

# The landing obligation – Seafish activities

## The issue

Discarding is the practice of returning unwanted catches to the sea, either dead or alive, because they are too small or damaged, because the fisherman has no quota, or because of certain catch composition rules. The revised Common Fisheries Policy provides regulations to prevent discarding through the introduction of a landing obligation (LO). This change in regime serves as a driver for more selectivity, and it is hoped will result in more reliable catch data. To allow fishermen to adapt to the change, the LO is being introduced gradually, between 2015 and 2019 for all commercial species (managed by quota species, or with minimum sizes) in European waters.

Under the LO all catches have to be kept on board, landed and counted against quotas. Undersized fish cannot be marketed for human consumption but do count against quota. The LO is being applied according to target species and gear type in the transitional period up to 2019. Details of the implementation are included in multiannual plans or in specific annual discard plans when no multiannual plan is in place. These details include the species covered, provisions on catch documentation, minimum conservation reference sizes, and exemptions (for fish that may survive after being returned to the sea, and specific de minimis discard allowances under certain conditions).

**On 1 January 2015 the LO was applied to pelagic and industrial fisheries in all European Union waters, and for cod in the Baltic. For demersal species, the LO came into force in January 2016 under a phased introduction, with full implementation by 1 January 2019.**

## Seafish work programmes relating to the landing obligation

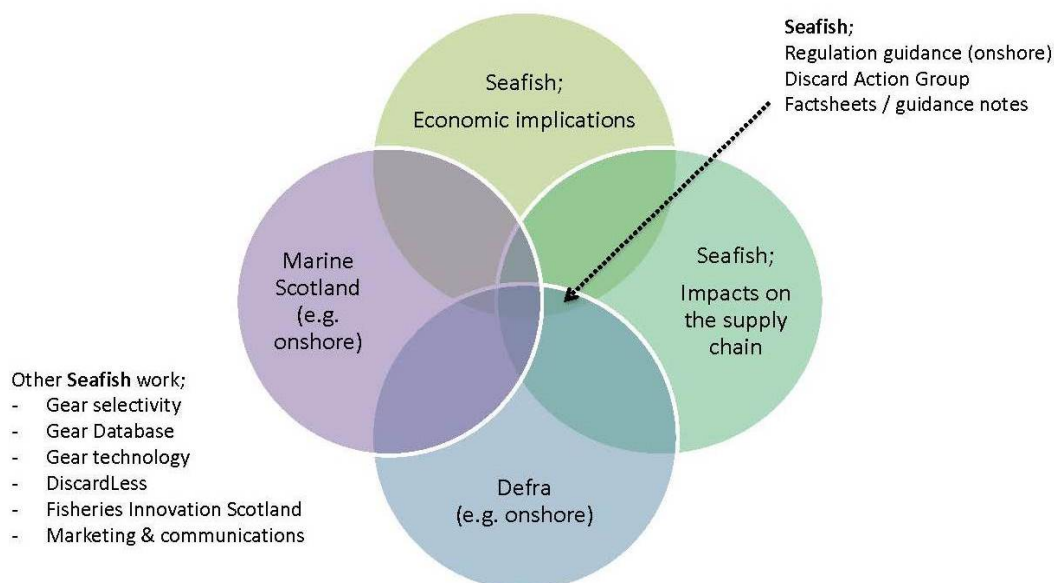
Seafish work on the LO is diverse and cuts across a number of our work areas. We are providing valuable services to industry and government and our co-ordination role covering ongoing projects limits duplication of work.

This paper summarises our recent, current and future activities. These activities have been agreed by Seafish's three Sector Panels and demonstrate a commitment to help industry meet the challenges of the LO.

## Key work areas for Seafish

- Economic impact assessment analysis
- Assessment of the impact of the LO on the UK supply chain
- Gear selectivity initiatives
- Seafish Discard Action Group
- Briefings and guidance
- Sectoral support and regulatory guidance
- Marketing and communications

## Seafish work activities



### Economic Analysis

The first phase of this Seafish project assessed, for key sectors of the UK fleet, the economic implications of a move from pre-LO fisheries management to various potential scenarios under the new LO. Outputs were published in two interim reports, in 2014 and 2015, and a final report published in 2016. The early phase of the project was part funded by Marine Scotland and Welsh Government, and included input from Defra. Further reports were published in 2017 and a report conducted in collaboration with Cefas is due to be published early in 2018:

- In January 2014 Seafish completed a [case study review](#) of the potential economic implications of the proposed LO on the Irish Sea *Nephrops* trawl fleet, the North Sea mixed whitefish fleets and *Nephrops*

fleet. This focused on choke species.

