



# The Landing Obligation in the European Union Common Fisheries Policy

→ Marie-Joëlle Rochet, Verena Trenkel,  
Laurence Fauconnet  
→ Ifremer, France

# Fishfight campaign 2010 – 2013: Bycatch And Discards are BAD

- Immoral
- Waste of valuable resource
- Adverse ecological impacts

New regulation to reduce discards by incentivizing more selective fishing



# The newly launched Common Fisheries Policy – Dec. 2013

Objectives: *Fishing activities environmentally sustainable on the long-term [...] achieving economic, social and employment benefits [...] supplying food to the Union market [...].  
Gradually eliminate discards [...].*

## Provisions:

- Conservation measures: capacity control, fishing gears
- More multi-annual plans
- Regionalisation

# Article 15: obligation to land all catches

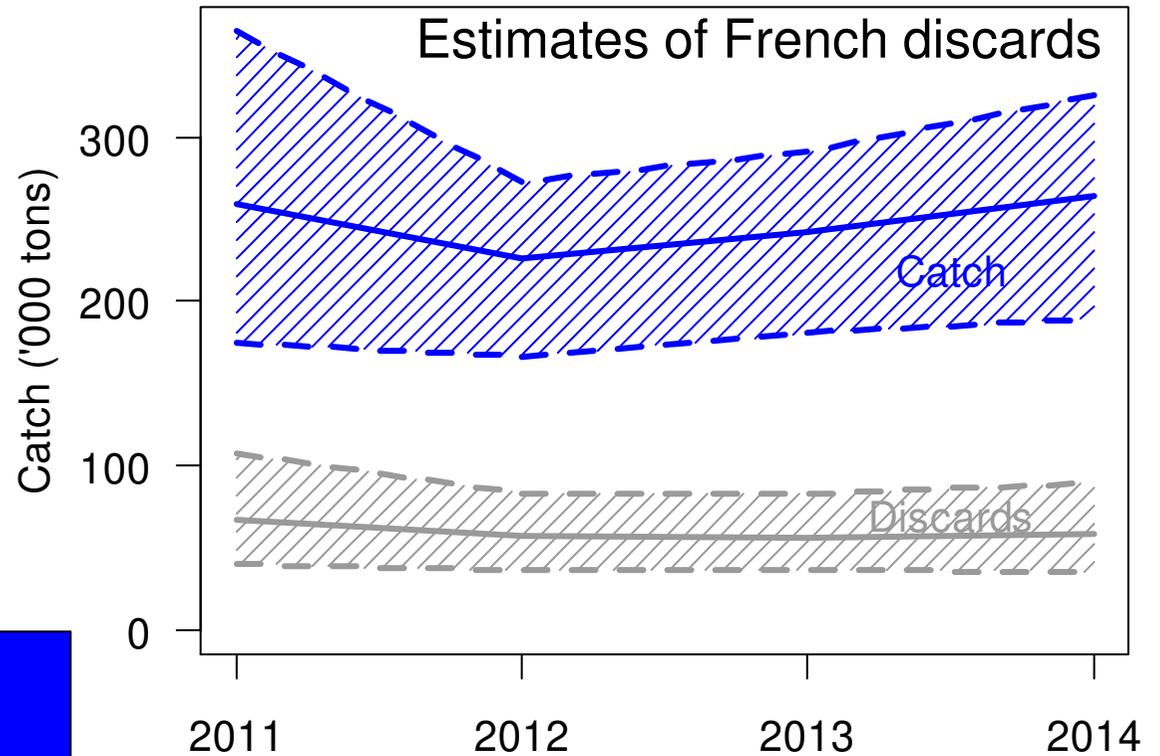
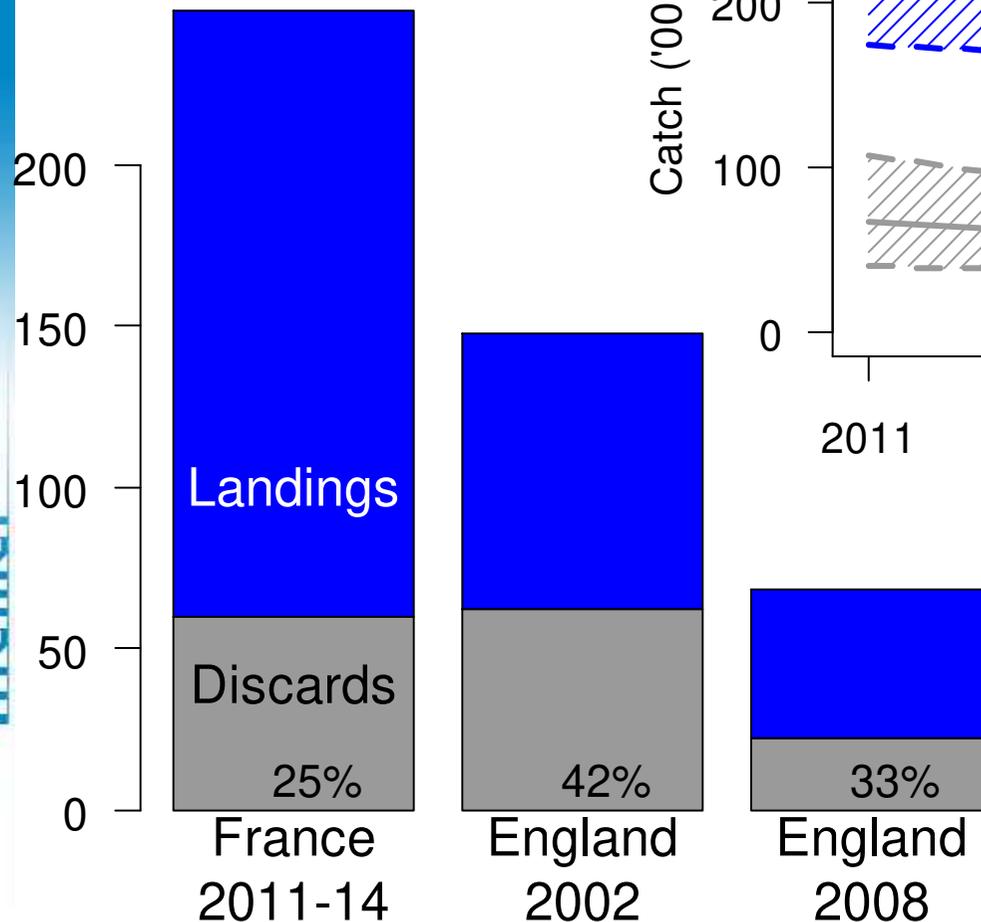
- Starting January 2015, gradually by fishery:
  - Land all catch of all species subject to catch limits
- Landing quotas replaced by catch quotas
- Minimum landing sizes replaced by Minimum conservation reference sizes
  - Fish < MCRS must be landed for purposes other than direct human consumption
- Exemptions, quota flexibility
  
