



MARITIME FORUM

Study 2006-15 lot 1: Analysis of difficulties in setting up pilot projects to reduce or eliminate discards in cooperation with the fishing industry in Member States

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The report identifies the obstacles in the development of pilot projects aimed at reducing or eliminating discards and to propose solutions to remedy difficulties encountered in the preparation and execution of such projects.

Why this study?

Discards refer to that part of the catch, which is not retained on board during commercial fishing operations and is returned to the sea. Despite an increasing awareness of the detrimental consequences of discarding, the quantity of unwanted material caught remains high in some fisheries and reducing discards remains an important management objective. The aims of the Common Fisheries Policy include a reduction in discarding with a view to increasing yields, improving sustainability and reducing the impact on the ecosystem. Although an interest in developing pilot projects to reduce discards has been clearly voiced by European fishermen, few projects have been developed so far. The low uptake has been attributed to the difficulties stakeholders have met when trying to set up these pilots.

Goals

This study aims to identify the difficulties and obstacles met by stakeholders in setting up pilots and to propose solutions. The main objectives are:

1. to identify the obstacles met by stakeholders in setting up pilot projects
2. to formulate solutions to these problems and
3. to devise guidelines to aid the execution of these projects.

Results

The study identified general consensus among stakeholders that discarding is too high and as such threatens the main aim of fisheries management in ensuring healthy fish populations and viable fisheries.

In general, it was agreed that sufficient funds are available to conduct pilot projects and that the availability of funds was not considered an obstacle in initiating pilot studies.

There is an economic driver to catch as many marketable fish as possible on each fishing operation and this often outweighs the economic disadvantage in catching unwanted fish, at least in the immediate term. The result is that discard levels can be high and discard reduction measures are often accompanied by economic losses. Consequently, the main impediment to the initiation of pilot studies to reduce discards by fishing industry members has been insufficient incentive.

The incentives required to initialize discard reducing pilot projects can be created using market forces, but these can be inconsistent and slow to generate. Regulatory-based incentives offer a more reliable tool to initialize pilots, whereby, either as part of annual negotiations on fishing opportunities, stock recovery programmes, special quota allocation and/or conditional licensing, fishers are rewarded with better fishing opportunities when participating in pilot studies. A high level of integration and flexibility in the different facets of fisheries management is required for fishery managers and fishers to identify incentives. The level of incentive required should match the expected losses associated with new measures. Involving the fishing industry in the identification of incentives and pilot projects, and in deciding the objectives of those projects, will aid their initialization and execution.

The report provides recommendations on: 1) how to increase the uptake of opportunities to carry out pilot studies, 2) constructing project proposals and guidelines to conduct pilot studies and 3) a detailed calendar of proposed actions.

Reference

Full title	Analysis of difficulties in setting up pilot projects to reduce or eliminate discards in cooperation with the fishing industry in Member States
Organisations	Marine Institute, Fiskeriverket and CEFAS
Full report	http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/publications/studies/eliminate_discards_2008_en.pdf [1]

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