

Note to be send to RACs asking for their position on the ideas of the Commission's proposal for the protection of blue ling spawners' aggregations.

During the meeting with stakeholders that took place in Brussels on 24.09.08, some important measures were discussed and developed to ensure the protection of blue ling spawners' aggregations during their reproductive period in area VIa.

As a summary, two basic ideas were developed:

1. Delimitate two "protection areas" where blue ling spawners occur and consider the sub-area below a 600 meters depth limit (see map enclosed) during the spawning period from March to May. During this period a maximum catch of 6 tones per vessel will apply on a trip basis. After reaching this maximum catch, vessels should stop fishing and abandon any of the above mentioned sub-areas. Skippers will set an entry-exit scheme in their respective log-book. Observers on-board will be established following the rules in EU Regulation 2347/2002 but they will also carry out length sampling and sexual maturity on a trip basis. Furthermore, no high grading will be permitted during this period.

2. Set a much simpler rule by which a 15% catch limit of each National allocated quota will be permitted during the spawning period from March to May. This maximum catch will be monitored by observers on board, according to rules in EU Regulation 2347/2002 and will report to their flag State on a daily basis. Once the maximum catch has been reached, skippers will not be allowed to land further catches.

The Commission intends to make a proposal to be applied in 2009.

RACs are requested to send their views on these two possibilities by 10.10.08