- Monitoring, control and enforcement incumbent on the Member States

Can a regulation focused on resource utilization address broad management objectives, such as limited environmental impacts, economic development, and food supply?

1. Discards in the European fisheries prior to the new regulation
2. Consequences of the newly launched Common Fisheries Policy

# EU fisheries: high levels of discards

Onboard observer programmes data

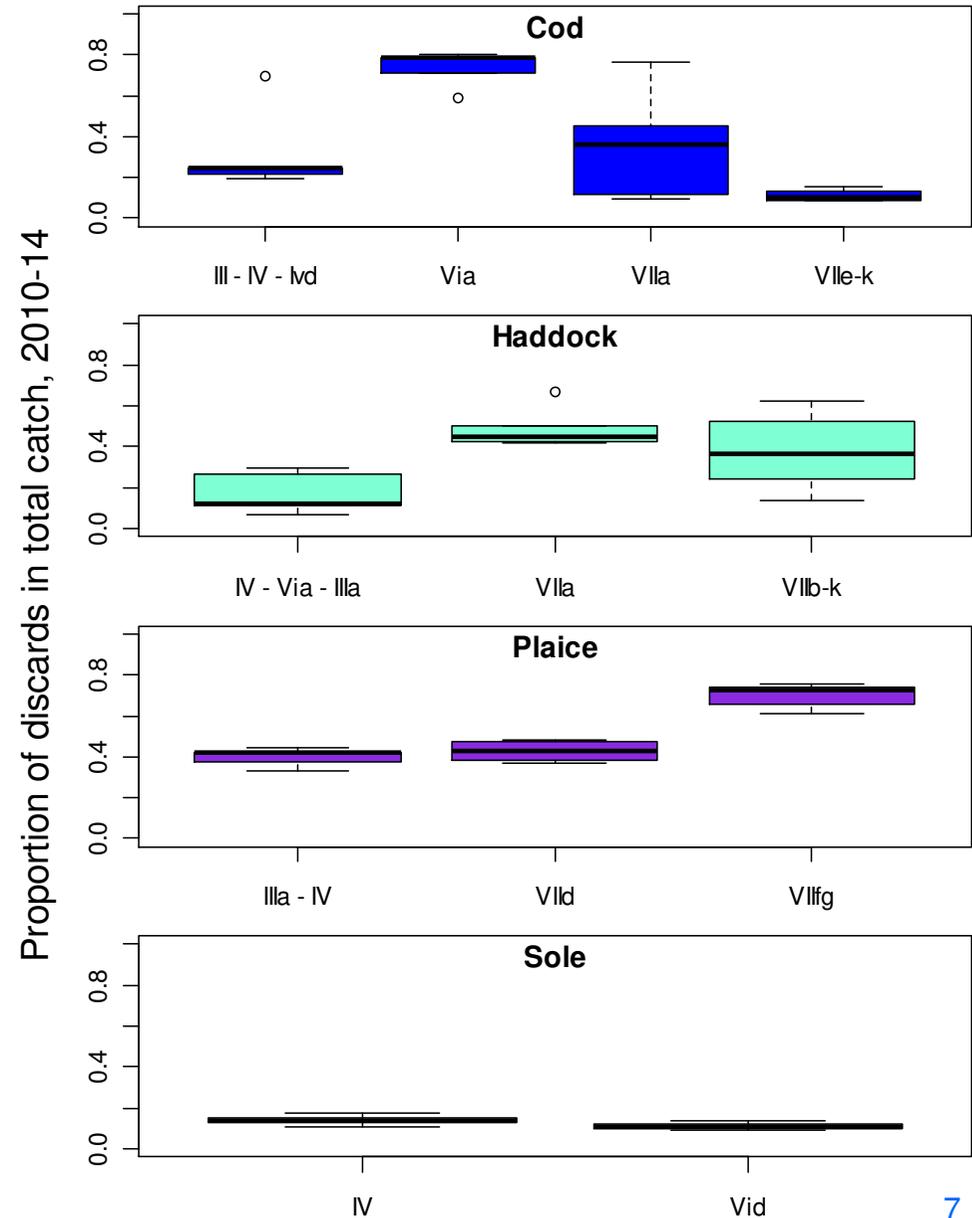


# EU fisheries: high levels of discards

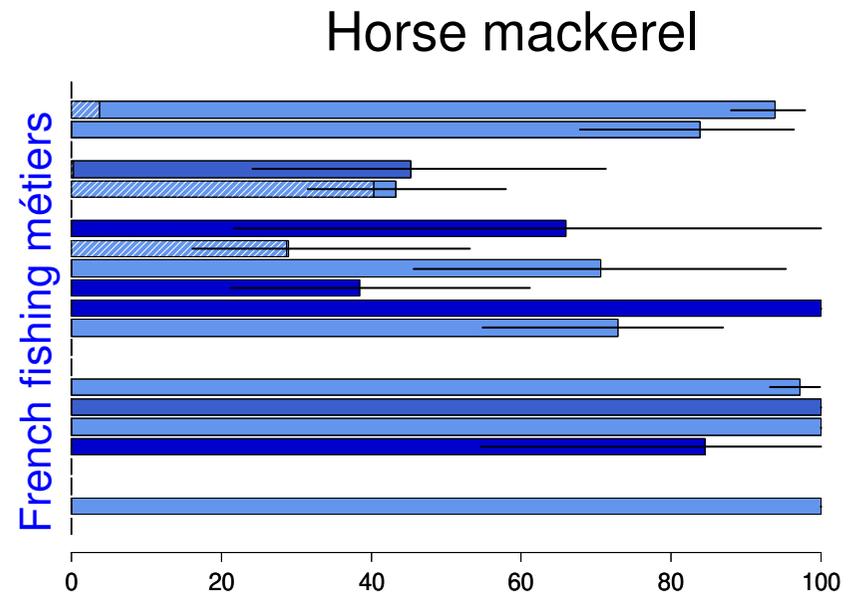
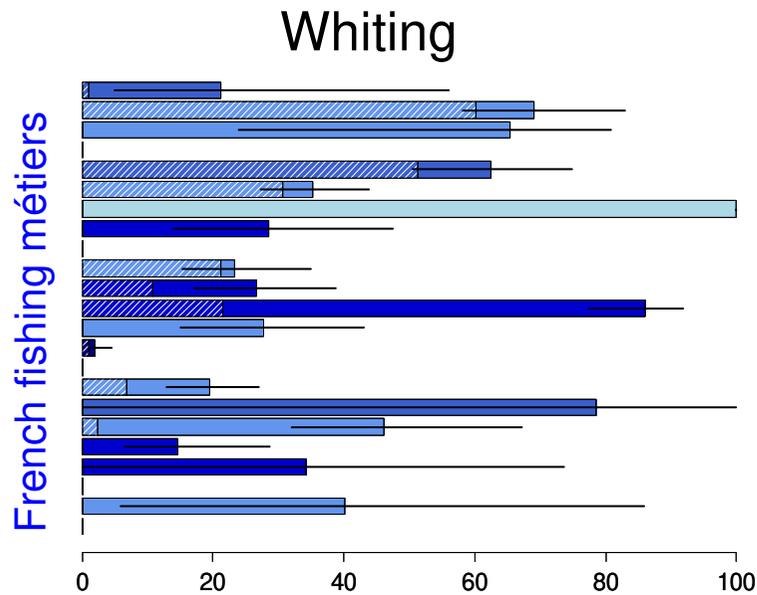
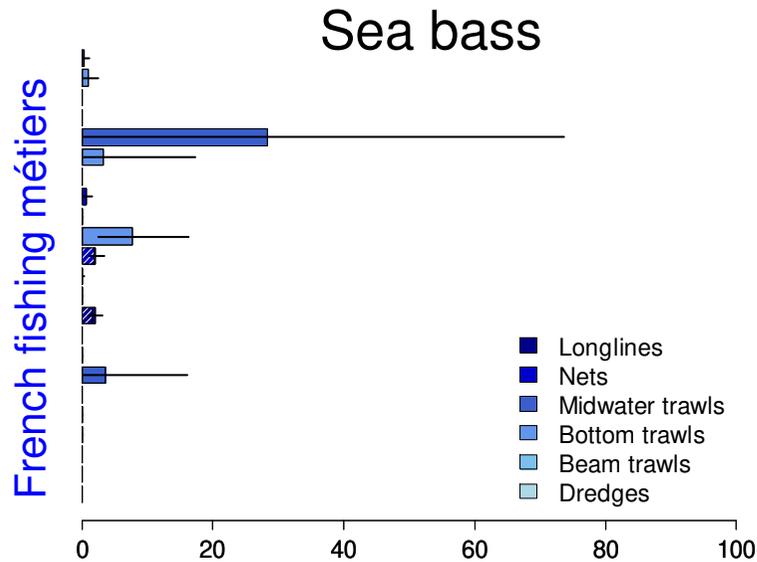
## Discards

