

Dear Minister,

The upcoming joint recommendations for next year's discard plans are your opportunity to make the landing obligation a success, by taking concrete measures to achieve its purpose: improving selectivity, minimising unwanted catches and eliminating wasteful discarding. As part of the regional Member State groups you can now make a decisive step towards achieving all three and making the Common Fisheries Policy's goal of sustainable fisheries a reality.

The 2019 deadline for full implementation of the landing obligation, which includes its application to all species subject to catch limits, is fast approaching. We count on you and your fellow Member State representatives to develop ambitious joint recommendations that provide a strong basis for successful implementation of the landing obligation in 2019.

Throughout this process, it is essential that you address the shortcomings of past discard plan joint recommendations by:

1. Only agreeing exemptions that are supported by the necessary evidence, recognising that a failure to do so would be in direct contradiction to the purpose of the landing obligation.
2. Following scientific advice to ensure that evidence-based exemptions for addressing choke issues are only requested where they will help, not exacerbate, these choke issues. For example, Member States should not push for *de minimis* exemptions in situations where the choke issue is related to quota limitation, as the *de minimis* discard quantities will be deducted from this already limited quota.
3. Taking a positive approach in the joint recommendations by including constructive and clear proposals for improving selectivity and the accurate documentation of discards.

We have sent this letter to your fellow fisheries ministers in all Member States involved in the North Sea, North Western Waters and South Western Waters regional Member State groups. This follows a letter addressing the points above in more detail, which we have sent to Ministry officials and which you will find attached. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues outlined, as well as potential solutions, in person with you, or if appropriate, with the relevant Ministry official.

Yours sincerely,



Monica Verbeek  
Executive Director  
Seas At Risk



Catherine Weller  
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