The Norwegian Discard ban

A brief history & factors contributing to its success

DiscardLess stakeholder meeting

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Rome 9-10 March 2017

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Discard Ban –
A radical change of direction in Norwegian fisheries

The introduction of a discard ban in the Norwegian Barents Sea cod & haddock fisheries, was a bold show of political leadership in addressing, and averting what could have rapidly become a biological & socioeconomic crisis of dimensions for coastal Norway.

Regulatory Measures – Discard ban

The Norwegian discard ban was introduced in 1987, and originally covered cod & haddock in the Norwegian economic zone north of 62°N. The discard ban has gradually been expanded to cover the whole of the Norwegian Exclusive economic zone. To-day the ban covers all main commercial species in the Norwegian EEZ

Discard Ban

The question;

Is a discard ban the right instrument to prevent fishermen dumping unwanted catch/ bycatch?

Answer?

YES! --- A ban on discards is essential, and when combined with accurate catch monitoring, forms the basis for accountability and good stock assessments.

A discard ban is only as good as the means available to enforce it.

Regulatory Measures – legal basis

The legal basis for the Norwegian discard ban is;

The Act of 3 June 1983 relating to Salt Water Fisheries activities. (replaced by new Act on marine resources 1 January 2009 The Discard ban was replaced by an obligation to land all catches)
and a Regulation of 22 December 2004 on how to practice the salt water fisheries (tech regs)

Regulatory Measures – Discard arrangement

Primary Measures

Discard ban for approximately 55 species - with some exceptions. Started gradually with cod & haddock and covered 18 species by 2008, and approx 55 by 2014.

Regulatory tools of implementation.
Technical measures (fishing gears)
Bycatch quotas.
Closure of fishing-grounds.
Economic compensation – illegal catch.

Regulatory Measures – Discard ban

Discard ban -if the fish is dead or dying

– could create some difficulties in **pelagic fisheries** (purse seine)

-The use of grading equipment equipments in pelagic fisheries (herring, mackerel) is prohibited.

-In the **cod fisheries** - static gears – minor problem

DISCARD ARRANGEMENT

Necessary to combine a discard ban with other (secondary) measures to prevent discards:

Protection of juveniles.

Minimum mesh size, corresponding to the minimum landing size of target species.

Introduction (mandatory) of sorting grids –cod trawl, shrimp trawl (from 1990)

Discard Arrangement

Discard ban – some exceptions (by enforcement) – discussions between the authorities and the industry

Very small amounts (kg) of:

-fish damaged by fishing gear.

Small fish (well below minimum landing size) and of no commercial interest.

Benthos –allowable to be discarded at sea

The industry has had a good experience with this arrangement.

Technical equipments -sorting grids

On their introduction, sorting grids were strongly opposed on the basis of being cumbersome, and of being a danger to the fisherman when in the act of hauling and shooting the trawl, especially in bad weather conditions.

The fishermen applied for a dispensation from the rule in times of bad weather,- this application was denied by the regulating authorities.

In later years grids of less weight, and with greater flexibility have been introduced to the industry. These grids have so far posed few problems.

Technical equipments - grids

Application for exemption of use in areas free from juveniles (fish under minimum size). This application was based on the grounds of reducing fuel consumption and thereby reducing pollutant gas emissions. It is also the case that in some fisheries catch rates also increase.

A dispensation has been given for a geographically defined area, and for a four month period January to April. This area is of experience known to be free from juveniles.

Quota Measures

Bycatch regulations
-maximum % of a species in each catch
-counting the maximum % during a period of a week (coastal fleet)

IQ regulations
-challenge - not get exhausted of quotas for some species (Chokes in mixed fisheries)

Combined quota system (mixed quota)
– manage cod, haddock and saithe together – using conversion factors (used in the coastal fisheries north of 62°N for some years)

Closure of Fishing-grounds

Permanent closed Areas
-where juveniles or protected species are present throughout the year.

Seasonal closed Areas
-where juveniles or protected species are distributed in different seasons/periods during the year.

Closure of Fishing-grounds

Real Time Closure of Areas
-protect juveniles or specific species

-**Surveillance service - Barents Sea programme**

-important to have a good sampling system (cover relevant gear types)

–hired vessels or ordinary fishing vessels with inspectors on board

–The fishermen have asked the authorities to use the crew on the Coastguard vessels in a cooperation with fishing vessels in such operations

Closure of Fishing-grounds

. Could be a problem when RTC areas are closed for fisheries for a long period due to lack of resources (vessels/inspectors) for sampling.

A demand from Norwegian fishermen that real time closed areas should be automatically re-opened after 4 weeks – new sampling from fishing vessels will then confirm if there is a need to re-close the area again.

