Discard Action Group e-alert – latest developments re the Landing Obligation and gear selectivity
https://www.seafish.org/article/the-discard-action-group

Reports
ICES. Quota exhaustion and discarding: how Ireland’s monthly quota system has a limited relationship with discarding patterns in the commercial fishing fleet. 9 November 2018.
The Irish fishing fleet is subject to monthly quotas which are designed to ensure an equal share between vessels and to spread uptake throughout the year. This monthly quota system also allows us to study the links between discarding and quota exhaustion once a month rather than once a year, as would be the case in most other countries. The hypothesis that discards of cod, haddock, and whiting would increase through the month, as quotas were used up, was tested using observer data collected from commercial fishing vessels. Other than for whiting the results showed no relationship between discarding and day of the month. Instead gear type and target fishery were bigger drivers of discarding with restrictive quotas for cod and haddock resulting in consistent discarding of these species throughout the month. Improvements in gear selectivity may aid in reducing discards but due to the mixed nature of the fishery there is limited ability for vessels to reduce catches of these quota restricted species. Understanding how such a quota management system may influence fishing and discarding behaviour is important when developing management tools to assist in avoiding unwanted catch. This is especially important with the introduction of the Landing Obligation in EU fisheries.

The catalogue of the possible uses of discards in the supply chain is now online. 3 October 2018.
DiscardLess has just published a new online module of its Discard Mitigation Strategies ToolBox (DMS Tool Box). The module deals with a catalogue of possible uses of discards and unwanted catches in the supply chain. An extensive review of most suitable uses has been performed, based on bibliographic results, current experiences and works performed by DiscardLess partners. The Landing Obligation states that only unwanted catches above Minimum Conservation Reference Size can be used for human consumption, but there is a need for designing new fish products that avoid a market overflow. Undersize catches need to be properly managed but the policy’s intention is to avoid creating a profitable market which may increase targeting on small fish.

Report on the PECHE Committee meeting 9 October 2018: Focus on the Landing obligation
On October 9, the European Parliament's Committee on Fisheries held a public hearing entitled "Landing obligation: state of play before its full implementation in January 2019". The first speaker, a Breton shipowner, focused on the practical difficulties in implementing the landing obligation. The second speaker, a scientist at the DiscardLess project provided an overview of her project, including recommendations, such as a limitation on the use of additional landing obligation regulatory changes and the adoption of effective monitoring and control provisions. The third speaker, a Fisheries lawyer at ClientEarth, provided an overview of the history and purpose of the landing obligation, addressing the problem in catch documentation and the importance of selectivity and avoidance. The fourth speaker, a Commission Representative, outlined the current state of play of the landing obligation, highlighting the gradual increase in fisheries and sea basins covered. The members of the Committee expressed concern about the excessive focus on controls, the need for dialogue with the industry, and the potential effects of choke species. Source: Dods Committee summary.
Scientific paper. Remote electronic monitoring and the landing obligation — some insights into fishers' and fishery inspectors’ opinions.
Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) with Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) has been tested in a variety of fisheries worldwide for different purposes and is currently considered as one possible tool to ensure compliance with a European ban on discards. This study focuses on Danish fishery inspectors and on fishers with REM experience, whose opinions are less well known. Their views on the landing obligation and on the use of REM were investigated using interviews and questionnaires, and contrasted to some fishers without REM experience. 80% of fishery inspectors and 58% of REM-experienced fishers expressed positive views on REM. 9 out of 10 interviewed fishers without REM experience were against REM. Participation in a REM trial has not led to antipathy towards REM. Fishery inspectors saw on-board observers, at-sea control and REM as the three best solutions to control the landing obligation but shared the general belief that the landing obligation cannot be enforced properly and will be difficult for fishers to comply with. The strengths and weaknesses of REM in this context are discussed.

