

European Association of Fish Producers Organisations



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DISCARD PROBLEM IN FISHERIES

The Commission's communication on discards (COM(07)136final) is a useful and welcome discussion document on the complex and multi-faceted issue of discards. Since the establishment of the Common Fisheries Policy in 1983 it has been generally recognised that all commercial fishing activities have some level of discards and scientific assessments in general incorporate some discards estimates into the assessment.

The fishing industry, as requested, responded to the Commission's questionnaire regarding the discard issue. They welcome the involvement of stakeholders to find solutions to reduce discarding of fish but at the same time caution the Commission against using the simplistic and unrealistic view of just implementing a discards ban.

The discard problem is very complex and multi-faceted issue and indeed certain Community regulations contribute to the discarding problem. For example minimum landing sizes, abiding to TAC's and quotas limitations and the requirements regarding catch composition oblige fishermen to discard fish.

The simple and unrealistic solution of just banning discards will not resolve the problem. The objective should be to reduce and where possible eliminate discards and avoid using the popular "sound bite" of just calling for a discard ban. A range of measures are required, many of these have been identified in the Commission's document and will require a detailed analysis on the effectiveness of the proposed measures in resolving the discards problem and the implications including the socio economic implications.

In general the industry realizes that it is in their interest to avoid, reduce and where possible eliminate discards. The EU fishing industry is looking forward to have a constructive input in this delicate decision making process. Having the fishermen on board in the search for an overall reduction of discards is the condition for success.

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