Delivering Fisheries 2027 – towards an implementation plan

This draft implementation plan sets out proposals for delivering ‘Fisheries 2027 – a long-term vision for sustainable fisheries’. We want to turn our vision into reality by working with you – our stakeholders. We are aiming to publish, in 2008, a shared contract between all marine fisheries stakeholders setting out a shared long-term implementation plan.

For each of the ‘Fisheries 2027’ vision statements, we have set out what we think this means; what Defra is planning to do now – by the end of 2008 – and what we are planning to do within the next five years to help to deliver the statements. We have also suggested some of the roles we see for others. We have identified what we see as the immediate priorities for delivery for each vision statement; the key targets; and how we could devise ways of monitoring progress.

In developing the draft plan we have tried to respond to the views expressed during the consultation on ‘Fisheries 2027 – towards a contract for the future of marine fisheries’. However, this draft plan is only a starting point for discussion. We wanted to set out our own ideas in a way that would let us have a full discussion about them with stakeholders. From this, we hope to be able to develop a shared implementation plan.

Over the next nine months we would like to hear your views on our proposed actions, targets and priorities. We would especially like to know the contributions you can make to turning the vision into reality. We look forward to working with you to develop this draft plan into a shared contract to deliver sustainable fisheries.
Delivering the vision statements

1. In 2027, economic returns are optimised

To optimise economic returns from fisheries we need larger fish stocks harvested efficiently at sustainable levels. We also need to maximise the economic return from harvested fish and shellfish or from recreational use and make sure that fisheries management represents good value for money. In the long term we think that there should be a direct return to society from those who have the economic opportunity of harvesting or using a shared, common resource.

What Defra plans to do now:

- Continue work to increase the size of fish stocks (see also vision statement 3).
- Continue to work within England, and with UK Fisheries Administrations, other Member States and the European Commission to make sure harvesting is at sustainable levels.
- Seek to reduce the administrative burden of regulation through domestic action and the European Union (EU) simplification plan.
- Work with the Marine and Fisheries Agency (MFA) to make sure that the new European Fisheries Fund helps businesses become more efficient and get greater returns from fish and shellfish.
- Work with shellfish stakeholders to ensure that we have the right framework in place to facilitate the sustainable development of the shellfish sector.
- Review existing measures designed to align fleet capacity with fishing opportunity and identify future action.
- Consider scope, timing and possible mechanisms for extracting additional value from fisheries for society directly.

What Defra plans to do during the next five years:

- Continue work to build fish stocks and make sure harvesting or recreational use is at appropriate levels.
- Press for long-term management plans, developed with the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), for all key stocks at EU level.
- Consider the scope for developing strategies for individual stocks in relation to both commercial harvesting and recreational use.
- Consider scope for the development of the English aquaculture industry, including offshore.
- Support the development of new opportunities that become available to the catching sector (e.g. as a result of climate change).

Where Defra sees a role for others:

- Improving the efficiency of businesses.
- Developing and sustainably exploiting new markets.
- Delivering supply chain integration.
- Fostering and contributing to a culture of compliance.
- Adding value through local sourcing and certification.
- Promoting and improving the reputation of the catching sector.
2. In 2027, there are rights of access to fisheries coupled with clear responsibilities

The current licensing and quota management systems which enable access to fisheries for commercial use have grown up gradually and without a strategic overview. Recreational sea anglers have, in theory, full and free access to all fisheries, although fisheries are generally managed with commercial harvesting in mind.

We think we need to change the current systems so that we have a clearer, simpler and more transparent rights-based system for accessing fisheries for most of the resource. This should provide more certainty for businesses and individuals. We also want to make sure that we have the right mechanisms in place to deliver the social benefits to coastal communities that we think an entirely market-based system may not deliver. For example, by enabling the profitable and environmentally responsible operation of small inshore vessels and making sure that people can enter the industry.

We also want to make sure that recreational users and the associated businesses can also access resources. As with the commercial sector, with rights there should be responsibilities and the expectation that users should share the costs of the benefits.

