

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2019/2177(INI)	Procedure completed
Securing the objectives of the landing obligation under Article 15 of the Common Fisheries Policy		
Subject		
3.15.01 Fish stocks, conservation of fishery resources		
3.15.05 Fish catches, import tariff quotas		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Fisheries	 GADE Søren	20/04/2020
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 MONTEIRO DE AGUIAR Cláudia	
		 GONZÁLEZ CASARES Nicolás	
		 KELLER Ska	
		 JAMET France	
		 RUISSEN Bert-Jan	
European Commission	Commission DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries	Commissioner SINKEVIČIUS Virginijus	

Key events			
19/12/2019	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
19/04/2021	Vote in committee		
27/04/2021	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0147/2021	Summary
17/05/2021	Debate in Parliament		
18/05/2021	Decision by Parliament	T9-0227/2021	Summary

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2019/2177(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Implementation
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	PECH/9/01993

Documentation gateway					
Committee draft report		PE659.055	28/10/2020	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE663.017	17/12/2020	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0147/2021	27/04/2021	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0227/2021	18/05/2021	EP	Summary

Securing the objectives of the landing obligation under Article 15 of the Common Fisheries Policy

The Committee on Fisheries adopted the own-initiative report by Søren GADE (DK, Renew) on securing the objectives of the landing obligation under Article 15 of the Common Fisheries Policy.

The landing obligation makes it mandatory to land and deduct from applicable quotas all catches of species which are subject to catch limits and, in the Mediterranean Sea, are subject to minimum sizes in EU waters, or in certain cases by EU vessels in international waters and forbids the use of undersized fish for direct human consumption.

The landing obligation is not a fully comprehensive discard ban as it only applies to regulated species (total allowable catches (TACs) and effort-regulated fisheries for which a minimum size has been defined.

Lack of information on landing obligations

The report recalled that the landing obligation is not a goal in itself but a tool to drive improvements in fishing and operational behaviour, incentivise the development and usage of more selective gears to minimise unwanted catches, and improve catch documentation for a better understanding and scientific assessment of fish stocks. Many fishers do not concur with the link between the objectives of the landing obligation and its implementation, which tends to hamper compliance.

Members regretted that the Commissions annual reports on the state of play of the CFP include very little information on the implementation of the landing obligation, with no information so far on the extent to which discards have been reduced under the obligation. The introduction of the landing obligation represents one of the greatest challenges in the history of EU fisheries management from recording landings, and even making discards mandatory at times, to a system that records the entire catch which together with the introduction of the MSY policy, has inevitably had a range of far-reaching short- and long-term ecological and socioeconomic impacts.

The landing obligation continues to raise concerns in the fishing industry and within the scientific community due to obstacles of a diverse nature. The report pointed out the fisheries sectors causes of concern are the lack of adequate infrastructure at ports, rising operating costs, lack of incentives for compliance provided by the authorities, and difficulties in achieving greater selectivity in some fisheries without jeopardising the economic viability of fishing.

Improving the implementation of landing obligations

The report recommended the following measures and management tools to improve the situation such as:

- further use and optimisation of quota-based tools;
- studying the feasibility of implementing a marine spatial planning and area-based management approach;
- providing greater flexibility to allow fishers to choose gear solutions;
- providing flexible mechanisms for the approval of new types of selective gear;
- granting exclusive access to fishing locations or time periods in order to encourage selectivity;
- adopting strategies to make the best use of unwanted catches for purposes other than human consumption without creating a demand for undersized catches and provided that it is feasible for fishers in economic and operational terms;
- using and developing voluntary and incentive-linked artificial intelligence tools to increase selectivity and control and improve species identification;
- progressively introducing the requirement for compliance with the same discard policy for imports of fisheries products from third countries in

order to eliminate the comparative disadvantage and unfair competition for the European fleet, while moving towards better protection of global fisheries resources;

- renewing the Commission's obligation to report annually on the state of play of the CFP and the implementation of the landing obligation and providing more information on its implementation.

Members called on the Commission in the framework of the evaluation report on the implementation of the CFP due in 2022 to, in particular:

- assess the extent to which the reduction of discards under the landing obligation has been achieved;
- assess the socioeconomic impact of the landing obligation, the remuneration system, the number of crew members and the safety and working conditions on board;
- assess the impact on the sustainability of the species removed by the Council from the list of stocks subject to TACs in recent years and evaluate the potential consequences of its reintroduction under the TAC system;
- identify and remove the administrative difficulties encountered in developing and implementing selectivity pilot projects, which are hampering fishers' efforts to be more selective;
- assess whether the current landing obligation policy is fit for purpose and evaluate the feasibility of adapting the landing obligation on a case-by-case basis by fishery and/or stock;
- assess pathways for better adaptation and simplification of Article 15 of the CFP on landing obligations to facilitate its implementation and understanding by all stakeholders and in particular the use by Member States of the overall available tools provided by the legal framework in place to improve selectivity and reduce unwanted catches.

