



WWF *for a living planet*

WWF Scotland
Little Dunkeld,
Dunkeld, Perthshire
Scotland, PH8 0AD
tel: 01350 728200
fax: 01350 728201
scotland@wwf.org.uk
wwfscotland.org.uk

Parliamentary Briefing – Annual Fisheries Debate, 2010

The European Commission's proposal on fishing opportunities for 2011, based on advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), offers little comfort to the main Scottish fishing fleets. Despite the efforts and sacrifices made by these Scottish fleets, scientists have again pointed to the continued depletion of many stocks of importance to Scotland. The temptation will be great to fight for the highest quotas in the annual quota negotiations. However, we ignore scientific advice on the state of fish stocks at our peril. In Scotland as elsewhere, short-term fixes lead to us fishing beyond what the stocks and the marine environment can withstand.

What is needed is to fish less but to make better use of what is caught. For this reason WWF is asking the Scottish Parliament to call on the Government to do two things:

- Redouble efforts to engage with the fishing industry and other national and international stakeholders in the search for solutions that are adapted to Scottish circumstances in order to deliver sustainable fisheries. This will involve further innovations in fisheries management such as catch quotas.
- Continue the hard work to ensure the delivery of a truly effective reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) through regionalisation of fisheries management and long-term management plans for fisheries.

Society demands that those who use common resources do so in a manner that does not endanger their renewal and respects the environment. An increasing number of fish buyers, processors, retailers and chefs have committed to only sourcing fish from sustainable fisheries. A growing number of people in the fishing industry in Scotland and beyond have joined together to achieve certification by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) for their fisheries. Many are also working hard within the innovative Scottish Conservation Credits Scheme to catch and discard less cod. WWF Scotland believes this move towards co-management must continue to be a priority, enabling cod and other commercially important stocks to recover.

The need for change in the Scottish fishing industry to fish less and fish better is clear in the recently published report by the independent panel of the Inquiry into the Future of Fisheries Management (IFFM)¹. The fishing industry must also be proactive in meeting its obligations under the recently adopted Marine (Scotland) Act alongside other marine users in order to protect the marine environment that sustains all sea-related activities.

Catch Quotas

European fisheries are currently regulated by Total Allowable Catches which do not in any way put a cap on catches but rather simply measures landings, thus overlooking the huge amount of waste of fish that are caught and thrown back overboard dead. These discards are wasted fish, potentially wasted food, and lead to a considerable amount of data lost for scientists who rely on

¹ Report of an Independent Panel, Inquiry into the Future Fisheries Management, Edinburgh 2010



President: HRH Princess Alexandra,
the Hon Lady Ogilvy KG, GCVO
Chair: Ed Smith
Chief Executive: David Nussbaum
Director: Dr Richard Dixon

WWF Scotland is part of WWF-UK, charity registered in England number 1081247 and in Scotland number SC039593 and a company limited by guarantee registered in England number 4016725.
VAT number 733 761821
Printed on recycled paper

accurate figures to advise fisheries managers. Discards undermine the health of fish stocks and lead to fishing mortality well above the quantity of fish that is safe to remove from the sea. The Scottish Conservation Credits Scheme was set up to tackle this problem by agreeing on measures to reduce cod catches and discards, improve data and compliance by adopting a set of conservation measures. Vessels taking part in the scheme are rewarded with additional days at sea, a currency of value at a time when their effort is limited in terms of the time that vessels are allowed to be out of the harbour. Discards have been reduced, but scientific advice is clear: they have to be reduced further still.

Catch quotas would, in a number of fisheries, allow for additional benefits, as under this regime discards are not permitted. The fisheries are fully documented through the presence of CCTV cameras on board vessels and daily electronic recording of all catches and landing declarations. The incentive is additional quota. Fishermen are accountable for all that they catch, which encourages skippers to target fish that can be legally sold thus encouraging more selective behaviour - such as moving away from areas with concentration of small fish and increased use of selective gear that allows the non-target sizes and species of fish to escape. Fewer fish are caught and discarded, the impact of fishing on the marine environment is lessened, the scientific data is enhanced, and control and monitoring is improved, as inspectors have all the necessary information they need for comprehensive controls. The fishing industry also gains, as fishing becomes more selective and more economically viable.

The need for reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

The reduced fishing opportunities for 2011 demonstrate the strong case for real reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2012. The failures of this EU policy have been well documented in the European Commission's 2009 Green Paper, and reflected in the many fisheries debates in the Scottish 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.

WWF Scotland encourages MSPs to commit to supporting the difficult political decisions that need to be made to deliver a reform programme that is ambitious and progressive.

Effective regionalisation of fisheries management is long overdue as is the adoption of a long term approach. WWF advocates the development and implementation of long-term management plans (LTMPs) at a fisheries level. In this model high level objectives for fisheries management would be defined at the EU level by Council and the European Parliament. Groups at the regional level - made up of the Member States participating in the given fishery, representatives from industry, scientific bodies, NGOs and other relevant parties - would then produce LTMPs detailing how to deliver the EU objectives. Once given the green light from the EU, these same regional groups would be responsible for implementing, revising and adapting their own plans as required.

Conclusion

WWF urges MSPs to promote the right solutions to ensure that Scotland retains a viable fishing industry in a balanced and healthy marine environment. It is clear that management decisions need to be taken in line with scientific advice – to disregard this may provide short term relief to the industry but will do them a disservice in the long run by undermining long term sustainability, and ultimately their viability.

For more information, please contact:

Mireille Thom, Fisheries Policy Officer, mthom@wwfscotland.org.uk 07799 582 041

Eva Groeneveld, Public Affairs Manager, egroeneveld@wwfscotland.org.uk 07766 150 944