### [See](#)

- [Interim Report One: Choke analysis](#) was published in March 2015. It illustrated, if LO obligation rules were applied to actual fishing activities in 2013, what impact the LO might have had on business outcomes of different fleet segments. The analysis assumed that fleets would have stopped fishing when they ran out of quota for any fish stock – known as a choke situation. [See](#)
- [Interim Report Two: Scenario analysis](#) was published in August 2015. It presents different outcomes for the UK fleet based on applying various LO policy levers. Analysis focused on what difference quota uplift, exemptions and flexibilities could

make to choke points and the activity and business performance of UK fleet segments. [See](#). There is also analysis to show the impact of policy levers on the under 10m fleet and the potential impact on the *Nephrops* fleet of assumed improvements in catch selectivity.

- [Landing Obligation Economic Impact Assessment Final Report](#) was published in February 2016. This analysed the potential impacts of the LO for the UK fleet if there were no major changes in fishing patterns. It explored the potential value of different policy levers (LO exemptions) to the UK fleet; identified potential choke stocks and associated choke points in different sea areas, and different fleet segments; and identified areas of greatest challenge for the UK. [See](#)
- [Seafish Bio economic modelling 2017 - 2019](#). This analysis of the choke points and problem stocks for the UK fleet under the LO (2017-2019) was published in April 2017. The focus of the analysis is on the likelihood that choke stocks could occur as a result of the landing obligation in five UK demersal fleet segments in 2017, 2018 and 2019 and whether the movement of quota could delay the choke points identified. [See](#)
- [Seafish Bio economic modelling methodology report](#). This is supplementary to the main report. This provides more detail on the three modules that form the Seafish bio

economic model namely: the data input framework; the simulation engine and the results output framework; and it provides more detail on the design and operation of the individual simulations developed for the model. [See](#)

**Contact** [Arina Motova](#) for further information.

### **Additional Seafish projects**

#### **LO impacts on the UK supply chain**

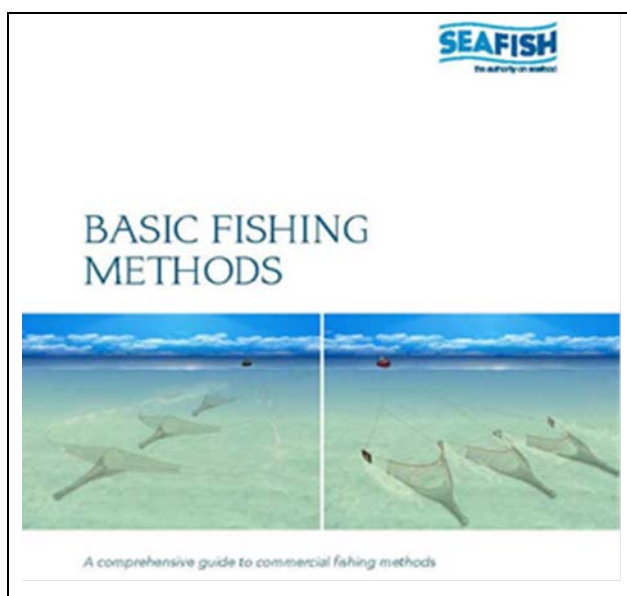
In 2015 Seafish was asked by the Devolved Administrations to analyse the issues faced by the UK supply chain and the potential consequences for individual sectors in meeting the challenges of the LO. The analysis was mainly qualitative, evaluating potential changes in activity of one sector in response to changed activities and outputs of other sectors. The project also identified novel work required to facilitate an informed and proactive approach to tackling issues. This project started in April 2015, and the report was published in December 2015. [See](#) The project provided an analysis based on the information available in 2015 (with written and oral opinions). The intention was for gaps in information identified by this work to be potentially addressed in subsequent project(s).