**What Defra plans to do now:**

- Ask for views from fishermen and others on possible options for quota management change, including how we can deliver the social benefits to coastal communities that we want.
- Facilitate consultation on the recreational sea angling (RSA) strategy and use the results to consider future improvements to the management of recreational sea angling.

**What Defra plans to do during the next five years:**

- Introduce changes to the quota management system that support the long-term aims set out in this draft plan.
- Increase further the participation of anglers in fisheries management.
- Identify and implement possibilities for future reform of licensing arrangements.
- Implement measures in the forthcoming Marine Bill to enable more active management of recreational sea fishing and the possibility of charging for commercial fishing vessel licences.

**Where Defra sees a role for others:**

- Engaging with Defra on policy developments, for example in relation to quota management arrangements and the RSA strategy.
3. **In 2027, stocks are plentiful and sustainably harvested**

Just over a third of commercially harvested fish stocks are at full reproductive capacity and harvested sustainably. Total Allowable Catches (TACs) are generally set at prudent levels for most stocks. Regulating orders improve the management of shellfisheries that may be at risk of over-exploitation. There are some stocks, however, that are depleted and which we are aiming to re-build through recovery or long-term management plans. Sustainable harvesting depends on good data, appropriate catch levels and technical measures and high levels of compliance. The fleet needs to have a capacity that matches the size of the resource and to be flexible in the stocks it targets. In turn, processors, retailers and consumers need to adjust their expectations and requirements.

**What Defra plans to do now:**

- Encourage the European Commission to move towards long-term management plans for all key stocks to try to build their size and improve the age structure.
- Review the effectiveness of the cod recovery plan with other Fisheries Administrations in the UK, the European Commission and other Member States.
- Prepare for and undertake annual negotiations on TACs and quotas and other measures at the EU/Norway Negotiations and December Fisheries Council.
- Complete the decommissioning scheme for the South West to decrease pressure on sole stocks.
- Work with international Regional Fisheries Management Organisations in managing stocks sustainably and combating Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing.
- Move towards introducing administrative penalties to speed up and reduce the cost of enforcement of minor offences.
- Prepare for e-logbooks, which will give faster real-time information on catches useful both for management and marketing.
- Consult on the management of brown crab and lobster stocks and develop proposals with other UK Fisheries Administrations.
- Work with the Department for International Development (DFID) on the impacts of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and EU market on global fish stocks and on developing countries. This includes policy inputs to Fisheries Partnership Agreements, DFID’s fisheries programme and the UK Government’s Sustainable Development Dialogues.

**What Defra plans to do during the next five years:**

- Make further efforts to include individual fishermen and anglers in gathering information about stocks and contributing to the assessment process so that catch levels are developed in the light of the best possible information.
- Set up and run a controlled trial for a Marine Protected Area to test its effectiveness for increasing fish stocks.
- Continue to respond to emerging international fisheries policy issues such as IUU fishing.
- Introduce administrative penalties, e-sales notes and e-logbooks.

**Where Defra sees a role for others:**

- Contributing accurate data to improve our understanding of fisheries.
- Fostering and contributing to a culture of compliance.
- Continuing to work closely with us on the annual TAC and quota negotiations.
• Participating in projects to inform stock assessment and ensure sustainable harvesting.
• Making under-used species more available to consumers.
• Continuing to work with Government on initiatives related to sustainable international fisheries.

4. In 2027, fishing activity contributes to coastal communities
Healthy fish and shellfish stocks and an efficient fisheries sector will bring economic and social benefits to communities around the coast. However, there are risks that relying entirely on a market-based system would threaten some fishing communities. We therefore believe that, in some cases, specific action will be needed where communities value the local economic and social benefits of fishing activity, even if that means a reduction in economic efficiency.

What Defra plans to do now:
• Take into account the impact on coastal communities of any proposals for changing the quota management system and consult on options.
• Work with the MFA to deliver the new European Fisheries Fund to help businesses become more efficient and resilient.
• Work with other agencies, such as Regional Development Agencies, to contribute to the sustainable development of coastal fishing communities.
Delivering Fisheries 2027: towards an implementation plan

- Support and fund, with the MFA, a Business in the Community (BiTC) initiative in North Shields to improve the links between business and the local fishing industry and to assist the industry in developing a long-term business plan based on sustainable development principles.
- Work with the MFA and Seafish on improving small business support to the fisheries sector.

