

SFS-9-2014: Towards a gradual elimination of discards in European fisheries

Version: 13/11/2013

Specific challenge: The new orientation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) calls for a move towards a gradual elimination of discards on a case-by-case basis, and taking into account the best available scientific advice to reduce unwanted catches and gradually ensure that all catches are landed. To do so, and to obtain better economic results while keeping consistency with the objectives of the CFP, particularly about compatibility with Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), there is a need to underpin innovations and changes in the tools and technologies used at all stages of the seafood supply chain, from catching to consumers.

Scope: Proposals should deal with the several keys aspects underpinning the new policy:

- i) how to **avoid unwanted catches** both through improvements to selectivity but also through adaptations of fishing strategies and fishermen behaviour,
- ii) how to address practical issues of **handling unwanted catches** on board vessels that must be now landed, while ensuring that such catches can be fully documented,
- iii) how to make **best use of unwanted catches** without creating economic incentives and inadvertently developing markets for such products,
- iv) how to estimate the **possible consequences** for fish stocks and the marine ecosystem of the removal of biomass hitherto discarded at sea,
- v) how to **control and monitor** compliance with the new rules, and
- vi) how to estimate and monitor the **socioeconomic consequences** of the new regulatory framework, not only on the fishing fleets but also on local communities.

Proposals should address in particular innovative technologies and practices, as well as simulation modelling of harvesting unwanted catches, to reduce and avoid discards, especially for fisheries with high discards rates, including on small-scale fisheries.

The proposals should also consider the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders, as well as the potential of participatory approaches in improving the compliance with the new rules. Finally, proposals should address economic and social dimensions of the above-mentioned problems and should create bridges between cutting-edge research and technologies, fishermen, processors, wholesalers, retailers, policy makers and consumers.

The Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU in the range of EUR 5 million would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

Expected impact:

- Support through research and innovation a key orientations for the CFP regarding discards elimination
- Contribute to implement the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) requiring moving towards good environmental status and in particular the descriptors related to 1: biological diversity, 3: population of commercial fish and shellfish, 4: elements of marine foodwebs
- Improved social and societal acceptance of conservation measures
- Increased level of control, compliance and enforcement of rules

Type of action: Research and innovation actions

The conditions related to this topic are provided at the end of this call and in the General Annexes.