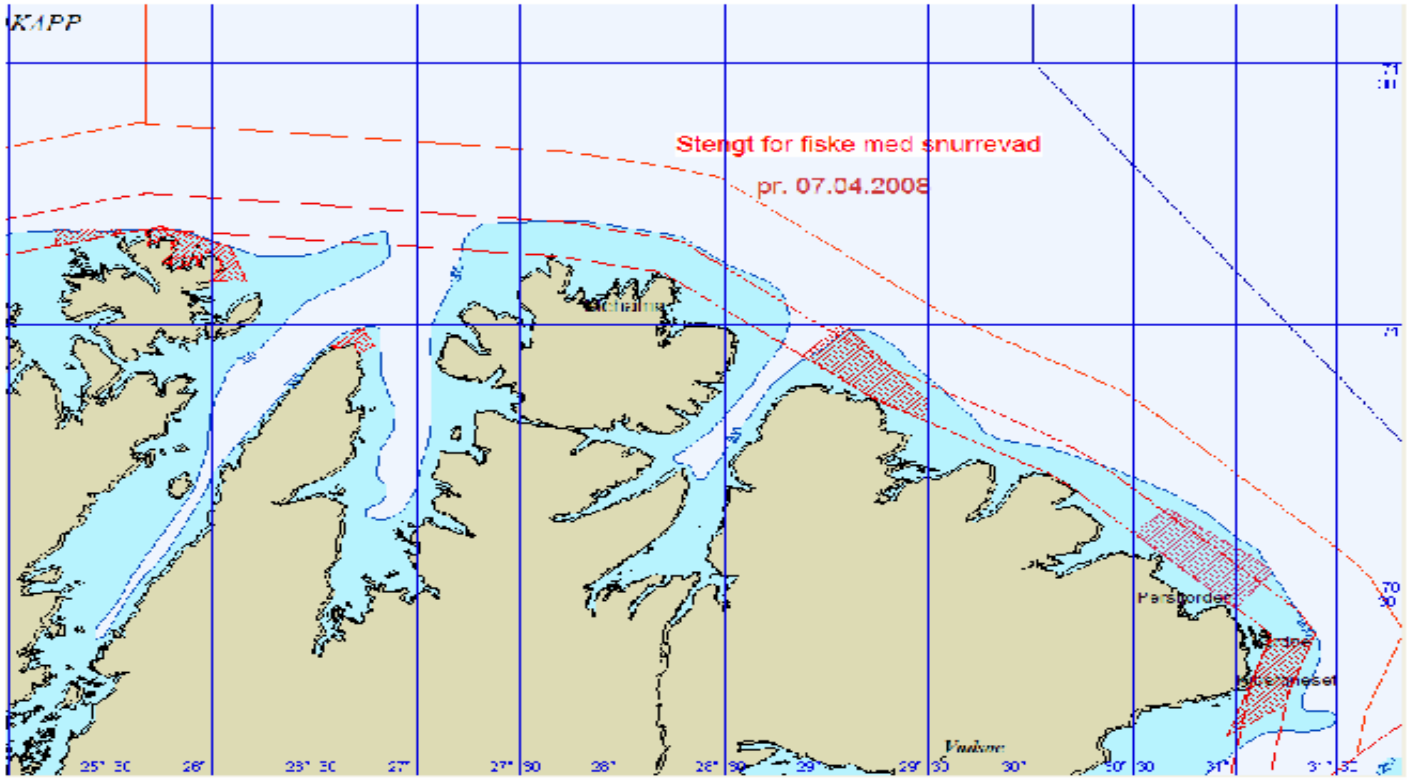
So fare this demand from the industry has not been accepted by the authorities.