What Defra plans to do during the next five years:
- Implement measures in the forthcoming Marine Bill to:
  - Reform Sea Fisheries Committees and therefore improve local management of inshore fisheries;
  - Start managing fisheries in a more integrated way with other activities in the marine environment through introducing marine planning, establishing a Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and developing high-level marine objectives and a Marine Policy Statement.
- Build on the work of the BiTC initiative to widen and improve small business support to the fisheries sector.
- Assist communities to identify where targeted support is appropriate and to also consider diversification options.

Where Defra sees a role for others
- Regenerating fishing communities. This cannot be achieved by Central Government action alone – it needs local initiatives developed by those who make up these communities. What needs to happen will vary from place to place, so we need stakeholders to tell us how we can help support local initiatives in their community.
- Investing in sustainable fisheries operations.
- Prioritising local sourcing where possible.

5. In 2027, the environmental impact of producing and consuming fish and shellfish products is acceptable

There is already much action being taken throughout the fisheries supply chain to reduce the environmental impact of the fisheries sector. This extends from developing new gear that is more selective to reducing the impacts of aquaculture. We need to continue this work, with a particular focus on reducing unwanted catch and therefore discards, but we also need to define environmental limits, make sure we are operating within them, and develop a way of comparing different environmental costs and benefits. We will, in general, press for measures to reduce the environmental impact of fisheries to be taken at EU level to avoid unilateral measures that adversely affect the long-term competitiveness of our industry.

What Defra plans to do now:
- Work with stakeholders on the European Commission’s proposals on discards and ensure that legislative proposals flowing from it are effective and practical.
- Develop a ‘roadmap’ that sets out how we can reduce the environmental impact of consumption and production of fish and shellfish in collaboration with stakeholders.
- Work with industry in developing understanding of the true carbon costs associated with choices on the sourcing and processing of fish and shellfish.
- Work with the MFA to make sure that the new European Fisheries Fund helps to reduce the environmental impact of the fisheries supply chain.
• Play a prominent role in EU and UK international negotiations, including on reducing bycatch of non-target species, deep sea bottom trawling and Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing in the EU.
• Publish our recommendations for future actions on applying strategic environmental assessment (SEA) to fisheries following a pilot.
• Develop a process to identify priorities and implement measures for marine species conservation.
• Identify and consult on potential Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) needed to protect nationally and internationally important species and habitats.
• Enforce the new Offshore Marine Regulations to prevent damage to protected species and habitats in the offshore area.
• Establish a framework for defining environmental limits and environmentally responsible fishing.
• Consider whether bag limits are required to reduce the impact of angling on certain stocks.

What Defra plans to do during the next five years:
• Publish our initial view of an acceptable level of environmental impact for the whole fisheries supply chain and implement actions set out in the fish and shellfish ‘roadmap’.
• Take forward conclusions from work on Strategic Environmental Assessment.
• Complete most of our Natura 2000 network.
• Press for further changes in EU legislation to further reduce unwanted catch and therefore discarding.
• Implement conclusions on possible bag limits for anglers.
• Develop with the Carbon Trust and the British Standards Institute a methodology to measure greenhouse gases embedded in goods and services.

Where Defra sees a role for others:
• Continuing efforts to reduce the environmental impact of activities, including assessing their progress and setting stretching goals for this improvement.
• Working with Defra and others to identify what environmental impact is ‘acceptable’.
• Using and promoting good practice.
• Fostering and contributing to a culture of compliance.
• Being prepared to pay for sustainable choices.
• Ensuring a level playing field.
6. In 2027, a Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is delivering sustainable fisheries

Whilst there has already been reform and improvement to the CFP there is still a long way to go before all fisheries are sustainable. We need to improve the state of the stocks, the framework and mechanisms for making management decisions, and the implementation across the EU. This means taking action now to improve the current system and working with others to change the system at the next reform of the CFP in 2012 and beyond. We want to see the 2012 reform result in a decisive break with micro-management from Brussels and a major shift to long-term management plans drawn up for key stocks with the full involvement of the fishing industry and others through the RACs. We want to see this result in a more central role for the RACs, a dramatic reduction in the number of annual decisions and in the volume of EU legislation, with the European Commission’s role being much more one of monitoring implementation of agreed management plans. We also need to work to deliver more coherence in European policy between fisheries, the marine environment and other marine users, for example through the EU Marine Strategy Directive and Maritime Policy.

