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## Media Release

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# WWF WELCOMES EU-NORWAY AGREEMENT TO REDUCE DISCARDS

*Brussels – Trials already underway in several EU Member States allowing fishermen to land more of their catch in return for extra quota can be increased as a result of the EU-Norway fisheries agreement reached yesterday. WWF welcomes the agreement which aims to halt the wasteful practice of discarding, particularly for cod and whiting, and urges EU Fisheries Ministers to endorse it at the upcoming Fisheries Council (13-14 December) in Brussels.*

*“The current system of setting quotas based on what fishermen land instead of what they catch is indefensible. It leads to the unnecessary killing of millions of tons of marine life each year. It is long overdue that we move to a system of catch quota management whereby fishermen catch less but land more. By using onboard cameras and fully documenting catches and the state of stocks at sea scientific data is also improved. It’s responsible, it’s transparent, it’s a win-win situation for both fish and fishermen,”* said Louize Hill, Fisheries Policy Officer at WWF.

Up to 50% of all fish caught in the North sea is thrown back, a practice known as discarding. Despite the existence of long term management plans (LTMPs) for important fish species such as cod, haddock and herring there has been no end to discards. As a result of poor enforcement, the cod recovery plan in place since 2008 has largely failed to reduce discards and achieve its objective of reducing cod mortality. In countries such as Denmark and Scotland where trials with catch quota are ongoing, all catches are recorded and discards are prohibited.

Member States will now have up to 12% extra cod to attribute to boats participating in the fully documented fishery trials. Quotas for all stocks with LTMPs were set in line with these, and a management plan was agreed on for whiting. A Total Allowable Catch increase of 15% was set for whiting which should lead to a significant reduction in discards, currently a serious problem due to the concentration of whiting in the north North Sea.

However, to successfully apply catch quota management the following conditions need to be met:

- 1) Ensure that extra allocated quota remain sufficiently less than the estimated discard levels for that stock. For North Sea cod it is estimated that 36% of all fish caught are thrown back to the sea (ICES advice).
- 2) Ensure that existing LTMPs are improved by stepping up control and enforcement measures to end discards (CCTV cameras and observers on board, use of selective gear, closures prohibiting fishing in specific areas or during specific seasons).
- 3) Shift from the long term management of species to the long term management of fisheries; for the EU this requires the reform of its Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in which LTMPs for fisheries would be mandatory by 2015 and would put an end to the yearly haggling over quota.

*“Cod, haddock and whiting are caught at the same time by the same vessels. A system that manages species separately doesn’t make sense. Plans need to take into account the specificities of a fishery, they need to be designed by regional stakeholders including fishermen. The current top-down, fragmented management is a failure but can be mended by an ambitious reform of the CFP.”* Hill added.

### **Further information:**

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