



WWF *for a living planet*

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Parliamentary Briefing – Annual Fisheries Debate, 2010

SUMMARY

We need to fish less, but fish better and make more profitable use of fish caught.

Guided by the objective of delivering sustainable fisheries, WWF asks the UK Parliament to:

- Support the Government's leadership role within the EU on the need for **radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy** through regionalisation of fisheries management and development of long-term management plans (LTMPs) for fisheries.
- Encourage the Government to champion **innovations in fisheries management**, particularly the introduction of **catch quotas** which have shown great potential to reduce discards.
- Support the Government in continuing to work with EU partners in pursuing the objective outlined in the **Ardoe Declaration** of taking all possible steps to account for and manage catches by their fishing fleets, in order to reduce the discarding of dead fish back into the sea.

BACKGROUND

This year the annual quota negotiations are doubly important. While they will decide what the fishing opportunities will be for 2011, they will also be a barometer for the process to reform the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The temptation will be great to fight for the highest quotas in the negotiations, but being guided solely by quotas – and fishing beyond what fish stocks and the marine environment can withstand – is clearly unsustainable in the long-run. 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 new way to manage Europe's fisheries through a reformed CFP.

Delivering sustainable fisheries requires that those who use common resources do so in a manner that does not jeopardize their renewal for use by future generations, while respecting the environment. An increasing number of fish buyers, processors and retailers have come together as WWF's CFP Alliance¹ to call for radical reform of the CFP to deliver sustainable fisheries and businesses, and we would encourage Parliament to support the Government in their ambitions for reform.

The need for the UK fishing industry to fish less and fish better is clear in recently published reports² which show that a different approach to management is required, in order to deliver economic and environmental benefits – a more profitable industry and healthier fish stocks.

¹ CFP Alliance <http://bit.ly/CFPalliance>

² The Potential Benefits of a Wealth-based Approach to Fisheries Management., DEFRA Project MF 1210, 2010; Report of an Independent Panel, Inquiry into the Future Fisheries Management, Edinburgh 2010



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PRIORITY FOR DECEMBER FISHERIES COUNCIL - 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 measure landings of fish at port. This system overlooks the huge amount of waste of fish that are caught and discarded at sea, often dead. These discards lead to a considerable amount of data lost for scientists to accurately calculate fish stocks to advise fisheries managers.

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 trials³. Under catch quota systems, fisheries are fully documented through the presence of on-board CCTV cameras and real-time electronic recording of all catches, supplemental to landing declarations. The benefits are that more selective fishing reduces discards resulting in a decline in overall fish mortality. This provides 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 and can generate greater economic returns from the fish that they land, this system incentivises more selective behaviour, such as avoiding areas with concentrations of small fish 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

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. In short, the CFP currently provides an over-centralised, 'top down', complex and short-term approach to fisheries management which has led to over-investment in the fleet, over-fishing, a high rate of discards (compared to other global fisheries) and poor compliance. The result is a degraded marine environment, depleted fish stocks and alienated stakeholders – leaving European seafood with a tarnished reputation.

WWF encourages Parliament to support the ambitious and progressive political decisions that will need to be taken within the EU negotiations in order to deliver a CFP fit for purpose and capable of delivering sustainable fisheries for the marine environment and the communities that depend on fisheries. WWF believes that a reformed CFP must be built on four principles:

1. **Long Term Management Plans (LTMPs)** – founded on science, long-term ecosystem-based plans would set fisheries on a stable track to recovery providing a more sustainable future for stakeholders and the environment;
2. **Regionalisation** – devolving management of fisheries to stakeholders at the regional level including responsibility for implementing, revising and adapting LTMPs as required;
3. **Scope** – reformed CFP principles should apply to all fisheries in EU waters, and to European vessels wherever they fish in the world.
4. **Maximising Value from Catch to Consumer** - requiring better connections and integrated policies across the supply chain, and a clear focus on efficiency and added value at all stages.

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³ Preliminary results of English Catch Quota Trial <http://tinyurl.com/33vfst6>