What Defra plans to do now

• Set up a sector-wide group to help us steer research on options for CFP reform, with a focus on the 2012 reforms.
• Contribute to reviews and development of stock recovery and long-term management plans and regulations, for example on technical conservation and discards.
• Review the Regulation of Buyers and Sellers.
• Consult fishermen and others about the review of the fisheries Control Regulation.
• Publish Plain English guidance on regulations.
• Work with other Member States to negotiate rules for electronic recording systems and seek stakeholder views on implementing them.
• Reduce the administrative burden of regulation, through the EU simplification plan.

What Defra plans to do during the next five years:

• Work with UK Fisheries Administrations, other Member States and the European Commission to deliver significant reform of the CFP in 2012.
• Continue to press the European Commission to:
  – improve long-term policy planning within the CFP;
  – produce impact assessments before making decisions;
  – apply the rules evenly across the EU; and
  – combat IUU fishing.
• Implement measures in the forthcoming Marine Bill to improve enforcement by:
  – making the enforcement powers of British Sea Fisheries Officers more consistent and coherent; and
  – strengthening our powers to control the activities of our nationals on non-UK fishing boats outside EC waters.

Where Defra sees a role for others:

• Working with Defra in developing and implementing changes.
• Ensuring a level playing field.
• Fostering and contributing to a culture of compliance.
7. In 2027, management is integrated and devolved to the most appropriate national, regional or local level

The regional management and advisory arrangements that we already have in place, in the form of Sea Fisheries Committees and Regional Advisory Councils, help make sure that policy development takes local circumstances and concerns into account and delivers some local management. However, fisheries management needs to be more appropriate and responsive to local circumstances, and better at avoiding unintended negative consequences. We also need to make sure that commercial and recreational fisheries are managed in the context of all human activities in the marine environment, using an ecosystem-based approach.

What Defra plans to do now

- Continue to support all four RACs in which the UK has an interest.
- Continue to support the North Sea and North Western Waters RACs in delivering commitments made at the 2007 Cod Symposium towards the review of the cod recovery plan.
- Promote innovative solutions to issues, in particular local fisheries through the Fisheries Challenge Fund.
- Involve stakeholders more in the policy process by:
  - inviting stakeholders to shadow policy officials;
  - developing a way to make sure that there are better lines of communication between different fisheries stakeholder groups, so that all stakeholders have an understanding of what others are doing, can make links and have opportunities to contribute their views;
  - continuing to make sure that policy officials visit the coast as frequently as possible to get views on policy issues and to improve our understanding of local circumstances.

What Defra plans to do within the next five years:

- Hold coastal meetings by autumn, from 2008, on those TAC and quota proposals that the European Commission has published.
- Use the 2012 CFP reform to further develop the role of RACs.
- Implement measures in the forthcoming Marine Bill to:
  - reform Sea Fisheries Committees and therefore improve local management of inshore fisheries;
  - start managing fisheries in a more integrated way with other activities in the marine environment through introducing marine planning, establishing a Marine Management Organisation and developing high level marine objectives and a Marine Policy Statement.

Where Defra sees a role for others:

- Getting involved in policy development and contributing views.
- Delivering responsive and flexible management to meet local needs.
- Getting engaged in and supporting the work of SFCs and RACs.
8. In 2027, management is responsive and based on agreed criteria for assessing impacts on stocks and the environment more widely

To make fisheries management properly responsive, we need to change fisheries management systems – for example those within the CFP – as well as improving our science and its credibility amongst stakeholders. Work to improve the CFP is set out under vision statement 6.

