



To:

12 April 2019

North Sea Advisory Council

Guidelines on best practice for handling catches of skates and rays

Handling catches of skates and rays has been a subject of discussion regarding the implementation of the landing obligation. Skates and rays have a high risk of becoming a choke species and at present, too little knowledge exists on the stocks, the fishery and the survivability of the fish.

For the fishery in 2019 through 2021 in the North Sea, an exemption from the landing obligation for skates and rays was granted to allow time for collection of further information on survival, avoidance and selectivity and evidence that will inform the development of long-term management measures.

It is the intention of the Scheveningen Group to submit such additional information within the deadline in the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/2035. One valuable contribution on handling catches of skates and rays would be the development of guidelines for best practice. At the High Level Meeting of the Scheveningen Group held in February 2019, the group invited the North Sea Advisory Council to cooperate on such guidelines.

The Scheveningen Group hereby confirms the invitation to the North Sea Advisory Council to produce a draft of guidelines for best practice when handling catches of skates and rays, building on existing knowledge on e.g. identification of the different species and their vulnerability/survivability.

With a view to developing common guidelines, in line with the 2018 Joint Recommendation, the Scheveningen Group would appreciate receiving by 6 May 2019 a description of:

1. Best practice for improving avoidance and selectivity of skates and rays in the North Sea area.
2. Best practice for handling catches of skates and rays in the North Sea area to achieve the highest possible survivability.

We look forward to our continued cooperation on this and other issues relating to the management of fisheries in the North Sea.

Yours sincerely,

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Fisheries adviser

On behalf of the Scheveningen Group