→ account for a significant part of catch in some stocks

→ vary across species & stocks

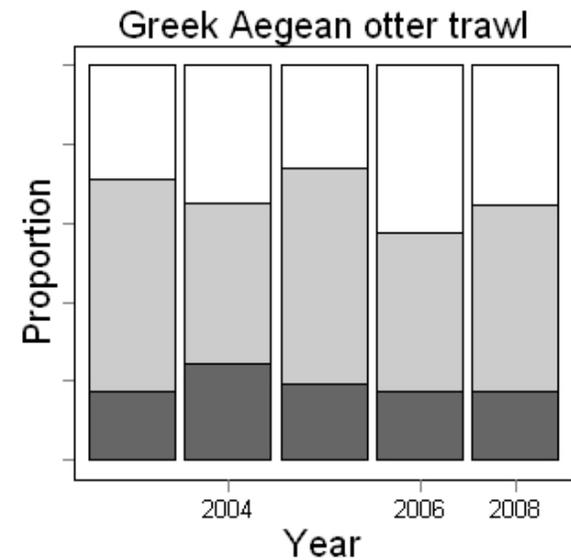
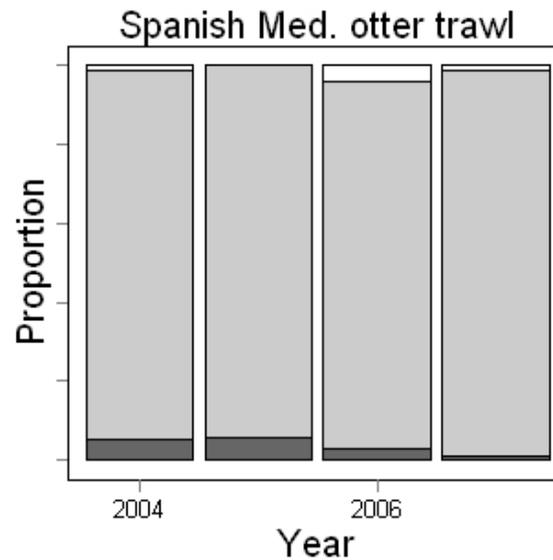
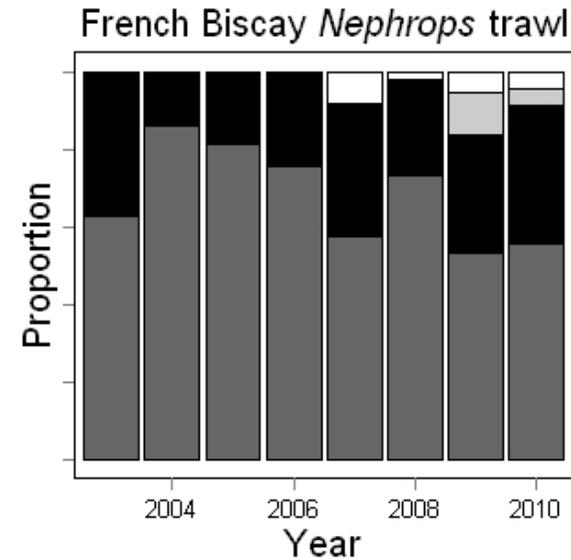
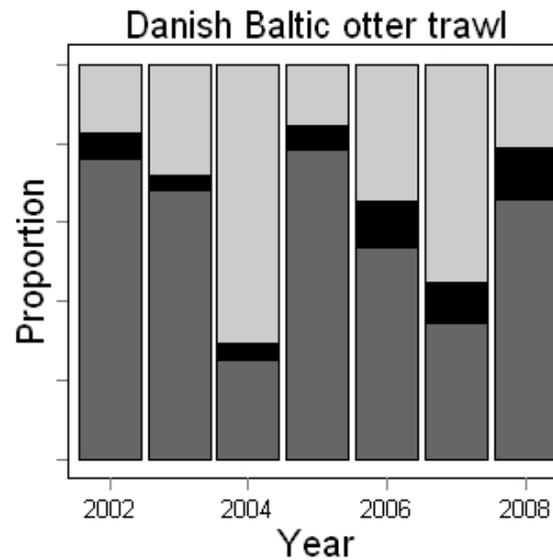
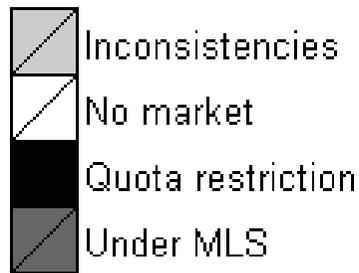


# Discards vary across areas, fisheries, and species



Discarded proportion (%)

# EU fisheries: reasons for discarding vary



# Consequences of discards on ecosystems: limited knowledge

→ Discards subsidize bird communities

- North Sea: bird populations impacted by recent decrease in discards

→ Water column, fish?

