comply with the rules of the Common Fishery Policy.

For this purpose, the SMEFF contains a set of generic common eligibility criteria upon which

implementation of actions under the recently adopted European Green Deal , which has the aim of making the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities. Under one of the main pillars of the European Green Deal, the protection and preservation of biodiversity, including the marine environment and its biodiversity, the Commission will be proposing a new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and through which measures to address the main drivers of biodiversity loss will be subsequently adopted.

The European Union would like to stress the important scientific work undertaken by the EU and its Member States, notably Spain, particularly with respect to mapping of the sea bed and which is being disseminated when available. This work provides the international community with a better basis on which to establish management measures which will adequately protect VMEs and deep-sea stocks in the future. The European Union is of the view that still more scientific work needs to be done in order to increase knowledge on VMEs and the impacts of bottom fishing on them.

Annex

North-East Atlantic

Spanish research project: "Project ECOVUL / ARPA to study vulnerable ecosystems in relation to fishing gear"

Three experimental campaigns were conducted between 2005 and 2008, in the Hatton Bank area in cooperation with the Spanish fishing industry, to study the impacts of bottom fishing gears. Furthermore, three multidisciplinary scientific surveys for mapping ecosystems were also undertaken. Experimental campaigns were carried out by scientific personnel embarked on board merchant vessels. Multidisciplinary campaigns were made on board oceanographic research vessels of the Spanish (Viscount de Eza and Miguel Oliver) equipped with cutting-edge technologies.

As a result of these investigations, the bathymetric mapping of deep trawl fisheries of the Spanish fleet at depths exceeding 1000 m was obtained. Around 19,000 km2 of seabed were mapped using a multibeam probe and more than 1,200 km of high resolution seismic profiles were obtained, in addition to numerous samples of surface sediments, rocks and reefs by dredging. Additionally trawl sets were made in the fishing grounds to study the benthic

organizations in Canada, Russia and the United Kingdom.

The work began in June 2009 and lasted until October 2010. During this period, the vessel made a total of 6 campaigns covering a total area of 68,000 km2 of seafloor and which involved mapping and sampling with dredges.

Moreover, the Canadian ship "Hudson" complemented the work in two campaigns where a Deep-sea Remotely Operated vehicle (ROV) was used for video transects at selected points, taking video footage of both pristine coral areas and areas where corals had been impacted by bottom contact gears.

The data collected from these campaigns is currently being analysed by a committee created to coordinate this work.

Annual research campaign: "Vizconde de Eza" and scientific observers on board on fishing vessels in the NAFO area

The surveys undertaken by research vessel “Vizconde de Eza”, cover the seabed in Flemish Cap and the "tail" and "nose" of the Grand Banks in Newfoundland. The results are used as indicators of VMEs. In addition, there is a scientific observation programme in NAFO. All data from campaigns and observers are presented by Spanish scientists in the NAFO Scientific Council every year in order to establish Recommendations related to VMEs. Other research projects focusing on data collection of VMEs in the NAFO area are those listed in the following table: (follow the link:http://www.fao.org/in-action/vulnerable-marine-ecosystems/background/surveyresearch-projects/es/)

South-West Atlantic: Spanish research project: Project Atlantis

Since 2008, Spain has been using the same methodology set-up used in the northeast Atlantic in the southwest Atlantic (Division FAO 41), in order to map and identify sensitive habitats and possible interactions with fisheries in the defined area between 42 º S and 48 º S latitude, and longitudinally between the western boundary 60 ° 55 ' W and the eastern boundary of 57 º 20 'W. This is an area where Spanish ships have been undertaking bottom trawl fisheries. 13 campaigns of multidisciplinary research were carried out between 2007 and 2010, by Spanish scientists led by the Spanish Institute of Oceanography, aboard the research vessel "Miguel Oliver". The scientific report with key findings and recommendations has in fact already been provided to Argentina and will also be made available to other parties upon their request.

Major tasks accomplished during the campaign were: seabed mapping, description of types of seabed and benthic fauna, obtaining rates of biomass and abundance of species of commercial interest, and finally, localization and characterization of sensitive habitats.

An area of 59,105 km2 was mapped to know its topography. To locate and describe sensitive habitats, a total of 91,905 km of profile surveying were carried out, detecting them in an area of approximately 41,300 km2. These works were carried out with multibeam echo sounders, using the existing protocols of the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHO-S44). As result, Spain closed the bottom fishing activity in nine (9) areas for the Spanish vessels wheM ! rc pan ↓ ᴰ†e li

Programme for Training in Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture. These courses include modules dealing with the research and data collection, basic safety on board, use of selective fishing gear, oceanography, fisheries control, and institutional strengthening, among others.