Gear Innovation and Technology Advisory Group (GITAG) fact sheets.
Phase I of GITAG delivered four projects; three of which went to full charter and one which was essentially a development project. Summary factsheets are available below. The detailed reports will be made available in due course.
- Coverless Trawl with square mesh panels (MV Aurelia)
- Inclined Netting Panel and Double Codends (MV Amity I)
- Square Mesh Escape Panels (MV Atlas)
- Inclined Netting Panel and Double Codends (Phase 2) to separate fish from Nephrops
- Ground Gear Changes and Effects (MV Zenith)

Discard plans and UK implementation
Commission Regulation specifying details of implementation of the landing obligation for certain demersal fisheries in the North Sea for the period 2019-2021. 18 October 2018.

Commission Regulation establishing a discard plan for certain demersal fisheries in North-Western waters for the period 2019-2021. 18 October 2018.

NWWAC advice on addressing choke risk in NWW after exemptions, 6 November 2018.
To aid the continuing discussions on the choke issues, the NWWAC has developed a table designed to re-assess the severity of potential choke stocks. The table is largely based on the North Western Waters Choke Mitigation tool which included a detailed analysis of the different choke risks for key stocks based on STECF catch data from 2015 and 2016. Options to mitigate the choke risk identified by the CMT included improvements in selectivity; avoidance; quota flexibilities; and exemptions included in Article 15 of the CFP. In order to re-assess the remaining choke risk for each stock from 1 January 2019 onwards, the results of the Choke Mitigation tool were updated with the ICES Advice for 2019 and also the exemptions included in the Joint Recommendation proposed by the Member States Group. The assumption has been made that these recommendations will be implemented fully. However, it should be noted that this is dependent on the final Delegated Act adopted. Each stock was then reclassified as a ‘high’, ‘moderate’ or ‘low’ risk taken as a whole across Member States. Additional mitigation measures are proposed to reduce the choke risk where relevant.
UK


The Committee are inviting individuals and organisations to share their experience of the impact that the EU landing obligation has had to date, and their views on what impact full implementation might have from January 2019. The Committee are also seeking comments on how effectively the landing obligation is being enforced and what the UK Government could do to address some of the challenges posed by the requirements of the landing obligation. Oral evidence sessions will be held in November and December 2018, and the Committee aims to publish a report of its findings and recommendations early in the New Year. There are nine questions (but responses do not have to cover all nine).

*MMO issues new guidance for fishermen ahead of full discard ban.* 13 November 2018.

The Marine Management Organisation has provided guidance for the fishing industry to help them comply and to manage challenges with quota. Under the full discard ban, fishermen must retain and land all quota species; non-quota species can continue to be discarded as can any fish that may represent a health hazard. There are also specific optional exemptions to the discard ban for some quota species and these are set out in the regulations. Prohibited species and undersized specimens of non-quota species must be discarded. There are also a number of specific gear technical requirements being introduced in 2019.

*Landing Obligation 2019 - Rules and regulations*

**Landing obligation general requirements 2019**

There are also 13 specific gear selectivity guides on the MMO website covering the pelagic sector, the North Sea and North Western waters, as well as guidance for dealing with choke scenarios under the landing obligation.

*UK government keen on levy to deter fishing discards post-Brexit.* 26 October 2018.

The Government remains committed to ending wasteful discards of fish and to comply with the discard ban. The aim is to set up a scheme for charging (rather than prosecuting) English fishing licence holders that land fish in excess of their authorised quota to incentivise sustainable fishing. The Fisheries Bill contains a proposed regulation-making power to set up a scheme for charging English fishing-licence holders that land fish in excess of their authorized quota. Those eligible for the scheme and signing up to it would pay a charge rather than being prosecuted. However, in order to apply to the scheme, English fishers would have to adopt more sustainable fishing practices.

*Events*

**DiscardLess Conference: Landing Obligation 2019: What have we learned, what are the next steps?**

30 and 31 January 2019, DTU, Kongens Lyngby, Denmark.

To take part contact E: Clara Ulrich clu@aqua.dtu.dk

*This is an amalgamation of the news alerts issued in October/November 2018.*