**Contact** [Marcus Jacklin](#) for further information.

## Gear selectivity initiatives

### Basic Fishing Methods (BFM) Handbook

Seafish, along with the fishing industry, has been developing new selective technologies and net-based fishing activities for many years to reduce unwanted bycatch. Seafish gear trial work over the last 15 years is increasingly relevant and outputs of this research have influenced gear now being used in commercial fisheries. The new handbook was published in May 2015 and contains illustrations and descriptions of commonly used fishing methods, gears and rigs. It covers UK fisheries, with reference to other fisheries throughout the world that supply wild-caught fish and shellfish into the UK markets. The publication also provides some basic knowledge of how fish are caught using a range of fishing methods. [See](#)



### Gear Database

The Seafish gear database is a [web-based tool](#) providing information on all fishing

methods in regular use in the UK and EU, and easy access to in depth information on fishing gear and accurate selectivity data. It was launched in July 2015. It gives a full description and illustration of each gear, as well as a list of the species that are caught by each one. It also lists the selectivity and discard reduction methods commonly applied to each gear, with links to more detailed descriptions and explanations of each device. There is also an assessment of how effective each selectivity method is in targeting only specific species, or size of fish. This is supported by details of all scientific trials that have been undertaken, and all the reports that have been produced for each of the selective gears in the UK in the last 20 years.

### Gear Technology

The syllabus of the Seafish Gear Technology Training courses at Hirtshals flume tank has been modified to include a greater emphasis on gear selectivity to give fishermen an increased understanding of what selectivity devices are available for use in the gear they use. As an example Mike Montgomerie ran a series of courses for fishermen from Northern Ireland who studied 40 different selectivity devices, and discussed them in relation to the gear that they use, and also supported a group of Scottish twin rig skippers in developing a new design of *Nephrops* trawl to minimise gadoid bycatch. This work is ongoing and Mike Montgomerie is directly involved with new gear selectivity developments including the Gear Innovation and Technology Advisory Group (GITAG).

**Contact [Mike Montgomerie](#) for further information.**

## Best Practice Guidance for Assessing the Financial Performance of Fishing Gear.

Although there has been significant investment in new gear design, and research and analysis of gear effectiveness, very few studies have addressed the financial impacts of the LO for vessel operators. Working with the UK Fisheries Economics Network, Seafish has developed Best Practice Guidance for industry-led and scientist-led gear trials to help vessel owners assess the financial impacts of fishing with new gear that they are trialling. Seafish has also developed a Financial Assessment Spread sheet for vessel owners and trial supervisors (to use alongside the Best Practice Guidance), to provide a straightforward, standardised way for users to collect, analyse and compare gear trial results and assess the financial effectiveness of fishing modifications.

- Industry-led trials [see](#)
- Scientist-led trials [see](#)

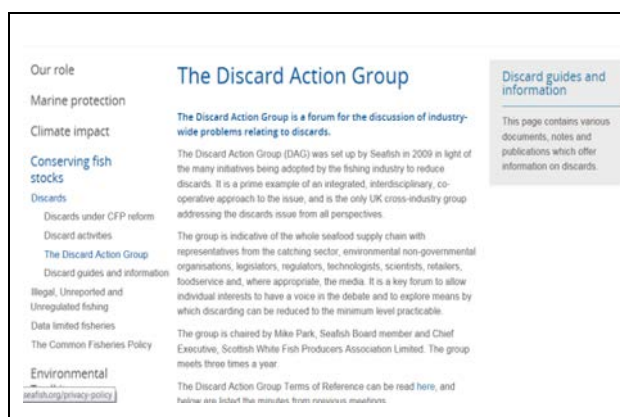
**Contact** [Ana Witteveen](#) for further information.

## DiscardLess Project

[DiscardLess](#) is a large EU-funded project designed to help provide the knowledge, tools and technologies to achieve the gradual elimination of discarding. The first focus is on preventing the unwanted fish from being caught, and the second focus is on making best use of the unavoidable unwanted catch. The DiscardLess project started in March 2015. Seafish are part of the consortium.

**Contact** [Arina Motova](#) for further information.

## Seafish Discard Action Group (DAG)



The group is an integrated, interdisciplinary, co-operative forum and is the only UK cross-industry group addressing the discards issue from all perspectives, with representatives from the catching sector, retailers, processors, foodservice environmental non-governmental organisations, legislators, regulators, technologists and scientists. Seafish holds two meetings per year typically attended by 30-40 stakeholders. News alerts are circulated at least twice a month to a circulation list of just under 300. [See](#)

Associated with DAG, in 2012 and 2014 Seafish completed two projects which were initially commissioned by Defra. These are; [Discards in Bulk Uses](#) and [Use of Discards in Bait](#) (the latter part funded by Seafish). These aimed to inform policy makers on the potential onshore utilisation of discards.

