

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Milestones Achieved in ASP-GEAC Northern Cod Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP)

Collaboration and cooperation are key, with the goal of achieving sustainability

(Brussels, Belgium) - The Northern Cod Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP) led by two industry trade associations in eastern Canada announced today they are making great progress in the work around the iconic stock, as reported at the end of their 2nd annual Working Group meeting held in Brussels on the eve of the Brussels Seafood Show.

The Association of Seafood Producers (ASP) and the Groundfish Enterprise Allocation Council (GEAC) held their annual Northern Cod FIP consultation with the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP), representatives from the industry in France, the UK and Canada, and representatives of the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, and Canada's Department of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

The meeting reviewed stock status and population projections, and updated the FIP Action Plan which includes a multi-million dollar research program aimed at sustaining the recovery of the Northern Cod stock complex. The program includes cutting-edge genetic study focusing on discriminating stock components, population simulation models and an extensive offshore acoustic tracking program needed to understand temporal and spatial migration patterns of different stock segments.

"With contributions from member companies and our partners including Davigel in France, High Liner Foods in the USA, our FIP - in the last 24 months – has organized and funded an expanding list of important science-based activities," said Derek Butler, Executive Director of ASP. "Collectively, these pieces help fill important information gaps that have long-challenged the assessment and management of this iconic resource."

The stock itself continues to grow, though slower than projected just a year ago. It remains below the Limit Reference Point, identified as the level above which a significant fishery would be expected to resume.

"While the rate of growth in this stock since 2010 has been very encouraging, we must be mindful that this stock may encounter nature's headwinds in the critically important next couple of years, including the impact of declining abundance of important prey species for cod, most notably capelin," observed Jim Cannon, President of SFP. "We are cautiously optimistic, but must practice restraint with respect to catch increases until a sustainable recovery trajectory is confirmed."

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