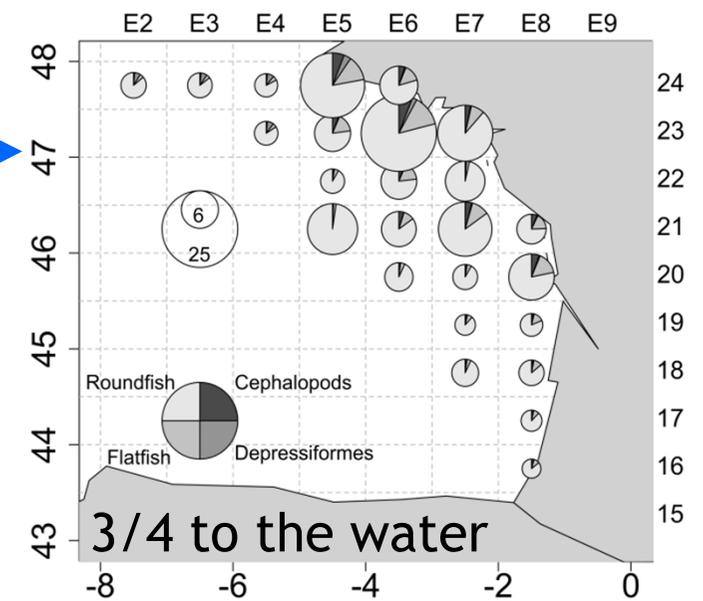
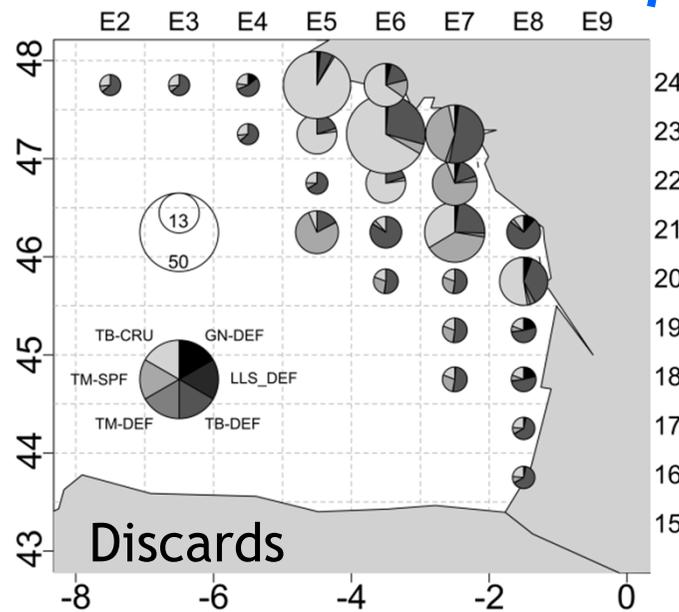
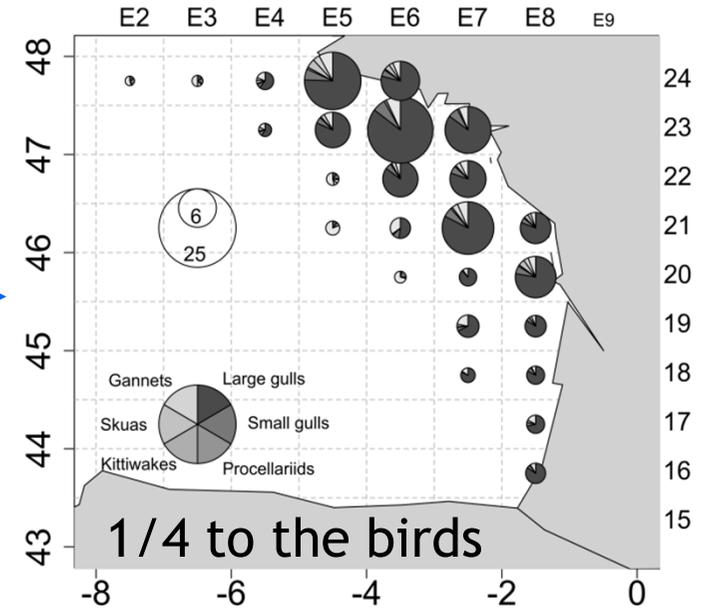
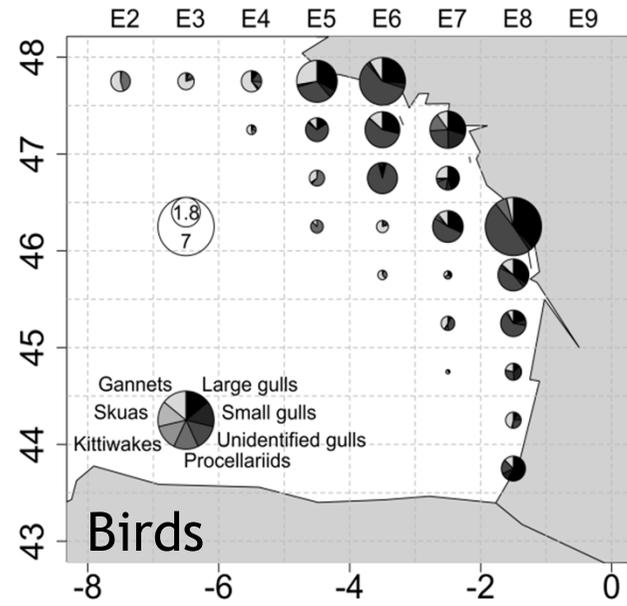
- Suspicion that increase of *Scyliorhinus canicula* in European waters partly due to scavenging on discards

