

EU ministers reach deal on fisheries reform

May 15 2013



Fisherman Jorg Perschke delivers pike on May 14, 2013 at the port of Stahlbrode in the Greifswalder Bodden region, northeastern Germany. EU ministers agreed early on Wednesday a reform of the EU's fishing quota system that must now be approved by the European Parliament, where lawmakers are set on curbing overfishing.

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Ireland, which is chairing the talks under the country's six-month EU presidency, is trying to reconcile the conflicting interests of member states with the hardline stance of the [European Parliament](#).

The key sticking point is Parliament's insistence that discards—the wasteful practice of dumping unwanted fish overboard—should be banned.

"We have agreed with a very strong support from the Council. Only one country didn't give support to an updated negotiating mandate for the presidency," said Irish Agriculture and Fisheries Minister Simon Coveney.

European [fishing boats](#) have long discarded fish, by some estimates up to a quarter or more of their catch, before entering port to ensure they meet strict EU quotas.

In the hard won compromise, [fishermen](#) would have the right to discard up to 5.0 percent of their catch at the end of a transitional phase instead of the 7.0 percent mooted in an earlier proposal.

Ireland had warned that it would be a "disaster" if difficult talks on reform of the EU's under-pressure fishing regime failed to deliver an agreement, Ireland warned Tuesday, calling on all sides to compromise.

Simple in principle, a ban on discards poses real challenges for fisheries and quota management, as well as increased costs for the industry in key states such as Spain.

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