

Sea Fisheries Draft Regulation- Chancre crab minimum Landing size increase.

Scrutiny Panel

5/4/2019.

Background information.

The draft Sea Fisheries Minimum Landing Size (MLS) amendment to be debated 21st May relates to chancre crab. Chancre crab/brown crab represents one of the five primary species essential for the viability of the Jersey's fishing industry and sits second only to lobster in terms of economic importance. The sustainability of the brown crab stock has implications also for the growing processing sector, exports merchants as well as for the hospitality sector.

The decline in the stock, which is reflected in official landing figures, where the average annual catch in the last decade has been at around 500 tonnes, with last years total well below 50% of that figure. The available science points to an environmental/biological issue, and resulting poor recruitment to the stock, rather than fishing pressure.

Jersey Fishermen's Association carried out considerable consultation with the various sectors implicated, throughout 2017/18 as well as entering into dialogue with our French neighbors in order to aim for a set of common measures. In doing so, a number of potential options, such as closed seasons, were rejected.

It is important to note that while a small minority of fishermen have since voiced concerns, throughout the consultation and up to present date, the MLS rise to 150mm has received strong support of all sectors, with the exception of the Breton committee representing Finistere region, though they have in the last 2 weeks, voted to follow suit.

The JFA also carried out a sampling program to determine the level of impact on daily catch rates of professional fishermen. It was realised that an initial reduction in catch would be in the order of approximately 18%-20%, though the crab returned alive remains in the fishery and will be of a considerably greater size and weight when recaptured, resulting in overall and long term net gain.

JFA were aware also that the removal of the 140-150mm crab (an inferior product for marketing) would result in an overall price increase, which we now know has been a figure around 30%.

The JFA took the proposals to the Marine resources Panel in mid 2018 and received full support of all stakeholders represented at the Panel.

The JFA strongly hold that the MLS rise (along with other measures) is absolutely essential to the long term sustainability of the stock and the the measure should continue beyond the current crisis, when stocks rebuild again.

In direct answer to question of whether Fishermen were adequately consulted: The JFA are content that the States of Jersey Environment/Fisheries department were engaged throughout the full process and have contacted all Fishing licence holders to inform them of the proposals.

It would be difficult to imagine any credible line of opposition that might come forward in states debate, where states members are adequately informed.