



## SUMMARY REPORT

# How Can Industry Innovation meet the Challenges of the CFP Landing Obligation?

8th December 2015  
European Parliament, Brussels

Policy makers and stakeholders were on the 8<sup>th</sup> December brought together by MEP Alain Cadec to discuss the importance of industry innovation in order to meet the challenges of the Landing Obligation (LO). The event highlighted how the LO is being implemented through the eyes of two fishermen:

- **David Stevens, Crystal Sea**, a fisherman working off the southwest coast of England is the skipper of the family-owned vessel, the Crystal Sea. He has been working in partnership with the UK's management and scientific bodies to undertake a Catch Quota Trial (CQT) in an effort to demonstrate that fisher-led innovation can provide new ways to tackle the challenges of the demersal LO. Facilitated and incentivised through a small uplift in quota, the trial was based on a foundation of collaborative working between partners, and has resulted in new methods for reducing discarding of quota species. The project has mostly focused on the controversial issue of choke species, which in his case was haddock.
- **Jacques Pichon, Pêcheurs de Bretagne**, a fisherman working off the coast of the Celtic Sea, who is involved with a project of improving selectivity gear with IFREMER in an effort to assess the various selectivity measures and their benefits.

**Alain Cadec MEP and Co-Chair of the “Fisheries, Aquaculture & Integrated Maritime Policy” working group of the EP Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development”** opened the meeting by highlighting that the LO came into effect in 2014, with the pelagic in 2015, the demersal zone starting in 2016, and all remaining species in EU waters in 2017. He noted that several issues have already risen on this very challenging change in fishing behaviour. It was also stated that, the measure, which was not supported during the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) was very complicated with regards to multispecific species. It was urged that Member States provide funding and flexibility to facilitate the work of professionals.

**The short film “Gearing up for Change”,** was screened in which **David Stevens, Crystal Sea** explains his work and provides a balanced and in-depth perspective on approaches to successfully implementing the LO. He touched upon the LO as the biggest challenge the fishing industry has had to tackle and that adaptability and flexibility are necessary to ensure a smooth transition to the discard ban (e.g. the case of CCTV which should not just be promoted as an enforcement tool but as a scientific one as well).

It was added that incentives are also an essential tool, as the LO in its first years has produced a severe economic impact, and changes in selectivity have created problems that the existing



legislation has failed to meet. It is fully understandable that fishers can deal with the issue to a certain extent (change in gear/fishing/areas/time) but as things stand, fishers will not be able to survive the LO transition alone, needing help from others. It is therefore imperative that this issue be tackled by all (fishers, scientists, policy makers, civil society) in such a way to ensure that the fishery and the communities living off this metier survive. He urged policy makers to allow for a more reactive policy so fishers can survive and subsequently deal adequately with certain problems caused by the discard ban (e.g. choke species, multispecific fisheries).

**Joao Aguiar Machado, Director-General of DG MARE, European Commission**, welcomed the presentation from Mr Stevens and the film acknowledging the need for adaptability in tackling discards and juveniles, hence the issue of the partial and gradual implementation of the LO as well as derogations (*de minimis*). It was added that the discard ban is a challenge necessary to ensure the health of fish stocks. As for incentives, those are included in the legislation and it is up to Member States to put that money to good use and ensure a smoother change for their fishers. He also welcomed Environmental Defense Fund's "*EU Discard Reduction Manual*"<sup>1</sup> as a valuable tool in adapting to the changes. On the issue of the upcoming new technical measures framework, the Director-General said that they are to be presented soon and will be based on a bottom up approach with the necessary flexibility and incentives to ensure the sustainability of the fishing sector; transparency and accountability will further improve the health and picture of the fish stocks and the industry as well as build trust.

**Jacques Pichon, Pêcheurs de Bretagne**, after a brief explanation of his project, welcomed the change of the selectivity of gear used as efficient but with some elements (juveniles still caught or other species picked up) still to be resolved. More specifically, in certain cases the desired result was not achieved whilst in some others there was commercial loss. Apart from that, the lack of sufficient data did not allow for a correct evaluation of the net effects of the change of selectivity. He added that certain fishers may look unwilling to adapt to the changes the LO has brought but it is not because of reasons of "unwillingness" rather than severe economic impact such changes would bring on their livelihoods. He finished by adding that there is no miracle solution and the idea of having a "zero discard" objective is an illusion. Nevertheless, more results for a clearer picture could have been provided if more time had been given to fishers to adjust to the LO and had they been involved in the discussions and decision making from the start. He expressed his anticipation for the new technical measures framework and how they would deal with such issues.

**Alain Cadec MEP** opened the floor for remarks and questions on how can the trials demonstrated by the speakers serve as a useful message on the value of innovation, collaboration and incentivisation to EU fishermen and policy makers and how can such gear and technological innovation be combined with smart quota management to realise the most effective and empowering way for fishermen to meet the Landing Obligation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/content/the-eu-discard-reduction-manual.pdf>



Attendees took the floor with some key issues:

- Urging the need for good cooperation between governments and fishers as well as the correct incentives to assist the latter in their troubles (e.g. indicate in which ports to discard, pick up of discards from ports, etc.)
- Welcoming the willingness of people interested in hearing what fishermen are saying at these early stages of the LO and how it is being implemented. Experiences like the ones heard at the event have to be shared not just with policy makers but with other fishers as well in order to incentivise them to come forward with their problems; that will allow for a wider picture of the situation.
- Regarding the issue of quota management, a smart system would be an essential tool in helping with the implementation of the LO.
- Dialogue and feedback from every experience, negative or positive, is crucial in assisting fishers and Member States in achieving the goals of the CFP.
- Critics on the fact that fishers were not given enough time, both to adapt and run more research programmes in order to transcend more smoothly in this change of fishing behaviour.
- EU institutions and policy makers should be open-minded and, in the future, combine existing projects so as not to produce the same results and end up wasting precious time.
- The knowledge of fishers has to be liberated via a transitional system allowing them to have a decisive role in the decision-making and implementing phase.
- Exemptions in the CFP alone will not be enough to allow the fishers' metier to be profitable. The need to think bigger and with substantial policy ideas on how to enable fishers to make investments.
- The need for a case by case approach to certain species since adaptability is not the same for all. Combined measures need to be enforced as well as a coherent infrastructure.

A question raised by an attendee was whether the EMFF could be seen as a tool to alleviate the impact of the LO (via financial support for gear, equipment, boats, material, adaptability, landing of discarded fish, storage, etc) and whether these alleviating measures were incorporated in the discard plans proposed by Member States. In their replies, the speakers noted that fishers were not adequately involved in these discussions whilst in the case of the EMFF funding it would have been wise to have it already in place prior to the entry into force of the LO. A last attendee brought forward the question of whether the existing or a new quota management between Member States and their fleets could assist fishers in better managing their fisheries; to which the speakers replied in saying that the LO creates more constraints in the existing quota management system. A better approach would be a mix of fish or area tailored measures, but following a bottom-up approach.

**Joao Aguiar Machado, Director-General of DG MARE, European Commission** acknowledged the difficulty in implementing the LO but, nevertheless, sees it as an opportunity to seek out more selective procedures. He welcomed the participation of all stakeholders and urged that they make full use of the EMFF to tackle the issues that have risen, and might rise up in the future, and achieve a sustainable practice.



**Alain Cadec MEP closed the meeting** emphasising the importance of innovation in selectivity measures and voiced his anticipation for the upcoming technical measures framework.

*The event was organised in collaboration with the Environmental Defense Fund.*

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