We fund a range of science: fish and shellfish stock monitoring and assessments, which give us information about the state of stocks, and long-term research into issues such as the impact of climate change on stocks around our coast and the impact of fishing on marine ecosystems. Part of the work for both of these aspects is carried out by fishermen through our Fisheries Science Partnership, and Fisheries Challenge Fund. We have also published a Marine Fisheries Science Yearbook, which we will keep updated, to promote understanding of what fisheries scientists do and to help people interested in fisheries contribute ideas for future scientific work.

We are improving our evidence base on the environmental impact of the fisheries supply chain, with the aim of setting criteria for an acceptable level of impact.

What Defra plans to do now

- Investigate the possibility of real-time closures in the North Sea under the cod recovery plan.
- Continue our joint project with Ireland to improve the accuracy of data used to assess fish stocks in the Irish Sea, including that relating to discards.
- Develop and pilot the ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAF) in the English Channel, aimed particularly at turning EAF theory into practice.
- Continue to run our science programme, including investigating the impacts of climate change on fisheries and involving stakeholder views through the Marine Fisheries Science Advisory Group.
- Set up a trial to investigate the effectiveness of Cefas’ research vessel surveys in catching commercial fish, by checking if all fish entering the ‘Endeavour’s’ trawl gear are retained and comparing the catch rates of key species with those of a commercial vessel fishing nearby.

What Defra plans to do in the next five years:

- Explore future possibilities for real-time closures and reducing discards.
- Start applying lessons learned from the Channel EAF pilot project to other sea areas.
- Continue to seek ways for scientists and the fisheries sector to work effectively together to achieve a more shared view of the state of fisheries.
- Make sure that responsive decision-making and the impacts of climate change are sufficiently prominent issues in the reform of the CFP in 2012.

Where Defra sees a role for others:

- Getting involved in gathering data and information.
- Getting involved in pilots and joint programmes.
- Giving us your ideas for issues where some research funding would help address a current problem.
- Communicating science effectively.
9. In 2027, fish are a readily-available and valued source of protein

Fish and shellfish have long been recognised as an important source of protein. Consumers are increasingly aware of the impact of their choices and are choosing environmentally responsible options more often. The retail and processing sectors are placing increasing importance on the traceability of fish and shellfish products. Underpinning this vision statement is the need to have plentiful fish and shellfish stocks – our action on which is set out under vision statement 3.

What Defra plans to do now

- Work with the EC and other Member States on traceability through a new Regulation on IUU fishing.
- Work with processing and retail industries as they develop guidelines on an auditable chain of custody standard to prevent IUU products entering the supply chain.
- Support actively the Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) scheme to introduce a global database on fishing vessels (the Global Fishing Vessel Record) to allow producers and importers to identify vessels likely to have been involved in fishing illegally.
- Contribute to the EU consultation on aquaculture.
- Work with the Food Standards Agency to ensure that the advice Government gives reflects the full range of sustainability issues.

What Defra plans to do during the next five years

- Consider scope for the development of the English aquaculture industry, including offshore.
- Press for the introduction of an EU-wide tracking system to trace the origin of fish and shellfish products.
- Implement the FAO Global Fishing Vessel Record once it is developed.

Where Defra sees a role for others

- Putting effective traceability systems in place and sourcing legally and sustainably harvested fish.
- Fostering and contributing to a culture of compliance.
- Making certification schemes available and accessible and consistent with FAO guidelines.
## Our priorities for delivery

For each of the vision statements we have identified what we see as the top priorities for action:

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Our key targets

To focus our work we have proposed targets for what we want to achieve within one, five, and ten years. These targets focus on the issues about which stakeholders expressed most concern during the consultation on ‘Fisheries 2027 – towards a contract for marine fisheries’ including CFP reform, more localised management and establishing greater trust between fishermen and scientists. Our proposals are that:

By the end of 2008 we want:
- Good progress made on the implementation of quota management reform.
- UK objectives defined for CFP reform in 2012.
- The framework for defining environmental limits established.

