



Virginia Polonio
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Sent by email

Date: 19/10/2022

Subject: Request for variation to the MSC Certification Requirement v2.2 FCP-7.28.23 for Joint demersal fisheries in the North Sea and adjacent waters

Dear Virginia Polonio,

I write with reference to your submission on 17/10/2022 of a request for variation to the MSC Certification Requirement (CR) to allow:

Another 30 days for the year 2 surveillance audit of the fishery certificate to allow the conclusion of harmonisation activities taking place for North Sea saithe stock.

As you are aware, the CR procedures relating to v2.2 FCP-7.28.23 state:

The CAB shall upload the Surveillance Report to the MSC database within 60 days of completing the audit for publication on the MSC website

These are integral to ensuring all MSC accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies operate in a consistent and transparent manner. The MSC intends that these requirements be met across all fisheries and CoC certificate holders, except in exceptional, well-justified circumstances, as part of the MSC programme.

MSC notes the factors presented supporting your request, including:

- Considering that this fishery encompasses 17 target stocks, 4 fishing areas, 4 client groups and multiple gear types, a variation was granted in 2021 to allow the submission of the surveillance reports no later than 120 days after the completion of each audit.
- The 2nd surveillance audit of this fishery started in May 2022 and harmonisation activities began at the end of August, including regarding the North Sea saithe stock based on recent scientific advice. The harmonisation discussion has been extended and the assessors of the overlapping fisheries have yet to reach an agreement.
- Control Union (UK) is requesting a 30-days extension, additional to the 120 days deadline granted in 2021, in order to ensure the conclusion of harmonisation activities.

Given the rationale provided, the MSC is willing to grant a variation to the CR in this case subject to the following conditions:

- The report shall be submitted no later than 30 November 2022.
- When requested by MSC, the CAB can confirm that it is not aware at this time of any factor (related to either fishery status, or performance against conditions) that could result in the fishery no longer being in compliance with the MSC Fisheries Standard.
- The CAB shall inform stakeholders on the delay in the publication of the surveillance report

If you have any questions regarding this response, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant Fisheries Assessment Manager for this fishery.

Marine Stewardship Council
cc: Assurance Services International

