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Fisheries discard ban: Commission adopts plans for the Atlantic

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Today the Commission adopted two plans to reduce the wasteful practice of discarding – throwing overboard unwanted fish – in the north western and south western waters of the Atlantic. These discard plans concern demersal fisheries, i.e. fish that feed on or near the sea bottom, and are temporary measures to phase out discarding and gradually put in place the landing obligation, a key component of the EU's reformed Common Fisheries Policy.

[Discarding](#) [1] constitutes a substantial waste of resources that threatens the sustainable exploitation and economic viability of fisheries. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations estimates that over 7 million tonnes - 8 % of the total global fish catches - are discarded yearly.

EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella said: "*These plans are a major step forward as the fisheries concerned are very significant. Landing what is caught is a start – but more importantly perhaps these plans should lead to more selective fishing, which will help stocks recover and ensure a stable income for our fishermen.*"

The discard plans adopted today determine which demersal fisheries in the Atlantic will be subject to the [landing obligation](#) [2], while also setting out certain exemptions. The first group of exemptions, so-called de minimis exemptions, allows discarding a small percentage of catches in fisheries where increasing the selectivity is difficult or where handling costs are disproportionately high. The second, so-called survivability exemption allows discarding species that have a high chance of surviving.

All exemptions have been set taking into account available scientific advice and following discussions with scientific advisory body [STECE](#) [3]. Certain exemptions will be reassessed in 2016 taking into account additional supporting information from Member States.

The discard plans will apply from 1 January 2016 for a maximum period of three years. However, they may be revised to bring additional fisheries under the landing obligation.

Background:

The reformed [CFP](#) [4] aims to make EU fisheries more sustainable. Between 2015 and 2019, EU fishermen will therefore gradually be required to land all fish they catch.

The CFP entails several provisions to facilitate the implementation of the landing obligation. They include specific flexibility mechanisms that should be implemented through comprehensive

multiannual plans, or, in the absence of multiannual plans, through so-called discard plans. Discard plans are envisaged as a temporary measure with a maximum duration of three years. They are developed as joint recommendations agreed by Member States from the same region or sea basin.

Today's discard plans are not the first to be adopted: in October 2014 the Commission adopted discard plans for pelagic and industrial fisheries in all EU waters and for fisheries for cod in the Baltic. These plans have been applied since 1 January 2015. The Commission also expects to adopt a discard plan for demersal fisheries in the North Sea this year.

More information:

- [North-Western waters discard plan](#) [5]
 - [Annex](#) [6]
- [South-Western waters discard plan](#) [7]
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Links

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/discards/index_en.htm

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/landing-obligation/index_en.htm

[3] <http://stecf.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

[4] http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/index_en.htm

[5] http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/fishing_rules/discards/doc/c-2015-6833_en.pdf

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