

Key points made at Discard Action Group catching sector specific meeting on Tuesday 20 November at the Thon Hotel EU, Brussels.

How to map delivery of a discard ban – what the legislative architecture should be to deliver a discards ban – a discard ban checklist.

Attendees

Andrew Brown	Marine Scotland
Arnold Locker	NFFO
Angus Cragg	Defra
Barrie Deas	NFFO
Bertie Armstrong	SFF
Dominic Rihan	DG MARE
Ian Hume	DARDNI
Joost Paardekooper	DG MARE
Lisa Borges	SFP
Karen Green	Seafish (Minutes)
Kenn Skau Fischer	Danish Fishermen's Association
Mike Park	SWFPA, Seafish Board (Chair)
Phil MacMullen	Seafish
Susie Wilks	ClientEarth

Apologies

David Parker	Youngs Seafood
Jane Sandell	SFO

Topics

1. Intro from Mike Park, DAG Chairman - What is happening in the UK.

Presentation by Mike Park.

This covered what DAG is all about and the positive initiatives being adopted by the UK fishing industry to reduce discard levels.

2. Lisa Borges. Presentation on FIPs and how discard reduction could be a key aspect of their development, what is happening in the North East Atlantic.

http://www.seafish.org/media/716835/dagnov2012_sfp_fips.pdf

- SFP runs FishSource which is a risk assessment of a stock - it does not define sustainability or certify eco-label fisheries.
- SFP would lobby for improvement through a Fishery Improvement Partnership (FIP). Initially SFP would run a FIP but now there is more industry involvement. It is usually a supplier/retailer, or possibly a fisherman who would identify the stock.

- There is a problem with FIPs in European waters due to the complexity of so many different fisheries but a stock-by-stock approach, which focuses on one key species amongst an assemblage of species, could be the way forward.
- SFP have instigated supply chain roundtables with one in the North Sea. Buyers are invited and encouraged to work with the fishing sector. This was questioned as to how SFP guard against only focusing on price and maybe being critical of fishermen; the potential for corporate buyers to dictate supply; the fine balance between price and consistent supply; and the need to get the catching sector and seafood buyers together.
- In some areas fishermen have been reluctant to get involved ie Baltic, but generally they are supportive of the projects.
- The question of how scientific advice is used was raised; the EU plays a 'de facto' management role; qualitative factors also need to be taken into account.
- SFP was asked if they ever look at social or economic aspects. SFP only cover ecological

3. Learn from the example of Skaggerak. Kenn Skau Fischer, Danmarks Fiskeriforening/Danish Fishermen's Association.

http://www.seafish.org/media/716832/dagnov2012_dma_skagerrak.pdf

A discard ban in Skaggerak will come into effect on 1 January 2013. By definition a discard-ban means: All catches must be landed (living, dying and dead fish); Minimum conservation reference size; increased TAC levels; the use of any demersal trawl, Danish seine, beam trawl or similar towed net having a mesh size of less than 120 mm (this is a change from 90mm) is prohibited; gears having the same selectivity characteristics as the ones set out confirmed by experimental fishing trips or assessment from STECF. Whilst this ban is not directly linked to the CFP reform process the lessons learnt during the process will be very useful.

Lessons learnt

- **Fishing industry must be part of process.** This is a big change to management regimes.
- **The role of Norway.** Norway is a key protagonists due to joint management but have been reluctant to discuss control. Norway has a discard ban but does adopt a pragmatic approach
- **Time needed and complications should not be under-estimated.** Making this a reality has not been an easy process and they are behind schedule. There are still unresolved technical issues.
 - Thought that a minimum mesh size of 120mm (anything smaller can only be sold for fishmeal) could impact on income levels. This was questioned – if the uplift in quota compensated for what would have been previously discarded how is income reduced? The response was that most fishermen do not think they will get enough additional quota to make up for the discarded fish.
 - Fishermen have been asked to predict what discard levels will be when new selective gear is introduced.

- Has the fishmeal industry been asked if they want all this discarded fish? We believe the fishmeal factories will want this fish. But levels for fishmeal will increase and we need to look at the logistics of sorting fish for human consumption and fish going for fishmeal. There are at least a lot of fishmeal reduction plants in Denmark.
- There will be quota flexibility (banking and borrowing) of 20% in year 1, 15% in year 2 and 10% in year 3. But this does not increase the overall quota.
- CCTV will be used for control in Skaggerak.
- **Step by step adaptive approach.** Questions about how a step by step adaptive approach was possible under the EU co-decision process. The cod management plan was cited as an example. It might have been inspired to begin with but became very rigid. However it could work under a regionalised CFP.
- **What is the aim?** It is not entirely clear what the aim is and it is unlikely to influence scientific data.
- **Bottom up process!** This has been led by the Danish, Swedish and Norwegian Governments.
- **Other points.**
 - Whilst we are in danger of treating the symptom not the disease (ie discards are a consequence of the quota system) the reality is that the discard ban will happen. The important thing now is to ensure enforcement is as pragmatic as possible.
 - Is there an opportunity to reduce the number of TACs to economic driver species? The problem here is that what is a key species in one area is not necessarily the same in another.
 - How do we benchmark discard figures? The current figures could be used but it is very difficult for ICES to predict what discard levels will be once selectivity measures are introduced.

4. Can we deliver a discard ban in the North Sea by 2015?

- Skaggerak has been a learning curve but this is a small, fairly simple fishery compared with the North Sea. Norway is another example and they also have a vibrant aquaculture industry – are the two linked?
- There are theories over a 'big bang' or 'step by step' approach but it could take up to ten years for a real culture change to be made.
- Is the solution landing dead fish to market or not catching them in the first place?
- The EU needs to define policies. Skaggerak is not a precursor or model to show what could happen in the rest of the EU but we could learn from it.
- There must be industry buy in. Fishermen must engage – we need clarity and a timeline.
- Does the EU want to maintain ultimate control of the discard ban? The whole aim or regionalisation is to move away from micro-management and let Member States manage this. However each fishery is different and needs to be treated differently. The current quota system does create discards.
- We do have a General Approach which calls for a discard ban and mentions a TAC uplift, however figures from Northern Ireland were quoted for whiting

discards (in the *Nephrops* fishery) which are very large compared with quota. It is highly unlikely there will be a TAC uplift of x 10 or even x 15 to cover this, but is it a success to bring 600 to 800 tonnes of whiting ashore? There is little point in bringing home fish for which there is no market demand, it would be better to return it to the ecosystem.

- We have signed up to the General Approach but we need to get smarter about how we manage quota. We have to work together.
- We need feasibility studies.

5. Next steps

Further meeting to be arranged early in 2013.