→ Discards subsidize benthic communities

- Input <<< benthos total energy budget
- Impacts local, few studies

# The fate of discards in the Bay of Biscay

Survey



Obsmer

# Summary: Discards in EU fisheries prior to new regulation

→ 2002 EU Common Fisheries Policy incentivized high levels of discards

→ High variability in amounts discarded, discard composition, and reasons for discarding

→ *Reducing discards may be complex, solutions to be tailored for each gear, species, area, fleet, harbour...*

# Implementation of the Landing Obligation: 2015

- Pelagic: in force, fishing ~ as usual
- Enforcement postponed to 2017
- Demersal: Groups of member states & Advisory Committees are:
  - Defining target species & fisheries (vessel lists)
  - Awaiting quota upgrade
  - Negotiating
    - Minimum conservation reference sizes
    - Exemptions: « high survival », *de minimis*
    - Quota flexibility

# Implementation of the Landing Obligation : 2016 – demersal fisheries

Pilot trips in Landing Obligation conditions to estimate:

- Increased sorting time
- Costs of gears, additional work & equipment
- Loss of marketable catch
- Decreased catch value
- Utilization of non-desired catch

Preliminary results

- Improved selectivity difficult to achieve
- Not all skippers and crews willing to comply<sub>14</sub>

# Expected consequences of the Landing Obligation

Expectations under two hypotheses, *all other things being equal, stocks at MSY*

→ Landing Obligation is enforced

Member states take on

- control observers or video-surveillance with sufficient coverage
- penalty systems

→ Landing Obligation is not enforced

Discarding continues

# « contribute to the collection of scientific data »

LO enforced

→ « Fully documented fisheries »:

- 100% coverage, all catch recorded

LO not enforced

→ Onboard observer programs: increased

- Deployment bias
- Observer bias

→ Non-landed bycatch not observable

- Illegal & legal discards
- Birds, mammals, protected species...

→ Increased reliance on

- **Surveys**
- Landings & effort

# « achieving economic, social and employment benefits »

LO enforced

→ Short term:

- Costs increase
- Revenues decrease
- Decreased profitability
- Decreased fleets & fishing activity

→ Long term:

- Economic benefits
- Employment losses

LO not enforced

→ Short term:

- Business as usual
- Increased catch (unaccounted for discards) – depending on quota upgrade

→ Long term:

???

# « environmental sustainability »

## 1. Stocks

LO enforced

→ Quota species:

MSY

→ Other species:

Change in fishing  
pressure intensity &  
distribution => ???

LO not enforced

→ Quota species:

MSY

→ Other species:

Change in fishing  
pressure distribution  
=> ???

# « environmental sustainability »

## 2. Birds

LO enforced

→ Short term:

- Sea birds starve
- Increased bird mortality
- Decreased bird population growth rates

→ Long term:

- Different bird communities

LO not enforced

→ Short term:

Limited change

→ Long term:

???

# « contributing to the availability of food supplies »

LO enforced

→ Short term:  
diversification of sea  
food products?

→ Long term:  
???

LO not enforced

→ Short term:  
no change

→ Long term  
???

# Conclusion

→ Consequences of the Landing Obligation will depend on the ability of Member States to enforce the regulation

→ *In an ideal world*, Landing Obligation contributes to address

- economic benefits (but not employment)

→ In the real world, Landing Obligation may complicate achievement of other management objectives