



## **EU Common Fisheries Policy 2012 Reform – some observations by SFP**

**AUGUST 2011**

The European Commission has recently released its proposal for a reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), recognising that urgent change is needed to tackle the overfishing of most European fisheries. The main points of the CFP reform<sup>1</sup> (identified in its communication<sup>2</sup>) are: Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) to be achieved in all European Union (EU) stocks by 2015, a discard ban, multi-stock management plans, transferable fishing concessions, regionalization & advisory councils, national strategic plans for aquaculture, funding conditionality and sustainable fisheries agreements.

Over the last two years, the CFP reform has been through an extensive process of consultation with stakeholders. Some of the issues that continue to be in the public eye, such as discards, are reflected in the proposal. However, although some of the measures listed above are new, the proposed regulation will not achieve the level of change necessary to deliver sustainable fisheries management in Europe.

The proposed regulation is better viewed as a collection of previous legal commitments (both at international and EU level) that are now under one legal framework and not the radical legislation that European fisheries need (and was so frequently promised).

SFP has identified three particular issues that may directly impact on its retail partners and merit detailed comment.

### **CFP goals and ecosystem based fisheries management**

The goal of sustainability in the proposed regulation is defined as reaching Maximum Sustainable Yield for all stocks by 2015 - a requirement already agreed by the EU and Member States in the 2002 Johannesburg Declaration on

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<sup>1</sup> COM (2011) 425 Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Common Fisheries Policy.

<sup>2</sup> COM (2011) 417 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

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Sustainable Development. There are no additional ecological goals other than a requirement “to implement the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management to ensure that the impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are limited”. This general statement requires specific operational objectives to allow for its implementation. SFP believes that an ecosystem based fisheries management (EBFM) framework, with specific operational objectives, should be the core of the reformed CFP. EBFM is extremely important, particularly regarding reduction fisheries where the fisheries target low trophic species that are the base of food chains. MSY and a discard ban are simplistic and partial measures of EBFM.

The proposed regulation also makes no reference to long term ecosystem management plans. The current management plans relate to fisheries or stocks, while from an EBFM perspective management plans should be made at a regional/sea scale.

### **Discards**

One of the novelties in the proposed reform is the inclusion of a progressive discard ban. Article 3 states the objective as “eliminate unwanted catches of commercial stocks and gradually ensure that all catches of such stocks are landed”. This is a positive outcome as the biological sustainability goal should only be to minimise unwanted catches (and so minimise fishing mortality) rather than necessarily eliminating the throwing back of catch to the sea.

The discard ban starts with pelagic species (that have a very small percentage of discards) from 2014, includes three demersal species by 2015 and encompasses all species by 2016. However, discards are not only species specific, they are also fishery specific (depending on a combination of gear, fishing ground and targeted species). Therefore, a progressive approach to a discard ban should either focus on groups of mixed species caught together or by fisheries. Additionally, the choice of the first three demersal species (cod, hake and sole) follows public opinion and not the reality at sea where, for example, whiting, haddock and plaice are subject to far greater discarding.

Finally, Article 15.4 details that “Member States shall ensure that Union fishing vessels flying their flag are equipped to ensure full documentation of all fishing and processing activities for the purpose of monitoring compliance with the

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obligation to land all catches”. A discard ban obliges the monitoring and control of fishing activity to move from land to sea. This is a fundamental change in control, which article 15.4 barely touches upon.

The supply chain can make a particular difference here by requesting evidence of compliance with the discard ban at source level. This can take the form of conditions of supply for example, and should be included in sourcing policies.

### **Regionalization**

References to regionalization in the reform proposal are solely in the context of decentralization of technical measures (that can now be adopted by Member States) and extending the roles of the Regional Advisory Councils. However, Article 53 that specifies the tasks of the Advisory Councils does not include any additional tasks to those in place today.

The Lisbon Treaty restricts the level of regionalization that may be achieved but even within these limitations more could have been proposed. Limiting regionalization to technical measures is disappointing given the level of debate on this issue but the need for the supply chain to be more involved in the Advisory Councils continues.

### **Summary**

The supply chain can achieve positive changes in the sustainability of European fisheries by:

- Persuading EU governments that specific ecosystem objectives are fundamental to the success of CFP reform
- Obliging suppliers to provide proof of compliance with the discard ban in their sourcing policies
- Participating more actively in the Advisory Councils.

SFP suggest that the points outlined above are brought to the attention of the relevant fisheries departments by the supply chain.