



ATMOSPHERE

New distribution of fishing quotas: Are lawbreakers being rewarded?

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The Individual Transferable Catch Quota (CITC) Regime, established by the Federal Fisheries Law and regulated by the Federal Fisheries Council, is central to ensuring the management of fishery resources for five species, including one of the most frequently caught in the Argentine Sea, the common hake or hubbsi.

The CITC regime is whereby a vessel and/or company has a percentage of the catch of a species, out of the total allocated to the entire fleet for that species (Maximum Allowable Catch).



Five species are governed by the CITC system, and these quotas are allocated for 15 years. Quotas were first distributed in 2009, and the next 15 years begin in 2025. Therefore, the CFP is currently redistributing the quotas for the next 15 years.

An interesting clarification is that quotas are transferable, meaning they can be sold or lent between ships and/or companies, and they have a high economic value.

To distribute the quotas, or the slice of the pie, the CFP takes into account five factors that determine how much each company and/or ship receives:

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Each of these factors has a different influence or weighting on the quota to be granted. For example, in the case of hoki, a proportion of 50, 30, 15, 5, and 0.1 percent weighting was assigned to each of them, with the corresponding sanctions being subtractive, that is, they subtract quota.

Of the five species listed in the Argentine Sea, the quotas for hoki (*Macroronus magellanicus*), Patagonian toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*), and Spanish toothfish (*Micromesistius australis*) have just been distributed. The remaining quotas are common hake (*Merluccius hubbsi*) and Patagonian scallop (*Zygochlamys patagonica*).



What is striking is that when the quotas were assigned to the first three species in 2009, the weighting percentage applied to each company based on their sanctions history was 1 to 2%, but now in 2024, the quota allocation is weighted by 0.1%, according to their sanctions history, that is to say: whether or not the vessel and/or company has violated the rules has practically no influence on the competition for the quota, it makes no difference whether or not it respects the law, the offender is practically rewarded.

- Hoki: increased from 1% to 0.1%
- Black hake: went from 2% to 0.1%
- Polish: went from 1 to 0.1%

Among the five factors taken into account for quota allocation, no aspect related to the sustainability of the company's and/or vessel's operations is considered. All factors are related to exploitation and productivity, the environment, and the impacts on the species and the marine ecosystem are practically ignored.

So far, at least with regard to sanctions, this 1 to 2% weighting factor could imply that some sanctions were related to violations of some aspect related to sustainability, such as fishing in closed areas, catching species without a permit or quota, prohibited discarding, or illegal fishing.

With the current reduction from what was already a tiny percentage to 0.1%, any possibility of quota allocation taking into account any aspect of the company's performance, much less the sustainability of its operations, is virtually eliminated.

Instead of reducing the penalty factor, it should have been increased. Another stain on an activity that needs to improve its transparency.

The fishing resources of the Argentine Sea are the heritage of all Argentinians; the right to exploit them

should be assigned to those who demonstrate their care for them. Being a lawbreaker should not be the same as being a good behavior.

We hope that the factor relating to sanctions will be reviewed, and that the imminent allocation of quotas for common hake—the most important of the five quota species and one of the three most caught in the Argentine Sea—will take into account the behavior of vessels and companies: respecting the law is not the same as not respecting it.

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