**Contact** [Karen Green](#) for further information.

## Briefings and guidance

There is a [Discards](#) section on our website with subsections covering; The LO; discard activities; the Discard Action Group minutes and presentations; and discard guides and information.

We produce regular briefing documents and guidance notes, and keep the Seafish web pages up-to-date. See our web pages on the [landing obligation](#), and the briefing note on the [pelagic landing obligation](#).

	Landing Obligation	Discard activities
Our role		
Marine protection		
Climate impact		
Conserving fish stocks		
Discards		
Landing Obligation		
Pelagic Landing Obligation		
Demersal Landing Obligation		
Onshore implications		
Discard activities		
The Discard Action Group		
Discard guides and information		
Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing		
Data limited fisheries		
The Common Fisheries Policy		
Environmental Toolkit		
Ethics in seafood		
Risk Assessment for Sourcing Seafood		

Contact [Karen Green](#) for further information.

## Sectoral support and regulatory guidance

### Conflict with other Regulations

The reformed CFP specifies that undersize fish - fish under the Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) - cannot go to direct human consumption uses, but can go to indirect human consumption or non-human consumption uses. This means fish that is fit for human consumption is legally not

permitted to directly enter the food chain. This fish now falls within the scope of the Animal By-Products Regulation (ABP) which was not intended for this situation.

Seafish worked with Defra to resolve some of the conflict. This has resulted in the agreement that undersized fish landings will come under food safety law, which removes the need for all landing sites to be approved for handling ABP. Seafish and Defra worked together and guidance was published by Defra to assist with the practical ways to comply and to ensure consistency of enforcement between landing sites.

This fish also falls within the Buyers and Sellers Regulation meaning that records must be submitted on the first transfer of ownership, in the same way as for fish for human consumption. Seafish already has guidance on compliance with the Buyers and Sellers regulation but have discussed simplification with the Marine Management Organisation. This fish is also subject to Seafish levy on the first sale of fish. Levy is payable when the first payment is made and if it remains a fish product.

Contact [Fiona Wright](#) for further information.

### Assisting Government

Seafish works closely with the Devolved Administrations, providing assistance to publicise consultations and meetings and providing a portal for disseminating information. The Defra Onshore Task Force (to capture issues from the onshore sectors) was incorporated into DAG in October 2016.

Contact [Karen Green](#) for further information.

### [Assisting Seafood Scotland/Scottish Seafood Partnership](#)

The urgent need to involve the onshore sector in LO work has been highlighted in Scotland in particular, as the majority of the domestic landings from the whitefish sector come into, and are processed, in Scotland. Seafish has been consulting with interested parties, and sharing the results of the Seafish economic analysis work with regards to the impact of the LO on the UK supply chain.

**Contact** [Jess Sparks](#) for further information.

### [Fisheries Innovation Scotland](#)

Seafish is a signatory to Fisheries Innovation Scotland ([FIS](#)) and is actively involved. FIS is a legally constituted, non-profit-distributing organisation, with the remit to bring together government, scientists, industry and other key stakeholders within a formal structure to lead an on-going programme of research, knowledge exchange and education. In July 2015 FIS held a conference titled 'Working with the landing obligation. The conference highlighted the latest advancements in understanding and working with the complexities of the LO, and included examples of progress made internationally. FIS has funded a number of projects specifically looking at the LO.

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*Supporting a profitable, sustainable and socially responsible future for the seafood industry.*

In 2015/16 FIS reports looked at 'Reconsideration of European Relative Stability Quota Shares and Implications for the LO' and 'Mapping and modelling the incentives for a LO in demersal fisheries'. For 2017/18 further projects are looking at selectivity, quota management, economic analysis of quota allocation and survivability.

[See FIS Final Reports for 2015/15, 2016/17 and 2017/18.](#)

**Contact** [Jess Sparks](#) for further information.

### [Seafish Strategic Investment Fund 2015/18](#)

The Seafish Strategic Investment Fund has funded selected projects that aim to directly address the LO issues. A 'Disruptive Technology Workshop' in May 2016 looked at developing new and disruptive technology solutions for the catching sector, to move beyond modifying existing systems and re-imagine an entirely new technology platform for 'selective catching'. [See report.](#)

**Contact** [Aoife Martin](#) for further information.

### [Marketing and Communications](#)

Seafish ongoing marketing activities seek to highlight the abundance of delicious, fresh seafood on offer across the UK, much of which is under-utilised. The [Fish is the Dish](#) website has all campaign details.

**Contact** [Heather Middleton](#) for further information.