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35TH ANNUAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 2013

Proposal for the establishment of an ad-hoc working group to reflect on rules governing by-catches, discards and selectivity in the NAFO Regulatory Area

Explanatory note:

A number of concerns have been expressed by NAFO Contracting Parties regarding by-catches, discards and selectivity in the NAFO Regulatory Area.

Some concerns were expressed regarding article 5.2 of the NCEM related to by-catches of redfish in division NAFO 3M following the closure of the directed fishery after 100% of the total TAC is reached. According to this article, fishing vessels are obliged to discard all redfish by-catches after the closure of the fishery. It is all the more an issue as it is unknown when the fishery will be closed.

Some concerns were also expressed regarding the obligation to discard by-catches of cod 3M in the redfish 3M fishery, after the entirety of the cod 3M quota has been fished.

More generally, some NAFO provisions are obliging fishing vessels to discard fish that have a commercial value and would be put on the market otherwise.

Rather than solving these issues on a case-by-case basis, it is proposed to have a more general discussion on rules governing by-catches, discards and selectivity in the NAFO Regulatory Area. This discussion would take place in the framework of an ad-hoc working group.

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It is recommended that the Fisheries Commission tasks an ad-hoc working group to reflect on rules governing by-catches, discards and selectivity in the NAFO Regulatory Area and to consider amendments to the current rules as appropriate. Ways to reduce by-catches such as improved selectivity would be considered.

This working group would meet back-to-back with another working group, at a date to be determined so that its recommendations can be considered at the 2014 NAFO Annual Meeting.

This working group would take into account the work already done by NAFO on these issues, especially in STACTIC.

Delegations would be composed of managers possibly advised by scientists, compliance experts and industry advisers, and chaired by the Chair of the Fisheries Commission.