



THE VOICE OF ANGLING

Angling Trust Response To DEFRA Consultation:

Proposals relating to the Common Fisheries Policy and the Common Organisation of the Markets in Fishery and Aquaculture Products

November 2011

The Angling Trust is the national representative body for all angling in England. We campaign for anglers' rights and on environmental issues. We lobby Governments and agencies to protect our marine environment and fish stocks and we support, develop and promote angling as a sport and support angling interests.

There are approximately one million recreational sea anglers in England and Wales spending in the region of £600m annually and supporting 19,000 jobs. Reform of Europe's Common Fisheries Policy will have a direct impact on the sea angling sector which relies fundamentally on access to and responsible management of our commonly-owned fish resources.

We believe that recreational sea angling is an inherently sustainable activity of high economic, cultural and societal value to coastal communities and our aim is to protect and promote it.

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Questions - CFP Reform

1. Are the aims of the CFP set out clearly and appropriately in these proposals, with the right balance between environmental, social and economic objectives?

In general the aims of the reformed CFP are set out clearly in COM(2011) 417. However, we believe the management of commonly owned public resources on behalf of the EU's citizens should prioritise the environmental objectives set out in the proposals with the priority being the recovery and sustainable management of fish stocks for the best use to society. Should this happen many of the social and economic objectives would be met as a result.

COM(2011) 425, Article 2, *General Objectives*, makes reference to providing long-term sustainable environmental, economic and social conditions. However, there is a lack of any reference on how to achieve the environmental general objectives in Article 3, *Specific Objectives*, which focuses almost exclusively on achieving social and economic objectives.

In addition, we have concerns over Article 2, point 2, "The Common Fisheries Policy...shall aim to ensure by 2015, that exploitation of living marine biological resources restores and maintains populations of harvested species above levels at which can produce the maximum sustainable yield".

The wording, "shall aim to ensure" does not provide enough assurance that stocks and species will in fact be harvested at MSY by 2015 and we propose that this is redrafted for more clarity on what this general objective actually means.

We also believe there is a lack of coherency between the specific objective laid down in Article 3, (a) "eliminate unwanted catches of commercial stocks and gradually ensure that all catches of such stocks are landed" and Article 15, *Obligation to land all catches*, which makes no reference to eliminating unwanted catches and focuses entirely on landing all catches in groups of species set out in arbitrary timescales. We believe that the obligation to land all catches should only come after all practical steps have been taken to eliminate unwanted catches first.

2. What are your views on the proposed content of multi-annual plans and the process to deliver management measures under these plans?

We welcome the introduction of multi-annual management plans as a way of eliminating the short term interests that have led to stock collapse and the need for recovery plans which have adversely affected all stakeholders including the interests of the EU's recreational angling sector.

An ecosystem-based and multi-stock approach to long term management plans is essential. The precautionary approach is essential in ensuring, where there is a lack of data, that commercial exploitation does not exceed sustainable levels. The commission's will to reduce discards and increase the usage of bycatch and underutilised species could see dramatically increased pressure on stocks for which there are no stock assessments and very little scientific data. However, it should also be recognised that the precautionary approach has the potential to place excessively

restrictive measures on the catching sector and it is therefore in the interests of the commission and the catching sector to work together to ensure that complete and reliable scientific data is available wherever possible.

This scientific data needs to be adhered to in order for these long term or multi-annual management plans to be effective. In addition we also welcome multi-annual plans as a method of reducing overall fleet capacity.

We welcome the decentralisation of management that would see member states adopt their own conservation and technical measures necessary to achieve the objectives of the multi-annual plans. However, we believe the provisions for emergency measures should allow member states to take conservation measures that apply to vessels flying flags of all member states within the 12 nautical mile zone and we believe that the commission's position on this is not consistent with the proposals towards regionalisation.

3. Have the proposals got it right on ending fish discards? If not, what changes would you suggest?

We favour measures to reduce discards through the application of technical measures such as adapted gear types and closed areas to reduce the overall mortality of 'unwanted' and immature fish and the need for discarding.

However, in circumstances where technical measures to avoid mortality through discarding of unwanted species and undersize fish are not suitable we support the landing of catches of managed stocks as long as these landings count against quota. We presume that minimum conservation reference sizes for species included in Article 15, Obligation to land all catches, be set at those which obtain the highest yield per recruit in order to achieve maximum sustainable yield. For non quota species or species for which commercial markets are being encouraged we believe there is a significant danger of opening up targeted fisheries rather than just landing what is caught when targeting other species. For stocks of these species for which there have been no stock assessments and where very little scientific data exists we have serious concerns about the sustainability of this approach and the impact of creating consumer demand and new, directed fisheries for these species.

Although we are pleased that the sale of fish stocks below the minimum conservation reference size shall be restricted we object to the idea of these fish being used for pet food. The use of these fish for fishmeal in aquaculture would be a better way of addressing food security.

