

Principles for delivering sustainable fisheries management

1. Effective legislation and fisheries agreements

Delivering sustainable, productive fisheries and a healthy, biologically diverse marine environment, strengthening and going beyond the commitments under current EU legislation, in line with governments' ambitions to be world leaders.

2. Setting sustainable levels

A legal requirement to fish below the fishing mortality associated with producing Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2020 in order to restore stock biomass above the MSY level, and an ongoing commitment to apply the precautionary approach and ecosystem-based management.

3. Specific protections

The creation and effective management of an Ecologically Coherent Network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). These need to be well managed to achieve each MPA's conservation objectives, with fishing and other maritime activities restricted where they could be damaging.

4. Sound science

Fishing limits that adhere to the best available scientific advice from ICES and other scientific organisations.

5. End discards

Delivery of an effective discard ban which includes full documentation and control of total catches.

6. Shared management

Mechanisms to work with neighbouring countries in order to achieve agreed policy objectives for managing shared fish stocks.

7. Effective monitoring and enforcement

Measures to ensure compliance and high levels of confidence in the achievement of domestic and international objectives, including combatting Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing.

8. Technical measures

Improvements in spatial management measures, gear selectivity and other technical measures, including those to protect vulnerable species and deep sea ecosystems.

9. Sufficient resourcing

Investment to underpin key operational systems such as data collection, monitoring and enforcement.

10. Good governance

Development and implementation of new fisheries laws should include clear processes for the engagement of stakeholders, involving scientists, NGOs and industry representatives with a wide range of perspectives, in line with the UK's international commitments under the Aarhus Convention.



Our organisations are working together to promote sustainable fisheries and a healthy marine environment. If you would like further information please contact;

Helen McLachlan, Fisheries Governance Programme Manager, WWF-UK

e: hmcLachlan@wwf.org.uk t: 0131 659 9042
m: 07867 720 633

January 2017

Delivering sustainable fisheries management

A sustainable future for UK seas

A briefing for policy makers following the EU referendum

The UK and Devolved Governments have a shared vision of “clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas”¹. As the UK prepares to leave the EU, it is imperative that governments work together to create new fisheries laws that will deliver this vision and put sustainability at the heart of fisheries management.

These new laws must incorporate the UK’s domestic and international commitments to protect marine habitats and species and enable the management of shared resources in co-operation with international partners.

The long-term social and economic sustainability of the fishing industry across the UK is dependent on a productive and biologically diverse marine environment that supports healthy fish stocks. Therefore, new laws should maintain and strengthen current legal requirements that limit catches to levels consistent with achieving maximum sustainable yield (MSY)², provide the basis for precautionary and ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management, and create a time bound discard ban with full documentation and accountability for all species subject to catch limits removed from the sea.

The setting of sustainable catch limits, for both nationally managed and shared stocks, must be based on independent scientific advice provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and others. The provision of such scientific advice will rely on continued investment in data collection and scientific research programmes that are effective, efficient and coordinated.

Importantly, new fisheries legislation and management must be underpinned and supported by effective monitoring and enforcement. This will require sufficient resources to manage and implement laws in UK waters and a system to control UK vessels fishing beyond UK waters. This is in line with

the ongoing duty under international law to ensure that all UK flagged vessels, wherever they fish, comply with all relevant rules in their areas of operation⁴.

Collectively these measures will help deliver the UK’s ambitions of a productive and healthy marine environment that supports thriving coastal communities and a profitable fishing industry.

Building on positive trends

Maintain positive trends to end overfishing

Fisheries trends in the Northeast Atlantic and adjacent waters have been positive in the last decade, with fishing mortality on the decrease and biomass increasing. In 2007 over 72% of assessed stocks were overfished whereas now approximately 47% of assessed stocks are overfished³. If we are to build on these positive trends, and not risk undermining them, sustainable management of our fisheries is vital.

Shared management

UK fleets exploit almost 100 stocks that are also fished by other nations so it is vital that as the UK leaves the EU and enters a new era of fisheries management it ensures that these resources continue to be managed jointly and sustainably across the UK and with neighbouring countries. Clear arrangements for how this will be achieved will be essential if we are to end overfishing, rebuild, and maintain healthy stocks.

¹ The UK Marine Policy Statement, “Safeguarding our Seas: A Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Development of our Marine Environment” Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, March 2011

² Including Article 61(2) and 61(3) of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Article 5 of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement, and

Sustainable Development Goal #14
³ Reports of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – Monitoring the performance of the Common Fisheries Policy (STECF-16-05) – CORRIGENDUM to STECF-16-03. 2016. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, EUR 27758 EN, JRC XXXXX, 60 pp.
⁴ United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement