

# Discussion Paper

16 September 2009

## Achieving sustainable fisheries through CFP reform

Sustainable fisheries will benefit everyone from the fisherman to the consumer – and our marine environment. We're making some progress towards sustainable fisheries with some stocks showing signs of recovery. But let's not kid ourselves – there's still a long way to go.

Most of our fish stocks are under pressure and we still throw millions of fish overboard. Processors, retailers, restaurants and consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about whether fish come from sustainable stocks and are caught in environmentally responsible ways. It is only through conserving fish stocks and the wider marine environment that we can provide a more stable, prosperous, long-term future for our fishing industry and communities dependent on fishing. That's why conservation must be at the heart of fisheries management – nationally and internationally.

I want us all to work together for an economically sustainable future for the fishing industry. I want reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) to unlock the potential wealth of fisheries, whilst ensuring a healthy marine environment. I want fishermen to help develop better ways of targeting the right fish and reducing the terrible waste of discarding. In short, I want fishermen to catch less but land more of it.



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I want conservation of rare or threatened marine habitats and species, commercial fish stocks and marine ecosystems more generally to be at the centre of radical reform of the CFP – with the UK leading the change. I also want everyone with an interest in fisheries – from catching fish to eating fish – to have a say in changes to the CFP. We have an opportunity now to use CFP reform to help achieve sustainable fisheries – let's take it.

**Huw Irranca-Davies MP**

**Minister for the Natural and Marine Environment,  
Wildlife and Rural Affairs**

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## How does this paper link to the Commission's Green Paper?

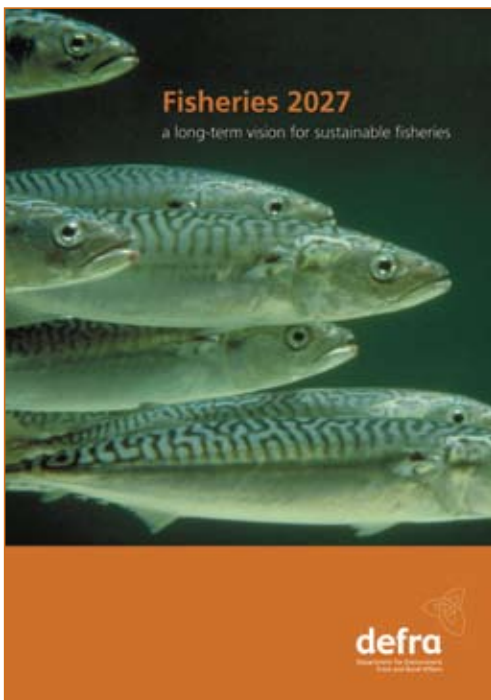
In April 2009 the European Commission issued a Green Paper to stimulate debate through a wide range of questions on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

We would like you to help us to develop the UK response to the Green Paper by replying to the questions in this discussion paper. We want to ensure that the UK response sets out the best possible actions to deliver a sustainable future for our fisheries and for the wider marine environment.

## Vision for sustainable fisheries

We share the Commission's vision for European fisheries in 2020 set out in the Green Paper (page 4, section 1). It is in line with *Fisheries 2027 – a long-term vision for sustainable fisheries*, which we published in 2007, following widespread consultation. In a nutshell, we want:

- fish stocks within safe biological limits;
- a prosperous and efficient fishing industry;
- recognition of the contribution of fishing to local communities; and
- fisheries management integrated with marine conservation.



These four elements are at the heart of our approach to CFP reform and will help to deliver healthy ecosystems.

There are a number of measures, as well as reform of the CFP, that contribute to the delivery of sustainable fisheries. The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive requires us to achieve 'good environmental status' for our seas by 2020. At a national level the Marine and Coastal Access Bill will help to improve the way we manage our seas; protect them from pollution and damaging activities; and ensure the long-term health of our marine environment and of the interests of people making a living from it. The Sustainable Access to Inshore Fisheries project is another approach to ensure the long-term future for our inshore fleet. We are also working with scientists and the fishing industry on a range of other projects to achieve sustainable fisheries, for example by improving our understanding of fish stocks and methods of catching; by reducing discards through changing fishing gears; by increasing our knowledge of the socio-economics of fisheries; better planning of quota uptake; and the use of CCTV and real-time closures to help protect cod stocks.

