

Focus on the environment - for people's sake

The new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) must enshrine environmental sustainability as the overarching principle without which economic and social sustainability is unobtainable.

Desired policy

OCEAN2012 would like management of European Union (EU) fisheries to:

- follow the Precautionary Approach as laid down in the UN Fish Stocks Agreement 1995¹;
- apply the Ecosystem-based Approach² to stock management ;
- set long-term abundance targets for stocks that go beyond Maximum Sustainable Yield.

OCEAN2012 therefore aims to secure the support of all EU Member States and of the European Parliament to achieve the prioritisation of environmental objectives in order to secure social and economic objectives.

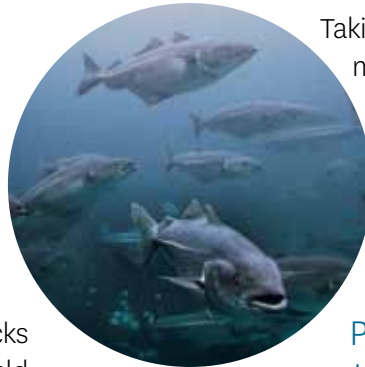
Background

There are fish without fisheries, but no fisheries without fish. Healthy marine ecosystems and fish stocks are a pre-condition for a sustainable, robust fishing sector, greater global food security and better ecological resilience to climate change.

OCEAN2012 proposes that the Common Fisheries Policy integrates environmental sustainability into all aspects of fisheries policy – from determining available fish resources and allocating access, through to funding and implementation of policy. This would be achieved by applying the precautionary approach and the ecosystem-based approach to policy-making and delivery. Both are mentioned in the current CFP but they have not been sufficiently applied in practice. Instead, short-term economic and social objectives tend to be prioritised, resulting in opportunistic policy-making to the detriment of longer-term sector stability. The current reality, where the Council of Fisheries Ministers sets Total Allowable Catches (TACs) on average 48 percent above scientists' recommendations, is a clear example of this.

¹ http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_fish_stocks.htm

² As described in the Marine Strategy framework directive Art. 1.3, Directive 2008/56/EC establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive).



Taking action to restore marine ecosystems may create social and economic costs in the short term and these need to be adequately addressed; however, not taking such action puts the sustainability of the resource and thus, the future of the fishing sector as a whole at risk.

Precautionary principle and approach:

The precautionary principle is incorporated into many international agreements and conventions on the protection of the environment. The UN Fish Stocks Agreement states that the absence of adequate scientific information shall not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures. Implementing the precautionary approach in fisheries management will require, among other steps, the following:

1. agreement of stock-specific reference points and the action to be taken if they are exceeded, using the best scientific information available;
2. development of data collection and research programmes to assess the impact of fishing on non-target and associated or dependent species and their environment;
3. plans to ensure the conservation of non-target species and habitats of special concern, and;
4. enhanced monitoring when the status of any species is of concern.

Ecosystem-based approach:

The ecosystem-based approach is a widely accepted concept and considered one of the most important principles of environmental policy. The UN Convention on Biological Diversity defines it as *a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.*³

³ Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-07/official/cop-07-20-add4-en.doc

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It is already part of EU legislation such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, which concerns the protection of the marine environment and biodiversity in the EU, and commits Member States to take all necessary measures to achieve Good Environmental Status by 2020. The future CFP must be formulated and applied in a way that delivers the fisheries-related aspects of Good Environmental Status, such as maintaining biodiversity, healthy stocks of commercially exploited fish, seafloor integrity, and functioning food webs.

OCEAN2012 would like to see the ecosystem-based approach made operational. For example, as first steps:

1. fisheries management must aim at maintaining biological diversity. The quality and occurrence of habitats and the distribution and abundance of species should be in line with prevailing physiographic, geographic and climatic conditions;
2. stocks should be maintained at healthy levels, exhibiting good age and size distribution. However, the long-term target for stock management needs to be more ambitious than Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), in order to maintain resilient ecosystems (see below); and
3. management must move from a single-species to a multi-species food web approach.

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY):

MSY has become the main tool for managing EU fish stocks. It is, theoretically, the largest yield (or catch) that can be taken from a species' stock over an indefinite

period without reducing overall abundance. The common assumption is that this occurs when the fish stock has been reduced to less than half of the unfished level.

However, the concept has been subject to harsh criticism from the scientific community since it puts populations at too much risk; it is single-species oriented; it considers only the benefits, not the costs, of fishing; and it is sensitive to political pressure. OCEAN2012 therefore views MSY only as an intermediate target to achieving healthy abundance levels. Longer-term fisheries management objectives must be developed that are more conservative and precautionary in nature.

Long-Term Management Plans (LTMPs):

OCEAN2012 would like to see LTMPs for all fisheries. These should apply the appropriate measures through genuine bottom-up participative co-management processes that give due weight to sustainable development.

Enshrining environmental sustainability at the heart of the new CFP relies on achieving other fundamental changes. See separate OCEAN2012 briefing papers:

- Ensure good governance
- Bring capacity in line with available resources
- Reward responsible practice with priority access
- Subsidies: public funds for the public services.

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).