

Extracts from conclusions reached by the reports “Nordic experience in fisheries management”, “Efficient Fisheries management – Fishing rights and flexibility” and “Regionalisation of the EU’s Common Fisheries Policy”

Rights-based management

In the Nordic countries, RBM systems, including individual or communal rights along with transferability of rights have contributed to adjusting the fleet capacity and thereby to sustainable management of fish resources. This is the common experience from Iceland, Norway and Denmark, despite the differences in sector structure and resource base. With the reduction of the fleet capacity to match the TACs and fish quotas, the economic performance of the remaining active fishing vessels has improved significantly. The fishing industry in the Nordic countries has become more profitable with the adoption of RBM systems, generating a sizeable resource rent. The experience from the introduction of RBM systems also demonstrates that such policy decisions are very sensitive. Adaptive bottom-up approaches involving the stakeholders in the system design have shown to generate lasting solutions, whereas inflexible top-down approaches have largely failed, due to lack of legitimacy within the industry.

Co-management

In the Nordic countries, there are several examples of groups of fishermen or wider groups of stakeholders taking responsibility for parts of the management of specific fisheries under a co-management arrangement. The cases presented include different types of co-management. There are many consultative elements where the co-management groups comment on proposals from the authorities. However, the highest levels of legitimacy of regulations and compliance are found where the groups also have an advisory role, formal or informal, so that their proposals and recommendations are included in the management regulations.

Discards

The Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Norway have all implemented a ban on discards, combined with systems for control and enforcement, including strict interventions when the rules are violated. The crews and owners in these countries benefit economically from the landing of legal by-catch, and they are also allowed to buy quotas after landing. In both cases, discard would otherwise represent a financial loss. The systems in the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway place a significant responsibility on crews. Compliance seems to be high because the ban and the repercussions are well known. If you break the rules, you run the risk of being exposed. In addition, the management of discard is considered reasonable and legitimate by the crews and owners, due to the extensive degree of participation that they have traditionally had in the design of management systems in the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway.

In practice, however, a ban has to be backed both by reasonable rules and regulations and by financial incentives. It is impossible to totally avoid by-catch, and therefore mechanisms have been developed to discourage the discard of undersized or just small fish.

Regionalisation

There are certainly discussions surrounding the Nordic fisheries and regionalisation that are relevant to the reform of the CFP. However, it is important to note that no model can be transferred directly from one setting to another – as the variations between the Nordic countries clearly demonstrate. In the discussion of the Nordic experience in relation to CPF reform, their specific contexts must be kept in mind, and questions must be posed about the social, political and ecological circumstances under which the specific solutions and models have been developed.