



**WWF-UK**  
*Registered office*  
Panda House, Weyside Park  
Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1XR

Tel: +44 (0)1483 426444  
Fax: +44 (0)1483 426409  
info@wwf.org.uk  
wwf.org.uk

## PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

# Debate – Fish Discards and Common Fisheries Policy Reform

---

11 May 2011

---

*This WWF Parliamentary Briefing has been prepared ahead of the 12 May 2011 Backbench Business debate on Fish Discards and the 2012 Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy moved by Mr Zac Goldsmith MP.*

### Summary

- While discards are a moral issue and should be tackled, the goal of CFP reform must be primarily to reduce fish mortality by limiting catches, allowing stocks to recover and fish to be harvested within environmental limits.
- A recent WWF poll of consumers across 14 EU Member States found that 88% think that the fish products on sale within the EU should come from sources that are sustainable and not over-fished<sup>1</sup>.
- Reform of the CFP should be based on:
  - Science-based, Long Term Management Plans (LTMPs);
  - Regionalisation whereby management of fisheries is devolved to stakeholders at the regional level ;
  - Scope of the reformed CFP should apply to all fisheries in EU waters, and to European vessels wherever they operate in the world;
  - Maximising Value from catch to consumer,

### Discards and Environmental Limits

European fisheries are currently regulated by Total Allowable Catches which do not in any way put a cap on catches but rather simply measure landings of fish at port. This system obscures the scandal of discards – the huge amount of fish that are caught and discarded at sea, often dead. Yet as well as representing a moral issue of the needless waste of an

economic and food resource, discards also result in a considerable amount of data lost for scientists to accurately calculate fish stocks to inform fisheries management.

WWF advocates a move towards a catch quota system to replace landing quotas. Catch quotas differ from the current system by measuring fish caught, rather than landed. A catch quota policy would encourage positive behaviour by the catching sector, resulting in much reduced discards, as illustrated in the preliminary results from the English catch quota trials<sup>2</sup>. Under catch quota systems, fisheries are fully documented through the presence of on-board CCTV cameras and real-time electronic recording of all catches, supplementary to landing declarations. The benefits are that more selective fishing reduces discards resulting in a decline in overall fish mortality, providing scientists with better data on which to make stock assessments, as well as providing a better opportunity for stock recovery.

Additionally, as fishers are accountable for all that they catch under a catch quota system, they can generate greater economic returns from the fish that they land. This system therefore incentivises more selective behaviour and use of selective gear that allows the non-target sizes and species of fish to escape. The result is greater profitability for the catching sector – profits that offset the costs of installing the hardware required to monitor catches at sea.

### **Priorities for Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy**

European fisheries must be managed to ensure that the social, ecological and economic benefits of resources are accrued over the long-term for the benefit of the environment and the communities who depend on fisheries for their livelihoods. This underpins the need for a reformed CFP based on respecting environmental limits.

The shortcomings of the CFP are well documented, not least in the European Commission's 2009 Green Paper ahead of the reform negotiations which will commence in 2011. An increasing number of fish buyers, processors and retailers have come together as WWF's CFP Alliance<sup>3</sup> to call for radical reform of the CFP to deliver sustainable fisheries. In addition, a recent European poll commissioned by WWF, found that 78% of Europeans (66% of UK respondents) support reform of the CFP.

The WWF CFP Reform Alliance advocates reform of the CFP based on:

- Science-based, Long Term Management Plans (LTMPs), including a discard and bycatch reduction strategy, providing a more secure and sustainable future for fishing communities and the environment;
- Regionalisation whereby management of fisheries is devolved to stakeholders at the regional level including responsibility for developing, implementing and adapting LTMPs;
- Scope of the reformed CFP should apply to all fisheries in EU waters, and to European vessels wherever they operate in the world;
- Maximising Value from catch to consumer, requiring integrated policies across the supply and production chain, with a clear focus on efficiency and added value at all stages.

<b>Contact</b>	Owen Gibbons, Senior Public Affairs Officer
<b>Email/Tel</b>	<a href="mailto:ogibbons@wwf.org.uk">ogibbons@wwf.org.uk</a> , 01483 412 374
<b>Date</b>	11 May 2011

Download Briefings at [wwf.org.uk/parliamentary](http://wwf.org.uk/parliamentary)

<sup>1</sup> WWF-commissioned YouGov representative poll of 14,635 adults across Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK. Figures have been weighted and are representative of all adults aged 18+ (18-54 in Greece).

<sup>2</sup> Preliminary results of English Catch Quota Trial <http://tinyurl.com/33vfst6>

<sup>3</sup> CFP Alliance <http://bit.ly/CFPalliance>