



OCEAN2012 position on the elimination of discards in EU waters and for EU fishing activities in third countries waters

The main questionable fishing practices that result in discarding are:

- Fishing with unselective gear, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, thereby catching a high amount of unwanted by-catch;
- Catching over quota or undersized fish, or catching protected species; and
- High-grading (improving quality of landings by throwing out lower value catch before entering port).

A number of policy approaches have been listed by the fishing sector as encouraging the wasteful practice of discarding:

- The setting of landing quota in a mixed fishery without the allocation of bycatch quota;
- The bycatch rules (limiting bycatch to a certain percentage of the catch of your target species);
- Minimum landing sizes;
- Effort (days at sea) management.



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The CFP reform offers an excellent opportunity to establish new policies that will address the discard problem. What follows are policy recommendations of OCEAN2012 for the elimination of discards under a reformed CFP:

1. It is vital that unwanted catches are avoided in the first place. OCEAN2012 insists that EU policy needs to effectively respond to the range of by-catch problems, including juveniles, endangered and protected species, as well as addressing the two main reasons for discarding: high-grading and the dumping of unwanted (over quota, illegal and uneconomic) catches.
2. OCEAN2012 supports the principle of a discard ban, as it would move the focus of management measures from landings to catches and thereby to overall fishing mortality. By making “no discards” the norm, any discarding then requires adequate justification (e.g. high survival potential).
3. The purpose of a discard ban is to avoid the unnecessary wastage of throwing marketable fish overboard due to lack of quota; not to provide opportunities for new markets that utilize discards of unwanted or unsustainable catches (e.g. undersized fish). Operators should receive compensation, equal to a small percentage of the value of the unmarketable landed catch, as is the case in Norway and New Zealand.
4. In order to ensure that biomass is removed from the sea in a quality and quantity that ensures sustainable exploitation and good environmental status of the marine environment in the long term, fishing mortality rates have to be set according to scientific advice, following the precautionary approach as defined by the UN Fish Stocks agreement, and the ecosystem-based approach.
5. To avoid unsustainable biomass removal from the seas, quota management under a discard ban needs to transition from landing quotas to true catch quotas. All caught fish needs to be counted against quota. By-catch quota needs to be set according to biological parameters, in the same way as catch quota, and mixed fisheries management must be on the basis of protecting the weakest stock.
6. To avoid unnecessary biomass removal, fishing should be regulated at the appropriate (e.g. regional) level, in

line with fishing seasons, promoting the use of multiple gears during the year, restricting gears that impact both species biodiversity and habitat integrity and diversity, and applying zoning measures that address both inter-gear/inter-sector conflicts and overfishing (be it recruitment, non-target species, or growth overfishing).

7. Under a discard ban, Minimum Landing Sizes (MLS) need to be replaced by Minimum Marketing Sizes (MMS). MMS need to be at least the same size as current MLS. However, any revision should respect biological constraints to avoid opening up new markets for undersized fish and should still provide a disincentive for the capture of small immature fish.
8. Incentives should be provided to ensure compliance with a discard ban. These could be in the form of providing preferential access to fish resources to those fishing in the most sustainable way, i.e. those meeting certain environmental and social criteria.
9. Enforcement will be equally crucial in the implementation of a discard ban. Onboard observer programmes will play an important role in the success of the policy. In cases where observer coverage may be impractical (i.e. small-scale vessels), the possibility

to implement other observer techniques (such as cameras) to achieve fully documented fisheries should be fully investigated. Monitoring and enforcement measures must be imposed consistently across all Member States and fleets.

10. Special attention should be given to how measures to counter by-catch can be “translated” to apply to EU fleets fishing in the waters of third countries. As a priority, the emphasis should be on the need to promote selective fishing and to ban destructive fishing practices. This is particularly important in the coastal zone of tropical countries, where wasteful and destructive practices directly affect local coastal communities, who depend on fishing for their livelihoods.
11. In the case of the EU distant water fleet, OCEAN2012 advocates that the use of the most selective fishing gears should be a pre-requisite condition for participation in fishing under Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs). The EU should initiate the inclusion of the issue of discarding in the negotiations for FPAs. Third countries also need to be convinced of the necessity to introduce measures to stop the waste of their resources.



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OCEAN2012 is an alliance of organisations dedicated to transforming European Fisheries Policy to stop overfishing, end destructive fishing practices and deliver fair and equitable use of healthy fish stocks. OCEAN2012 was initiated, and is co-ordinated, by the Pew Environment Group, the conservation arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-governmental organisation working to end overfishing in the world’s oceans. The founding members of OCEAN2012 are the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA), the Fisheries Secretariat (FISH), nef (new economics foundation), the Pew Environment Group and Seas At Risk (SAR).