Reducing discards will continue... 

In the second of a series of articles, Mike Montgomerie, gear technologist at Seafish, gives his perspective on the issue of discards and the work that Seafish and the industry have been doing to help develop new selective technologies and net-based fishing activities to reduce them...

How can the behavioural trends of fish be exploited when designing and positioning discard reduction devices, or redesigning nets to reduce the number of fish discarded? Much can be done by modifying the existing gear and a lot of work has already been done in this area. However, there is no one magical device to cure all discard problems. Usually it is a case of linking the correct device to the particular problem in a particular fishery, and in many situations combining the benefits of several discard reduction options.

In many fisheries the skippers have already refined their gear to minimise unwanted bycatch and discards, as they appreciate the detrimental effect discards have on their profits and the public perception of their industry. Taking into account that many discard devices will result in a slight decrease in the quantity of target species caught, there needs to be some incentive, other than just legislation, to encourage skippers to adopt these modified gears. This could take the form of a financial benefit, an increased quota, an increased days-at-sea allowance, or an acceptance that...