Authorisation Review

Rationale

* Short term aim of the bass FMP to review the current bass authorisation system. The review must be underway within 2 years of publication for this target to be met.
* Purpose of the group is to review the current system to determine if this is still the most appropriate system.
* Currently only UK and EU vessels with a track record of landing bass between 1st July 2015 and 30th September 2016 are authorised to use nets and hook and line gears.
* Trawls and seines do not currently need an entitlement, and instead have a 5% per trip limit.

Objectives

Review the existing domestic authorisation system to assess its suitability. Any new system should align with the following goals within the bass FMP:

* Short term objectives:
  + Goal 2 “Equitable access to the bass fishery, while prioritising stock sustainability”.
  + Goal 8.1 “Minimise and, where possible, eliminate bycatch of sensitive species in bass fisheries”.
* Medium/long term objectives:
  + Goal 3 “Minimise discarding of bass bycatch where survival rates are low”.
  + Goal 5 “Maximise the benefits of bass fishing for local coastal communities”.

Considerations

* Should the bass fishery remain a closed commercial fishery?
* How do we balance accessibility to the fishery with sustainability?
* Is the current authorisation system still appropriate?
* Should authorisation still be based on a track record, or moved to another system?
* How do we best encourage stock recovery within this system?

Roles of the BMG

The bass management group will be responsible for deciding the composition and size of the task-and-finish working group, ensuring all viewpoints are represented.

Possible representatives within the task-and-finish group:

* Defra
* Marine Management Organisation
* Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
* Commercial Fishers
* Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities
* Natural England
* Welsh Government

Do you have any further suggestions for the membership of the group?

Next Steps

The task-and-finish group should meet as and when required to review evidence on the authorisation system for bass fisheries and discuss potential options for change moving forward. These meetings will be organised and chaired by a selected individual, either from within the bass management group or externally. These meetings should also focus on how the bass management group and the task-and-finish group can address the medium-and long-term bass FMP goals.