

High Level Meeting on banning discards Brussels 1 March 2011



1. INTRODUCTION

Our fisheries management system is not delivering a sustainable management of our resources and, in addition, incentivises fishermen to discard important quantities fish.

The reasons for discarding are EU and national legislation, which are not well suited for EU waters, where the majority of catches are from mixed fisheries, as well as financial interests of the fishing industry to keep only more valuable fish on board.

The Commission has therefore invited Members of the European Parliament, Ministers and the Court of Auditors to a political discussion in order to focus on how to end discards in the context of the CFP Reform.

2. INTRODUCING A DISCARD BAN

2.1. TIMING AND FISHERIES COVERED

The Commission is considering a mandatory discard ban as part of the CFP reform covering vulnerable and economically important species. The discard ban is a natural follow up of the high grading ban already in place in all EU waters. This could take place in a phased in approach as of the first year of implementation of the reformed CFP.

- ✓ Year one of new CFP: The main pelagic species would be covered by a discard ban (mackerel, herring, blue whiting, etc.)
- ✓ Year two of new CFP: the main target species in demersal mixed fisheries (cod, hake, nephrops, sole etc.) as well as by caught species in these fisheries (haddock, whiting, hake, plaice etc.) would come under the discard ban
- ✓ Year two of new CFP: Mediterranean fisheries would apply the discard ban

Other species could be included in the discard ban in successive steps in the years to follow. Under the discard ban all catches of the target species and all by-catches of non target species

would have to be landed and counted against quotas. Scientific advice would greatly improve as all fish removed from the stocks will be counted and fed into the advisory process.

Single-stock fisheries (for example pelagics like herring, mackerel) could remain to be managed by quotas combined with an obligation to land all catches.

2. IMPLEMENTING A DISCARD BAN IN MIXED FISHERIES

2.1. AN EFFORT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

- Mixed fisheries (whitefish, flatfish, Nephrops etc) could be managed by effort only;
- For mixed fisheries current relative stability keys in quotas would be expressed as effort shares without affecting relative stability. This calculation would be based on current relative stability, not on deployed effort in recent years;
- All catches to be landed and time at sea to be counted against effort.

A discard ban under an effort system will remove any incentive for the fishing industry to under declare or falsely declare catches or to falsely declare catch areas, as landings are no longer counted against quotas. Such a discard ban could have as flanking measures

1. Controlling kw days at sea by VMS;
2. Obligation for vessels to move fishing grounds, real time closures and area closures for spawning stocks, vulnerable habitats or protecting juveniles.

2.2. A CATCH QUOTA SYSTEM

- All catches are landed and counted against quotas;
- Council would have to designate a sufficient portion of all national quotas as national by-catch quotas; or allow for quota transfers within an individual transferable quota system
- MS would have to allocate quotas to vessels according to likely catch composition of hauls, fishing trips or metiers.

Examples:

- in whitefish fisheries, once 'targeted' cod quotas are exhausted, all cod catches are counted against by-catch quotas for cod; the whitefish fishery on haddock, whiting, saithe or Nephrops could continue with by-catches of cod until TAC exhaustion is 100%;
- once the national cod quota and by catch quota is exhausted all metiers where cod is by-catch would be closed by MS, so fishing for haddock, whiting, saithe etc. would need to be closed;
- once the national sole quota and the by-catch quota for sole are exhausted all metiers where sole is a by-catch would be closed by MS, so fishing for plaice, lemon sole, brill etc. would need to be closed even if quotas are not yet exhausted
- The above procedure would be extended year by year covering all other species that would fall under the discard ban

Compliance to and control of a discard ban using catch quotas will only work with efficient enforcement systems implemented by Member States to guarantee its success, such as:

1. CCTV on all vessels above 12 meters, or observer schemes or other effective control methods by Member States, with EU co-funding
2. Obligation for vessels to move fishing grounds, real time closures and area closures for spawning stocks, vulnerable habitats or protecting juveniles, as well as discard avoidance measures
3. Extending the use of electronic logbooks and VMS
4. Improving landing controls with more personnel
5. Deterrent sanctions against discarding
6. Improving compliance by way of peer review

2.3. THE MARKETING SIDE OF BOTH SYSTEMS

Both systems will need to be accompanied by marketing measures:

- minimum landing size to be replaced by minimum marketable sizes
- fishermen market the whole catch and keep part of proceeds (incentivising the sector to develop selective gear avoiding catches of undersized fish)
- as much fish as possible to be marketed for human consumption; marketing for fishmeal only allowed where human consumption market is not available

2.4. INDUSTRY AND PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS

In a regionalised policy, industry and Producer Organisations become active players of a locally based effort or quota management.

- industry in self regulation should choose best selective gears, discard avoiding measures and the most adequate fishing strategy for specific fisheries based on objectives established at EU level taking into account the minimum market sizes
- Producer Organisations need to plan fishing activities and take decisions such as closing a fishery once effort or quotas are used up.

3. CONCLUSION

Implementing a discard ban is possible, both under an effort management system and under a catch quota system, with both having advantages and disadvantages.

Participants to the meeting are asked to express their views on the issues discussed in this non paper.

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