## The UK approach to CFP reform

At the EU Council of Fisheries Ministers meeting in May, the UK Fisheries Minister set out the above four key elements as our priorities for CFP reform. To deliver these priorities we need to enable a more rational exploitation of fisheries resources and long-term management of fisheries based on sound science. We also need better ways of working, with the fishing industry taking more responsibility for implementing the objectives of the CFP; processors, retailers, restaurants and consumers all helping to achieve sustainable fisheries; and transitional financial support targeted to deliver the changes needed for sustainable fisheries.

We believe that the four priorities, together with changes in ways of working, will help address the failures identified by the Green paper: fleet overcapacity, imprecise policy objectives, short-term decision-making, lack of responsibility given to industry, and lack of compliance (page 7, section 4).

**Q1 What, if any, are the other failures of the CFP and which elements are successful and should be retained?**

## What are the best ways of achieving sustainable fisheries?

We would like your views on the actions needed to meet the four priorities for achieving sustainable fisheries. The questions below are designed to help us to develop the UK response to the Green Paper and are not intended to be comprehensive. The Green Paper includes many more detailed questions to which you can also respond (see page 8 of this paper on how to find the Green Paper).

**Our priorities:**

### *Fish stocks within safe biological limits*

The attainment of healthy ecosystems should be an underpinning principle of the CFP with stocks enjoying sustainable levels of abundance and exploitation rates. This means working to meet our commitment at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development to achieve maximum sustainable yield (MSY) from fish stocks by 2015. At these fishing levels stocks will be more abundant and on average live longer; catches will be better and more stable. But we should be prepared to set more challenging targets for 2020 and beyond which will further improve the economic base of the industry and give it a lighter environmental footprint.

#### **Q2 Which targets are the best for the CFP to use to measure the attainment of sustainable stocks by 2020?**

The Green Paper (page 14, section 5.2) has more questions about this.



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### *A prosperous and efficient fishing industry*

Fishing is not generating the financial rewards that it could. Building fish stocks will help improve this. Inefficiencies – such as over-capacity in some places – are also being magnified by uncertainty about rights of access to fishing from one year to the next. In the UK there is greater certainty over fishing rights than in some other EU member states, but the rights remain subject to the uncertainties generated by annual negotiations.

Our fishermen have little flexibility over their access to EU fishing opportunities. This can mean that individual fishermen or the national fleet are unable to access fishing opportunities that match the catches from the fishing grounds. In turn, this can lead to discarding of quota stocks for which fishermen have insufficient quota, whilst other parts of the UK, or EU, fleet hold unused quota. This also reduces opportunities for fishermen to increase incomes.

#### **Q3 What is the best way of overcoming the uncertainty created by the annual EU fisheries negotiations and enabling the fishing industry to plan for the long term?**

The Green Paper (page 10, section 4.3) has more questions about this.

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## *Recognition of the contribution of fishing to local communities*

As well as being based on economically rational principles, a reformed CFP should also promote vibrant fishing communities. These two aims will often be complementary but for some, often remote, coastal communities, small-scale fishing may not be most commercially efficient, yet offers wider social, cultural and economic benefits. We need to consider how a reformed CFP might best include a transitional social element targeted towards those communities heavily dependent on fishing.

### **Q4 What is the best way for the CFP to deliver a social element, whilst promoting a more efficient and profitable fishing industry overall?**

The Green Paper (page 9, section 4.2) has more questions about this.



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## *Fisheries management integrated with marine conservation*

With competition for space between a range of activities in the marine environment (for example, renewable energy, aggregates and recreation) a more co-ordinated approach to the management of all activities is needed. Fisheries management needs to be integrated with management and conservation of marine resources and the marine environment.

The Marine and Coastal Access Bill will create a system of planning with a Marine Policy Statement and marine plans to facilitate a joined-up approach to the management of all marine activities. Fisheries management cannot remain isolated from this approach. CFP reform should, for example, ensure that fishing activities do not put protected species and habitats at risk and that fisheries management is an integral part of the planning of marine protected areas

### **Q5 How should the CFP be changed to help integrate fisheries management with management and conservation of marine resources and the marine environment?**

The Green Paper (page 16, section 5.5) has more questions about this.



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## Ways of working

To deliver our four priorities for CFP reform we also need to make changes to our ways of working to ensure that fisheries management decisions are all based on sound science and rational economic principles; that the fishing industry takes more responsibility for implementing the CFP; and that processors, retailers, restaurants and consumers help to deliver sustainable fisheries.

