

Fishermen, environmentalists pressure EU over fish quotas

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A fisherman distributes flyers during a protest against European Union fishing quotas on December 2, 2014, at La Rochelle harbor in western France

EU ministers went into difficult talks Monday to decide on fish catch limits for 2015 as they sought to balance conflicting demands from fishermen and environmentalists.

The European Commission, the EU executive arm, proposes to reduce

quotas for 40 [fish stocks](#) in the Atlantic and North Sea, including sole, haddock and cod, to keep them at sustainable levels.

It proposes, meanwhile, to increase or at least maintain catch limits for 29 other species, including anglerfish, horse mackerel and Norway lobster, which are all thriving.

"From our point of view, the European Commission's interpretation is very strict," Spain's agriculture and fisheries minister Isabel Tejerina said.

"We believe that there is room to improve" the catch limits for the benefit of fishermen, said Tejerina who represents one of the largest fishing industries in the EU.

The Commission is basing its proposals on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which was reformed in 2013 to fight overfishing that hurts 40 percent of the stocks in the Atlantic and North Sea.

"We want to see stocks at MSY (Maximum Sustainable Yield) levels but also want to see fishermen out at sea," the fishing lobby group Europeche said in a statement.

The environmental group Greenpeace feared [ministers](#) would act in favour of the fishing industry.

"Despite repeated calls by the EU's scientific advisory body to further reduce catches, ministers have often set fishing quotas at significantly higher than recommended levels, under pressure from Europe's oversized industrial fishing fleet," it said in a statement.

"For instance, North Sea cod has been overfished for years, jeopardising its reproductive capacity. While scientists have recommended further

cuts, ministers are likely to request an increase in quotas," it added.

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