



WWF-UK

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PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

Backbench Business Committee Debate: Fisheries

15 November 2011

Summary

- **The failures of the CFP have been well documented in the Commission's 2009 Green Paper and reflected in the many fisheries debates in Parliament. Its over-centralised, top down, complex and short-term approach to fisheries management has led to over-investment in the fleet, over-fishing, discarding and poor compliance. The result is an imbalanced marine environment, depleted fish stocks and alienated stakeholders.**
- **The Commission's proposals, published on 13 July, make some progress towards sustainability – such as spelling out clear conservation objectives and multi-annual plans – but too much has been left to chance. Much work needs to be done by MPs, Ministers and MEPs over the next 18 months to secure progressive reform.**
- **Crucial delivery mechanisms, time-frames and responsibilities for developing multi-annual plans are lacking from the Commission's proposals.**
- **Much more work needs to be done to ensure fisheries management is decentralised to harness the expertise of local stakeholders who are best placed to draw up and implement multi-annual plans for their fisheries to deliver high-level EU targets.**
- **Discarding is a wasteful practice, so WWF welcomes the Commission's intention to find a solution to the issue. However, the emphasis should be on not catching unwanted fish in the first place – through more selective fishing practices. We need to catch less, and make better use of what is caught.**

WWF's priorities – and our position on the Commission's proposals

WWF welcomes the clear commitment to restore and maintain populations of exploited species above levels which can produce Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) and to apply an ecosystem approach. **This is a welcome focus on conservation at the heart of the policy.**



President: His Royal Highness,
The Prince of Wales KG, KT, GCB, OM
Chair: Ed Smith
Chief Executive: David Nussbaum

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However, WWF calls on MPs to ensure that the UK Government plays its full part in ensuring the gaps in the proposals are filled in to deliver on this commitment.

1. Long-Term Management

Crucial delivery mechanisms, time-frames and responsibilities for developing multi-annual plans are still missing from the proposals. **WWF believes clear and binding targets need to be met through multi-annual plans designed specifically for each fishery.** These should be in place by 2015 and co-managed by stakeholder groups at the fishery level. WWF also has concerns that there is little vision on aligning fleet capacity with available resources. Transferable Fishing Concessions (TFCs) – a very specific form of rights-based management - are proposed as the main stand-alone tool to deal with overcapacity, yet are likely to be a blunt tool at best, lacking the safeguards needed to prevent a concentration of rights or to address failure to meet conservation goals. TFCs should be one of many elements in a rights-based management ‘toolbox’ to be selected by regional stakeholders according to the plan for that particular fishery.

2. Effective Regionalisation

Long-term management through multi-annual plans must go hand in hand with regionalisation. However, worryingly, **a clear co-management mechanism is absent** from the Commission’s proposals. A genuine decentralisation of fisheries management and the full involvement of stakeholders at a regional level (e.g. Member State decision makers, scientists, industry representatives, NGOs) is essential to achieving sustainable, and regional management system, moving Europe away from the politically motivated annual centralised quota negotiations.

3. Eliminating discards

Discarding is a wasteful practice abhorred by all, so WWF welcomes the intention to find a solution to the issue. However, the proposed option of commercialising would-be discards is not the right solution to a complex problem. **The emphasis should be on not catching unwanted fish in the first place** – through encouraging more selective fishing practices (as trialled in Cefas’ ‘Project 50%’). The solution should lie in better regulation and incentives for fishermen as demonstrated in the Scottish Conservation Credits Scheme or the UK catch quota scheme which allow for fully documented fisheries.

4. Fair fishing abroad

WWF welcomes the inclusion of the external dimension in the Commission’s basic regulation, however, is disappointed to see so little detail on taking the lead in global fisheries governance. **We believe all EU vessels - wherever they fish - should fish to the same high standards.** Clear targets, measures and mechanisms are needed to ensure this occurs.

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