

FACTSHEET: Discards reform consultation

What are discards?

Discards are unwanted catches of fish (dead or alive) which are thrown back to sea during commercial fishing operations.

Why are we consulting?

The landing obligation prohibits discards in UK waters. However, it has not been effective in changing fishing practices. Discarding continues to take place. Among other things, this can pose risks to the long-term sustainability of the stocks. We need a different approach.

Better discards management will support the long-term future of the English fishing fleet and coastal communities whilst protecting our marine environment and the fish stocks that industry depends on.

What does the consultation propose?

The consultation proposes:

- Changing how we account for catches to ensure that all catches (both landings and discards) are counted against quota.
- Establishing working groups so that industry and other stakeholders can help us identify measures to avoid and reduce unwanted catch in the first place. For example, requiring more selective gears in English waters.
- Updating current exemptions from the landing obligation in English waters to align with the latest scientific advice.
- Introducing a voluntary discard prevention charge which could help those who do not currently have sufficient quota to cover all their unwanted catches

This consultation is for England only. We will aim to align with other parts of the UK where it is right to do so.

Give us your views

Find the consultation online at:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/discards/discards-reform/>

or scan the QR code to visit the page.

The consultation is open to 23:59 on 9 October 2023.



What happens next?

A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the government website at www.gov.uk/defra.

We expect to do this within 12 weeks of the consultation closing date.