It is not clear from COM (2011) 425, Article 15, where the EU stands on the obligation to land elasmobranchs since they are not covered in Article 15, 1 (a), (b) or (c). More clarification is needed on this.

We welcome a distinction being made for species that will survive discarding and recommend more research be done in order that a one size fits all policy to eliminating discards not be applied where fishing mortality can be reduced instead.

4. Do the proposals give sufficient flexibility to manage fisheries on a regional basis, with an appropriate voice for stakeholders? If not, what changes might be necessary?

We welcome the opportunity that the proposals give for member states to take a regionalised approach to conservation and technical measures. However, as previously stated, we believe this should include the provision of powers for member states to take measures through the emergency powers that apply to vessels of all member states within their 12 nautical mile limit.

We have serious misgivings about the reform's proposals that would see more self-management for the fishing industry (commercial catching sector) by increasing fishermen's involvement in the policies. In addition we have serious concerns over proposals that would see fishermen's organisations and producers' organisations having more influence than they already enjoy through the RACs and other regional bodies. We believe that these proposals are an over reaction to trying to address the centralised, top-down approach to the CFP which is one of its current criticisms. This approach would also not provide an 'appropriate' voice for all stakeholders with those with a financial interest in the catching sector having disproportionate influence.

We support the proposals in the COM (2011) 417, 2.5, *Better governance through regionalisation*, to maintain and extend the role of the advisory councils in advising on conservation policy under the regionalisation model.

We question the legality of regional governance bodies at a sea basin level being able to make decisions regarding EU law. Should they be unable to the model of regionalisation and its objectives needs to be reviewed.

5. What are your views on the proposal to introduce “transferable fishing concessions” for vessels over 12m and those which used towed gear? Are the provisions for Member States to decide on allocations and set safeguards on trading appropriate/sufficient?

We welcome the proposals of transferable fishing concessions as a method of reducing fleet overcapacity without using public funds. The proposed measures should ensure that member states can regulate transferable fishing concessions and prevent the speculation and accumulation of concessions by a handful of large operators.

The proposals to allow member states to choose whether or not to introduce TFCs for under 12 meter vessels has large implications for the UK where the fleet is dominated by the inshore under 10 meter fleet. We question why the decision has been made for vessels over 12 meters when variations in the fleets of different member states might mean this has larger implications for some member states than it does others.

We are pleased that in COM(2011) 425 marine biological resources are referred to as a 'common good' and we believe that any user entitlement to such a common good be strictly controlled and time limited – with the provision to recall that entitlement.

6. Are the proposals to help develop the aquaculture industry necessary, and the steps suggested helpful?

All steps taken to achieve more sustainability in the development of aquaculture are necessary. The aquaculture of marine finfish currently relies to a large extent on an unsustainable conversion of wild fish. Until this issue is fully addressed it is difficult to see how the development of aquaculture can be achieved sustainably.

The pollution caused by aquaculture, sea lice populations, the emergence of pesticide resistant sea lice and the loss of genetic diversity through escapees from fish farming continue to pose enormous threats to stocks and the biodiversity of migratory species.

The economic and cultural contribution of unsustainable and environmentally damaging aquaculture should not be allowed to continue to take precedence over the threat that it poses to our commonly owned wild fish resources or the EU's commitments to achieving good environmental status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive/Water Framework Directive.

The sustainable development of molluscan aquaculture presents an opportunity for development in the inshore area and diversification for the under 10 meter fleet. This offers an opportunity for fleet overcapacity to be addressed, reducing the pressure on inshore fish stocks while still providing jobs and income for coastal communities in the fishing industry.

7. Do these proposals go far enough to ensure the sustainability of EU fishing activity in external, non-EU waters? If not, what other measures are necessary?

We would like to see more detail on why the EU playing a stronger role in RFMOs will strengthen them. COM(2011) 425 states that the EU shall "advocate best available science-based positions," however, it is hard to see why non EU states should accept these positions given the EU's track record through the CFP of not following scientific advice and pandering to short term political advantages and lobbying from the commercial catching sector. An example being ICCAT's quota setting for Atlantic bluefin tuna which continues to exceed scientific advice despite the EU's involvement in the convention.

We welcome the wide-ranging proposals to reform Sustainable Fishing Agreements (SFAs) with non-EU countries. However, we have concerns over the interpretation of the following sentence, "They shall ensure that the exploitation of fishery resources takes place on the basis of sound scientific advice only targeting surplus resources that the partner country cannot or does not want to fish itself."

On what basis will it be decided that a third country cannot or does not want to fish for these resources itself? It would appear that should the third country have the means to fish these resources themselves, they would.

We have elected not to answer questions 8 – 12 relating to reform of the Common Organisation of the Markets.