Lastly, the Commission is called on to submit, based on this evaluation and if appropriate, a legislative proposal in order to better achieve the objectives of reducing discards and improving stocks.

Securing the objectives of the landing obligation under Article 15 of the Common Fisheries Policy

The European Parliament adopted by 624 votes to 29, with 43 abstentions, a resolution on securing the objectives of the landing obligation under Article 15 of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Reaffirming the EU's overall objective of achieving sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources, Parliament stressed that reducing discards and minimising unwanted catches are public policy priorities. These priorities have been developed in response to concerns about responsibility, conservation and waste, as regards natural resources, and the scientific need to take full account of all sources of fishing mortality.

Difficulties in implementing the discard ban

The introduction of the landing obligation represents one of the greatest challenges in the history of EU fisheries management. Many fishermen do not understand the aim and procedure for implementing this obligation and question its legitimacy, which tends to hamper compliance.

The landing obligation continues to raise concerns in the fishing sector and in the scientific community due to various obstacles. Concerns relate to the lack of adequate infrastructure in ports, increased operational costs, lack of clear incentives and difficulties in increasing selectivity in some fisheries without compromising the economic viability of the fishery.

Deploping that difficulties in implementing the discard ban have led to a negative representation of fishermen, Parliament stressed the need to remove administrative obstacles to the effective implementation of the landing obligation, to strengthen the development and adoption of new selective gears and to draw up effective plans to reduce by-catches in order to rebuild vulnerable stocks.

Lack of information on landing obligations

Members regretted that the Commission's annual progress reports on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) include very little information on the implementation of the landing obligation and have so far failed to report on the level of discard reduction achieved under this obligation, or to study the socio-economic impact of the landing obligation or the consequences of its implementation on safety on board fishing vessels.

In order to ensure proper implementation of the landing obligation, the Commission and the Member States should increase their efforts to fully implement the relevant EU legislation and take additional measures to ensure comprehensive catch documentation and data collection in a manner proportionate to the fishing capacity of the small-scale coastal fleet.

Improving the implementation of landing obligations

Parliament recommended the following measures and management tools to improve the situation such as:

- further use and optimisation of quota-based tools;
- studying the feasibility of implementing a marine spatial planning and area-based management approach;
- providing greater flexibility to allow fishers to choose gear solutions;
- providing flexible mechanisms for the approval of new types of selective gear;
- granting exclusive access to fishing locations or time periods in order to encourage selectivity;
- adopting strategies to make the best use of unwanted catches for purposes other than human consumption without creating a demand for undersized catches and provided that it is feasible for fishers in economic and operational terms;
- using and developing voluntary and incentive-linked artificial intelligence tools to increase selectivity and control and improve species identification;

- progressively introducing the requirement for compliance with the same discard policy for imports of fisheries products from third countries in order to eliminate the comparative disadvantage and unfair competition for the European fleet, while moving towards better protection of global fisheries resources;
- renewing the Commission's obligation to report annually on the state of play of the CFP and the implementation of the landing obligation and providing more information on its implementation.

Members called on the Commission in the framework of the evaluation report on the implementation of the CFP due in 2022 to, in particular:

- assess the extent to which the reduction of discards under the landing obligation has been achieved;
- assess the socioeconomic impact of the landing obligation, the remuneration system, the number of crew members and the safety and working conditions on board;
- assess the impact on the sustainability of the species removed by the Council from the list of stocks subject to TACs in recent years and evaluate the potential consequences of its reintroduction under the TAC system;
- identify and remove the administrative difficulties encountered in developing and implementing selectivity pilot projects, which are hampering fishers' efforts to be more selective;
- assess whether the current landing obligation policy is fit for purpose and evaluate the feasibility of adapting the landing obligation on a case-by-case basis by fishery and/or stock;
- assess pathways for better adaptation and simplification of Article 15 of the CFP on landing obligations to facilitate its implementation and understanding by all stakeholders and in particular the use by Member States of the overall available tools provided by the legal framework in place to improve selectivity and reduce unwanted catches.

Lastly, the Commission is called on to submit, based on this evaluation and if appropriate, a legislative proposal in order to better achieve the objectives of reducing discards and improving stocks.