Closure of Fishing-grounds

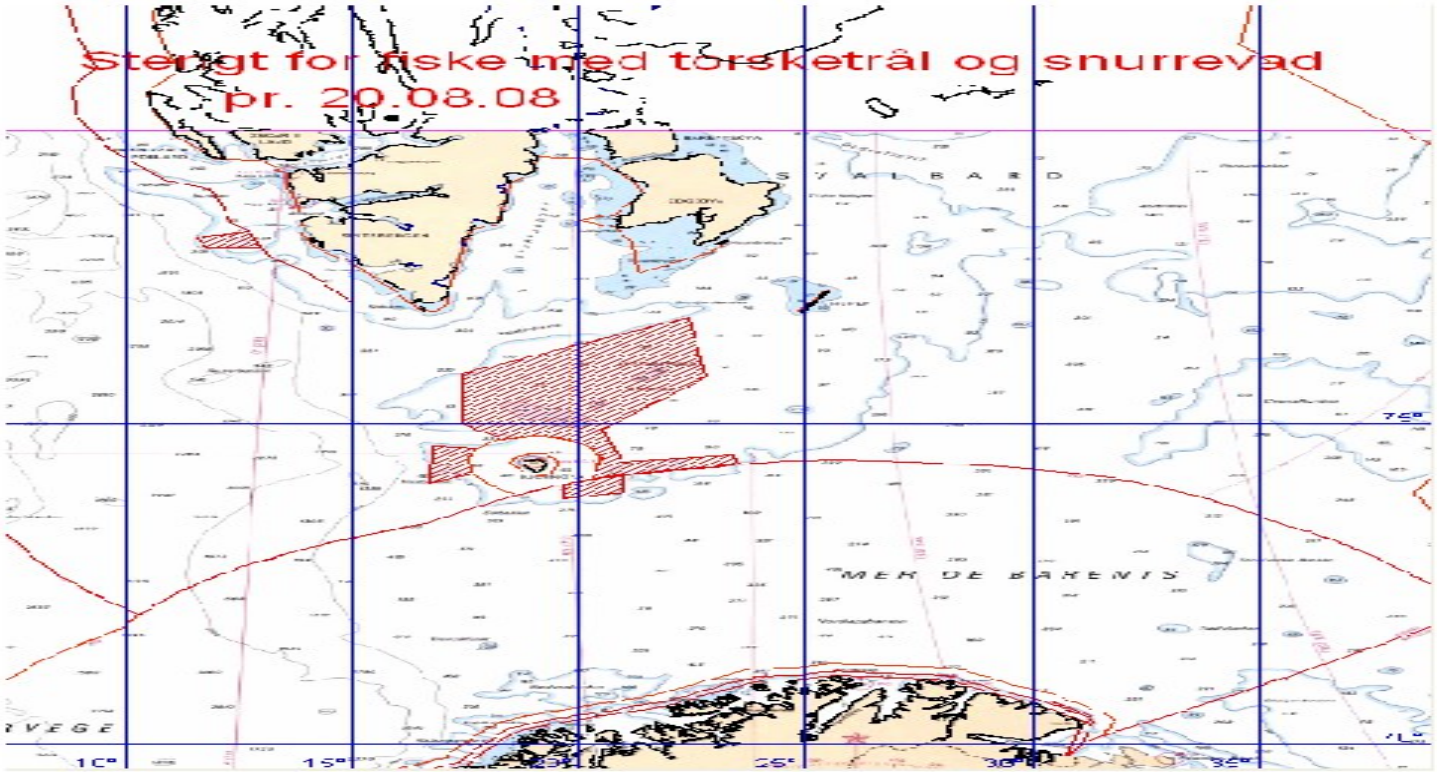
- There has been some discussions about the criteria used to close areas.

Closures are problematic for vessels engaged in shrimp trawling, due to high amounts of juveniles of cod, haddock, Greenland halibut &red fish – some adjustments have been made.

Real time closed areas for Danish Seine – Coast of Finnmark



Real time closed areas for Cod trawl and Danish seine – Barents Sea and Spitsbergen



Areas requested not to fish

In the last years the Coastguard has used an “ad hoc” measure of **areas of concern,** where fishermen are asked to exert great caution. These areas are closed by request, and are not fished on a voluntary basis.

Precautionary areas are not closed by a legal decision, but by co-operation between the fisherman and the coastguard.

Used in some pelagic fisheries if the composition of species change rapidly in an area

Economic compensation – illegal catch

Vessels with an illegal catch, or catch above its quota. The value of the catch will be confiscated by the Sales organisations, and an economic compensation for the work and expenses connected to bring the catch on land paid to the vessel – (catch not evident intended)

This arrangement was introduced as a result from a demand from the fishermen (just for white fish sector)
A compensation is 20% of the first hand value of the illegal catch, or catch above the quota is seen as big enough as an incentive not to discard, and not high enough to make it profitable.

Conclusion

Our experience is that a discard ban will not solve all the problems about dumping unwanted catches at sea.

In principle a discard ban is absolutely more preferable than a order to discard illegal or unwanted catches catches over board.

A discard ban is the only navigable way forward when seen in the perspective of sustainability of our common marine resources.

Important to be clear of what the **primary objective** is with the introduction of a discard ban.

Create “rules & tools” that support the objective,

and stimulate the fishermen to land all catches.

Only then can all catches be audited in relation to their respective quota allocations (vessel, group, national, total)

Correct catch statistics is an important input for the scientists when making stock assessments and calculating TACs

”Prevention is (still) better than cure”.

Avoidance and selection should be the mantra for the future.

Secure industry understanding that capture & discarding of juveniles is a waste of future bioeconomic potential.

Move focus away from ”problem” to ”solution”.

Have a common understanding of goals, and ways to achieve them.

Nurture sense of ownership to process & management, co- responsibility and accountability.

Thank you all for your attention.