By the end of 2012 we want:
- A quota system that supports sustainable fisheries.
- Full traceability of all fisheries products throughout the supply chain.
- Marine planning, including for fisheries, to be in place.
- A more effective CFP in line with UK objectives.
- A substantial reduction in discards.
- More effective inshore fisheries management delivered by reformed Sea Fisheries Committees (SFCs).
- Fishermen and scientists to have a shared view of the state of fisheries.
- Environmental limits defined for important aspects of marine ecosystems and to be implementing action to be living within those limits.

By the end of 2017 we want:
- Fisheries management plans, developed with full stakeholder input, in place.
- CFP reform that:
  - is recognised as proportionate by the fishing industry and other stakeholders;
  - devolves management to the most appropriate level;
  - is consistent with European environmental policy; and
  - is coherent with European development policy and takes into account the impacts of the CFP on the environment and economies of developing countries.
- Real-time responsive management using Vessel Monitoring System and e-log data.
- Fisheries management to be firmly part of broader marine management.
- Discarding to be at minimum acceptable levels.
Measuring our progress

We need to be able to measure progress to make sure that we are doing what we have said we will do; and that the actions we are taking are actually delivering the outcomes we want to achieve over the long term.

Over the next year, as well as working with stakeholders to identify and start work on the right activities, we plan to develop some indicators to help us evaluate progress more objectively. This will enable us to establish an accurate baseline and then to monitor progress. We will be able to use that information over time to adapt or change our actions and priorities to reflect the progress we are all making.

Once we have developed indicators this should enable us to identify more SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timed) targets with stakeholders. This should allow us all to hold each other to account and to be clear about the process for achieving our long-term outcomes with interim milestones identified. We aim to develop a clear and concise way of showing how our actions will deliver the outcomes and the path to get there.
What we mean by:

**Contract**
We do not use the word ‘contract’ in the sense of a legally binding agreement. Instead, we mean a document that sets out a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, including Government, businesses and individuals. We hope that this will give stakeholders the confidence to act sustainably, knowing that there is a shared commitment to achieve sustainability and that their actions will be matched by others.

**Economically efficient**
By ‘economically efficient operators’ we mean those commercial operators who get the highest financial return from the smallest input. This does not necessarily reflect the quantity of fish caught; what matters is the value derived from the resource and the ability to minimise costs. The related phrase ‘most of the resource’ means more than half of the total resource, rather than more than half of the resource in a specific stock or area.

Economic efficiency is one element of sustainability and needs to be achieved alongside other objectives, for example those relating to environmental protection and coastal communities and in the context of a balance between commercial and recreational use of a shared, common resource.

**Environmentally responsible/acceptable**
‘Environmentally responsible’ and ‘environmentally acceptable’ mean operations or decisions that do not have an unduly adverse effect on the environment. We will clarify this further when we publish an initial view, for further discussion, of an acceptable environmental impact for different parts of the supply chain.

**Fisheries sector**
‘Fisheries sector’ means the full range of related activities including commercial and recreational catching, marine aquaculture, processing and retailing of fish and shellfish.

**Long-term**
When we say that we want fisheries to be securing ‘long-term benefits’ for the whole of society by 2027, we mean that we want fisheries management to take account of the needs of future generations, as well as current users of the resource.

**Sustainable**
When we say that we are aiming to achieve ‘sustainable’ fisheries, we mean that we intend to manage fisheries to get the best long-term benefits from the resource, while ensuring that activities are carried out in a way that does not breach environmental limits. We want everybody to make decisions and investments that take account of the long-term future of the fisheries resource.
Your views

We need your views on this draft implementation plan to get it right. We also need you to tell us how you, or your organisation, can contribute to our shared vision for sustainable fisheries – the Government cannot deliver it on its own.

We would like you to tell us:
• If you think we are proposing the right actions to deliver sustainability.
• If there are actions you think we should take instead of some of the things we have set out.
• What you are planning to do that will help.

We will be discussing this draft implementation plan with stakeholders over the next nine months. If you have comments and views please come to one of the meetings that we will be organising (information will be on our website – www.defra.gov.uk). Alternatively, send your views to:

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Before introducing any new policy we will, of course, consult fully on proposals in the normal way.