## Decisions based on sound science

We need the best possible scientific data to help to achieve sustainable fisheries. As well as stock assessments, we need to understand the impact of fishing on the marine environment; the effects of the environment and climate change on fish stocks; and the basic biology, ecology and socio-economics of fisheries. Quality data, accepted by scientists, fishermen and others, particularly for stock assessments, remains vital to fisheries management. Scientists, fishermen and managers will need to work together to deliver this data.

### **Q6 How can we improve the type of data on fish stocks and the fishing industry, and the way we collect it, for fisheries management under the CFP?**

The Green Paper (page 17, section 5.6) has more questions about this.



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## *The fishing industry taking more responsibility for implementing the CFP*

One of the failures of the CFP highlighted in the Green Paper is a lack of stakeholder involvement in decision-making. The CFP is also criticised for being over-centralised, leading to a 'one size fits all' approach to regulation. One way of correcting this is to give those involved in fisheries more responsibility for implementing the most effective fisheries management for their fisheries, taking into account local variations. The reformed CFP should encourage greater engagement at regional and local level.

One way to do this might be to set an overarching framework for fisheries management policy at the EU level. There could be a requirement on Member States' Fisheries Administrations, fishermen, scientists, environmental organisations and other experts to work together to develop robust regional and local management plans to meet the EU level objectives. These plans would focus on the technical detail of implementation of the overarching framework. In the case of shared stocks all member states and third countries with an interest in those stocks would need to co-operate in the common goal of responsible fisheries management. Providing robust scientific support at regional, local, as well as EU level, will be a challenge.



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### **Q7 What is the best way for everyone with interests in fisheries to work together to deliver sustainable fisheries and at what level?**

The Green Paper (page 9, section 4.2) has more questions about this.

### **Q8 How can we best develop long-term management for all fish stocks, taking account of variations in fisheries and environmental factors?**

The Green Paper (page 10, section 4.3) has more questions about this.

### *Processors, retailers, restaurants and consumers helping to deliver sustainable fisheries*

The EU has a major influence on the global fish trade. Our growing demand for fish products, accompanied by a decline in EU production, has

led to the EU becoming hugely reliant on imports of fish. Currently, over 60% of all fish supplies are imported from outside the EU. This rises to 90% for white fish (such as cod and Alaskan pollock). So consumer behaviour has the potential to help to drive changes for sustainable stocks across the globe.

In addition, sustainable fisheries must remain a priority for global food security – fish provides the main source of animal protein for around one billion people world-wide. Fisheries are important not only to poor people's livelihoods and their nutrition but for the economies of many developing countries.

### **Q9 How can processors, retailers, restaurants and consumers help to ensure that fish sold in the EU comes from sustainable fisheries?**

The Green Paper (page 15-16, section 5.4) has more questions about this.



## Funding to deliver changes

Funding may be needed to help deliver changes to achieve sustainable fisheries. Fisheries management is complex and expensive. In moving towards a cheaper, simpler system the fishing industry may need more support in the short term. Any transitional financial support should be targeted towards helping to achieve our priorities and manage change. The European Fisheries Fund is due to be reviewed by 2013 and may provide one opportunity to look at how a reformed CFP can be implemented effectively.

### Q10 How can we best use the European Fisheries Fund or other means to help deliver a reformed CFP?

The Green Paper (page 18, section 5.7) has more questions about this.



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### Next steps

We welcome views from across the UK on this discussion paper. After receiving your views, the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations will be working together to prepare the UK

response to the European Commission's Green Paper on the reform of the CFP. The Commission has asked for responses by 31 December.

Reform of the CFP is due to be agreed by EU Ministers in 2012 and implemented from 2013.

### Where to send your views

We welcome your views by **26 October** on the questions in this discussion paper or other ways of achieving sustainable fisheries to [cfp@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:cfp@defra.gsi.gov.uk) or Lekha Prakasan, Defra Marine Programme, Area 2C, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR.

You can send responses to the European Commission's Green Paper on Reform of the CFP to the above address and we will use them in the UK response to the Green Paper and send them to the European Commission for you. Alternatively, you can send them directly to the Commission.

You can find a copy of the Green Paper at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0163:FIN:EN:PDF> including the address for sending comments directly to the Commission.

If you would like us to post you a copy of the Green Paper please phone Lekha Prakasan on 020 7238 4691.

In line with Defra's policy of openness, your responses may be made publicly available. If you do not agree to this, you must clearly request that your response is treated confidentially. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request. You should be aware that there may be circumstances in which Defra will be required to communicate information to third parties on request, in order to comply with its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.