



Timeline: Fisheries Management in North-Western European Waters

Overview

The European Union has the world's third-largest fishing fleet and is the biggest importer of fish products. It wields considerable influence over global marine policies, a status that has often encouraged the over-exploitation of wild fish stocks. The heavily fished waters of north-western Europe—the North, Celtic, and Irish seas and the Atlantic Ocean west of Scotland and Ireland—serve as a testing ground for implementation of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) throughout Europe and by EU vessels globally. This region is geologically diverse, ranging from the deep fjords and sheer cliffs of the westerly coastlines to the sandy beaches and wide, productive mud flats farther south.

The waters boast a rich and diverse mix of environments and wildlife that have shaped the cultures along their shores. For more than a century, the fish stocks in Europe's north-western waters have been severely over-exploited. That has left many populations, such as cod, low or depleted, and has devastated numerous fishing communities that depended on these stocks for their livelihoods.

Despite putting in place a CFP in 1983 to manage European fish stocks sustainably, EU fisheries ministers have set fishing limits on average 40 per cent above scientific advice for the past 12 years. Calls to reduce fishing pressure have been ignored for too long in favour of short-term economic and political gains. However, as a result of sustained pressure for ambitious reform, EU decision-makers agreed in 2013 to a far-reaching reform of the CFP, including a commitment to end overfishing and restore fish stocks.

References

- 1 C.M. Roberts and L.C. Mason, *Return to Abundance: A Case for Marine Reserves in the North Sea* (London: WWF, 2008), http://www.wwf.org.uk/filelibrary/pdf/marine_reserves_north_sea.pdf.
- 2 European Council, "Council Regulation (EEC) No 170/83 Establishing a Community System for the Conservation and Management of Fishery Resources", 25 January 1983.

For further information, please visit:

pewtrusts.org/endeuoverfishing

Contact: Daniel Ehreiser, communications
Email: dehreiser@pewtrusts.org
Project website: pewtrusts.org/endeuoverfishing
Twitter: @Pew_EU

The Pew Charitable Trusts is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public, and invigorate civic life.

Timeline: Fisheries Management in North-Western European Waters



1957

The Treaty of Rome establishes the European Common Market and sets the objective of increasing the productivity of the fisheries sector.



1982

The U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) requires parties to maintain or restore fish stocks to levels of maximum sustainable yield (MSY).



1992

The 1992 CFP reform aims to reduce overcapacity of the EU fleet and to improve gear selectivity.



2002

Extensive revision of CFP adds regional advisory councils, long-term management plans, and improved wording on ecosystem-based approach.

World Summit on Sustainable Development (Earth Summit) commits to attain MSY.

2007

94%

of assessed EU stocks are classified as overfished.

2013

EU decision-makers agree on new CFP, which takes effect in January 2014.



2014

Reformed CFP enters into force with clear targets and deadlines to end overfishing.

On average, EU fisheries ministers have set fishing limits 40 per cent above scientific advice for the past 12 years.



1890

Much of the North Sea is trawled in many places more than once a year.



1983

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is initiated to manage fishing by EU members and fisheries in EU waters.



1995

U.N. Fish Stocks Agreement defines in more detail how to restore fish stocks.



2003

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) calls for the closure of the North Sea cod fishery. The EU adopts a cod recovery plan in 2004. Starting in 2004, ICES advises zero catches for cod in the Irish Sea.



2012

U.N.'s Rio+20 conference commits to urgently take the measures necessary to maintain or restore all stocks at least to levels that can produce MSY.



2020

Date by which EU overfishing must end according to reformed CFP.

2015

EU overfishing to be ended ... "where possible" but overall it actually increases.

