

PRESS RELEASE

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& Fishing Correspondents

Immediate Release - 17 January, 2002

HUDGHTON DEMANDS FAIR DEAL FOR FISHERMEN

The European parliament is today voting on an important report by Ian Hudghton MEP (Scottish National Party) on the Commission's recovery plans for cod and hake. It is the first time that the EU has addressed the problem of how to promote the recovery of fish stocks. Speaking during the debate in plenary, Mr Hudghton said:

"The Commission must strike a balance between the need to advance the recovery of stocks and the need to avoid disproportionate restrictions on the many different fisheries affected and the negative consequences on those whose livelihood depends on the sea."

"I call on the Commission to take onboard the recommendations of this report and ensure that both the fishing industry, scientists and environmentalists are fully involved. It is imperative that recovery plans are fully thought out and researched before being imposed on a sceptical industry with minimal impact."

"The Commission's recovery plans for cod and hake seek to restore stocks to sustainable levels, but they also have socio-economic implications, not only on those who fish cod and hake, but also for fishermen whose livelihood depends on stocks associated with either of these fisheries."

The report suggests that there should be no broad-brush approach; that there must be accurate scientific advice; that the impact of industrial fisheries must be recognised; that there must be adequate funding including cash for compensated tie-up schemes and that accessible diversification programmes should be available. Ian Hudghton added:

"The report stresses the importance of properly funded precise scientific advice. Effort limitation and technical measures must be based on properly funded sound independent scientific advice. The Commission has admitted clear long-term scientific advice on conditions to be followed during the cod recovery plans is not available. It must rectify this situation immediately if

there is to be confidence in the system. It also calls for the idea of observers to be extended to ensure that scientists observe actively on fishing vessels, which should also help instil confidence in the technical measures.

The Hudghton Report asks the Commission to carry out a comprehensive analysis of all the socio-economic risks involved. Ian Hudghton said:

"Whilst I welcome the Commission's commitment to tie-up schemes, noting that it is not only encouraging compensated tie-up schemes but that it is removing the current ceilings on financial contributions, I am deeply concerned that funding is not applied equitably amongst fishermen affected by technical measures. If fishermen are willing to take responsible action when their going to sea could risk further stock decimation, as happened in Scotland last year, there must be some mechanism which facilitates them to do so and which does not push them into bankruptcy. The report therefore calls for funding to be available on an equitable basis, and not subject to the political whims of Member State governments."

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