



Parliamentary briefing: End of Year Fish Negotiations debate

Tuesday 9th December 2014

Summary

- We are at a turning point in fisheries management in Scotland. **At the end of year fisheries negotiations, the Scottish Government must support decisions that will help Scotland reap the benefits of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP):** achieving effective implementation of the Landing Obligation ('discard ban'), fishing at sustainable levels and helping to deliver Good Environmental Status, while retaining a profitable fishing industry.
- **The Scottish Government must support strong, science-based action to implement the reformed CFP.** Scotland's fishing fleets must make maximum use of selective gears and spatial measures to minimise unwanted catches to smooth the transition to meeting the Landing Obligation.
- **Fishing quota is a national asset, and access to it should be transparent and linked to clear rights and responsibilities.** New ways of managing quota must ensure that vessels which bring social and economic benefits to local communities, without damaging the marine environment, should have more opportunities to fish than others.

2015 will be a turning point for Scottish and European fisheries: the first phase of the Landing Obligation ('discard ban') comes into force on January 1st for the pelagic fleet, and vital work will be underway to prepare the demersal fleet to meet the Landing Obligation from January 2016. 2015 is also the deadline for other CFP objectives such as new targets for sustainable fishing (Maximum Sustainable Yield) where possible.

At the end of year negotiations, the Scottish Government must fight to ensure that quotas are set in accordance with science, and that action is taken to achieve the objectives of the reformed CFP to bring real economic and environmental benefits to Scotland.

Ending overfishing: Scotland, and Scottish fleets, must demonstrate that they are doing all within their powers and abilities to fish at sustainable levels (Maximum Sustainable Yield, or MSY) by 2015 where possible, and at the latest by 2020. This will include maximum use of selectivity, temporal and spatial management measures (including Real Time Closures of areas of sea), as well



President: His Royal Highness,
The Prince of Wales KG, KT, GCB, OM
Chair: Sir Andrew Cahn KCMG
Chief Executive: David Nussbaum

WWF-UK a charity registered in England and Wales number 1081247 and in
Scotland number SC039593, a company limited by guarantee registered in
England number 4016725. VAT number 733 761821
100% recycled paper

as behavioural change by the fleet in order to avoid catching unwanted fish. RSPB and WWF would like to see a clear road map of how Scotland will meet the MSY commitment.

Preparations for landing obligation: The Scottish **pelagic fleet** (fishing for mackerel, herring etc) will implement the first phase of the landing obligation in 2015. The hope is that this will work smoothly and that all fleets abide by the new requirements although we note sympathy for a fleet which faces potential uncertainties as to the legality of landing fish in the new year should the necessary European legal arrangements not be in place.

For the **demersal fleet** (fishing for cod, haddock etc) where there are more challenges due to the more mixed species nature of the fishery, the Scottish Government must ensure that it, Scotland's fishing industry, and stakeholders including RSPB and WWF, are doing all that can be done to prepare for the Landing Obligation which will impact them in 2016. This includes maximum uptake of selective gear on fishing vessels, and spatial management to avoid catching unwanted fish. At present, of the 30 vessels in the fleet segment of over 24 metre demersal trawlers, almost half (14) are not using identified selective gear.

Potential for changes in quota management: The Scottish Government is considering how changing quota allocation can help achieve CFP objectives while meeting Scottish policy objectives. In our response to the recent consultation, RSPB and WWF support the use of so-called 'quota uplift' to form a pool of quota that will be used to support vessels meeting the Landing Obligation. We believe that there should be conditions attached for the use of this quota in line with the new requirements of the CFP to reward vessels which bring social and economic benefits to local communities, without damaging the marine environment, with more opportunities to fish than others. This could include the requirement of vessels to use onboard cameras which many believe to be the only effective method for monitoring the Landing Obligation. This would help monitor implementation of effective selective gears and spatial management in order to meet the Landing Obligation and other CFP requirements including broader marine environmental targets such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and the Birds and Habitats Directives.

Financial challenges and opportunities: While phasing out discards will undoubtedly have cost implications and cause hardship for some vessels, Scottish Government economic analysis identifies that there will be offsetting economic benefits. The reportⁱ estimates that by eliminating discards of the six key whitefish stocks by Scottish vessels, either by landing and selling all fish currently discarded or by increasing selectivity so that no unwanted fish are caught in the first place, has the potential to add **up to £200 million** to the landed value of these species between 2013 and 2020 compared to the status quo. By 2020, the additional value of landings of the six key stocks by Scottish vessels each year could be worth £26m-£28m.

Scotland must keep its eyes on the prize of truly sustainable fishing and do what it can to meet the challenges head on with innovative and sustainable solutions.

For further information, please contact:

Robin Parker, WWF Scotland; rparker@wwfscotland.org.uk, 0131 659 9024
Thom Quinn, RSPB Scotland; thomas.quinn@rspb.org.uk, 0131 317 4100

ⁱ Economic Assessment of the Cost of Discards - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/Sea-Fisheries/19213/discards/ScottishDiscardSteeringGroup/SDSGMeetings/SDSGMeeting17January2014>