

# The true cost of the EU fishing fiasco

**A**s the EU finally wrestles with the disastrous Common Fisheries Policy, a report this month from the New Economics Foundation reveals the scale of the problems. It finds that between 1963 and 2008, cod with a landing value of £2.7 billion were discarded because of CFP rules. This represents a loss of £935 million to the UK, enough to support more than 700 jobs in fishing.

The report says: "In one species studied in this report, cod living in the North Sea, Eastern Channel, and Skagerrak, almost 7.5 billion cod have been discarded since 1963; that's a staggering 1.4 for every cod landed. In cold, hard cash, this adds up to £2.7 billion lost at sea. We can ill afford to squander our environmental and economic wealth; especially given the current economic climate.

"Discarding is a symptom of poor management and practice. These two factors are also responsible for overfishing this public resource far below its economic potential. European fisheries management continues to use blunt policy tools,

such as single-stock quotas, that do little to accommodate the impacts of fishing on the wider ecosystem.

"Fishing technology is not yet sophisticated enough to avoid catching fish that have not had the chance to grow or reproduce and thus support the future of the stock and of the fishing industry – a loss which we estimate at £7.5 billion since 1963. The report concludes that "discarding has no place in a sustainable future where we must reconcile runaway consumption with collapsing ecosystems."

If discards had been banned during this period and left in the sea, says the report, revenue from the stock would have risen by £414 million – £144 million to the UK, supporting 219 more jobs – and the cod population would have been an average 13.2 per cent larger year-on-year.

"With completely selective gear sparing the small cod, discarded fish, with time to grow, could have weighed up to 9.26 million tonnes, almost five times the weight at which they were actually discarded (2.14 million tonnes)." Those fish could have been

worth £7.5 billion (£2.6 billion to the UK), but were simply thrown away.

The report finds that even if total catches were reduced by banning discards, landings could actually increase and the stock would benefit, growing 13 per cent larger each year. "Fewer catches mean more fish in the sea, and as they grow in size, they grow in economic value. This potential can be realised with smarter initiatives and practice, such as highly selective gear and seasonal fishing in minimal by-catch areas."

Commenting on the report, Ian Campbell, UK co-ordinator of the campaign group OCEAN2012, said: "We are calling for a carefully implemented discard ban aimed at reducing unwanted fish and by-catch, not the creation of new markets for them. There is more work to be done to show how a discard ban would work in practice, but NEF's report suggests that the Council and European Parliament need to support the Commission in ending discarding."

*A copy of the report is available from [www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)*

## Largest Swiss party rejects European Union

SWITZERLAND'S largest political party, the SVP or Swiss People's Party, has used the country's most potent symbol of independence to emphasise Swiss opposition to any suggestion of European Union membership.

The SVP has issued what it calls the Rütli Declaration 2011 to state that if Switzerland ever decided to join the EU – an unlikely scenario, it must be said – the 10 cantons in which it is the majority party would secede and form a new Swiss confederation. The Declaration echoes the medieval Rütli Schwur, an oath said to have been

sworn at Rütli meadow above Lake Lucerne by which the Old Swiss Confederation proclaimed its freedom.

In the SVP's modern version, the Declaration avows that "a Switzerland in the EU is Switzerland no more". Indeed, in the summer of 2010 the party promoted the idea that instead of becoming part of a larger organisation, the Swiss might invite the border regions of neighbouring states to join Switzerland.

Along with its Declaration, the SVP has also suggested that it would terminate existing international

immigration treaties and rebase immigration policy on only allowing immigrants who are self-supporting. There would be a strict numerical limit on immigrants and those allowed in would have no automatic right of permanent residence, no benefits and no right of family reunification.

Europe's most successful country, with by far the highest income per head as well as a long established democracy, once again shows a will to confront the biggest issues facing all of western Europe.

**Anthony Scholefield**