

Press release: start MSC assessment for the pulse fishery on sole and plaice

Emmeloord, 26th of March 2015

The Cooperative Fisheries Organisation (CVO)¹ proudly announces the kickoff of the MSC (Marine Stewardship Council)² assessment for the Dutch pulse fishery on sole and plaice. CVO values the assessment of the pulse fishery against the robust and credible MSC certification scheme, alongside the recently certified CVO twinrig and flyshoot fisheries. The start of the MSC pulse assessment is an important step in the transition to more sustainable fisheries in the Netherlands.

All Dutch pulse fishers affiliated to CVO will participate in the MSC process: 84 vessels under Dutch flag and eight vessels under German and English flag. Within a period of 12 to 18 months an independent assessment team (Acoura Marine, formerly known as Food Certification International) will collect all information on the pulse fishery that is necessary to assess (1) the health of the sole and plaice stock, (2) the impact of the fishing gear on the marine ecosystem and (3) the management of the fishery. *'The pulse fishery brings considerable ecological advantages and we therefore are confident about the positive outcome of the MSC process. If the assessment reveals the need to make an extra effort in certain areas, CVO and the pulse fishermen will be happy to take that forward'* according to Mark Goedhart, president of the CVO. The MSC process is completely transparent and stakeholders are invited to express their interest to contribute.

The pulse trawl is a relatively new fishing technique, which is based on a system that emits short electric pulses on a part of the seabed. This makes the muscles of the fish contract, whereupon the fish detach from the seabed and land in the net. The pulse technique is characterized by a lower impact on the benthic ecosystem, less discards and lower fuel consumption compared to the traditional beam trawl gear. This is shown in numerous research reports, resulting from research on the effects of the pulse trawl over the past years. For this purpose, the Dutch flatfish fishery collaborated with research institutes IMARES³, LEI⁴ and the Belgian research institute ILVO⁵. An overview of the available knowledge on pulse trawling can be found on www.pulsefishing.eu. In addition to the currently available knowledge, a comprehensive research program is being developed with emphasis on the ecological impact of a complete transition to the pulse trawl.

At the moment, fishing with electricity is not yet allowed (EU regulation N.850-98⁶). Since 2007 however, derogations have been granted to a number of vessels, based on positive research results in the area of ecological impact and discards. The derogations are mainly used for the flatfish fishery, and on a limited scale for catching Brown shrimp. The shrimp pulse gear is not part of this MSC assessment.

In 2011 the CVO pulse fishery has performed a confidential assessment against the MSC standard 1.3, to give more insight into the areas where more information or effort was desired. From 2011 onwards, the CVO further prepared herself for a full MSC assessment for the pulse fishery, based on the results of this confidential assessment. CVO choose to continue on this track, and to let the pulse fishery be assessed against MSC standard 1.3. On the 1st of April of 2015 version 2.0⁷ of the MSC standard will come into force for all new fisheries that enter an MSC assessment. The CVO will, if and when the MSC certificate for the pulse fishery is obtained, automatically transfer to the new MSC standard, following strict MSC procedures.

Note to editors:

Please direct questions to Inger Wilms from the Cooperative Fisheries Organisation at iwilms@cvo-visserij.nl or +31 (0)6 16914257. For more information on the MSC assessment for the pulse fishery on plaice and sole on the MSC website, please see <http://www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/fisheries-in-the-program/in-assessment/north-east-atlantic/cvo-pulse-sole-and-plaice>

¹ Cooperative Fisheries Organisation, a partnership of Dutch Producer organisations. More info on the CVO: www.cvo-visserij.nl (Dutch only)

2. MSC, Marine Stewardship Council, standard for sustainable and well managed fisheries. More information on MSC: www.msc.org
3. IMARES Wageningen UR, the Dutch institute for applied marine ecological research. More information on IMARES: <http://www.wageningenur.nl/en/Expertise-Services/Research-Institutes/imares.htm>
4. LEI Wageningen UR, Landbouw Economisch Instituut. More information on LEI: <http://www.wageningenur.nl/nl/Expertises-Dienstverlening/Onderzoeksinstituten/LEI.htm>
5. ILVO: Instituut voor Landbouw en Visserij Onderzoek in Oostende (Belgium). More information on ILVO: <http://www.ilvo.vlaanderen.be/>
6. COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 850/98 of 30 March 1998 for the conservation of fishery resources through technical measures for the protection of juveniles of marine organisms
7. Overview of most important changes in the MSC standard from the 1st of April 2015: <http://www.msc.org/documents/fisheries-certification-requirements-updates-supplementary-documents/summary-of-changes-fcrv2.0>