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Fishing quotas 'set to be decentralised' under new EU rules

Rules deciding fishing quotas could be decentralised as European fisheries ministers moved to scrap current rules.

By Chris Irvine
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The move is set to give more power to member states and to the fishing industry - environmentalists and fisherman have long argued the current system does not work.

The EU's Common Fisheries Policy has been reviewed every 10 years since its creation in 1983.

The EU now has until 2012 to draw up a new Common Fisheries Policy   Photo: PA

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It was last agreed in 2002.

Fish caught over quota are currently dumped back in the sea even if they are dead. Scientists have estimated that four fifths of EU fish stocks are overexploited.

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Huw Irranca Davies, Britain's Fisheries Minister, said it the annual "horse-trading" over quotas need to be replaced by a "longer term view informed by good regional science and management".

Bertie Armstrong, Chief Executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, said the announcement was "good news".

"We've proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the present framework - which is tightly-controlled by the Commission - isn't working at all and needs to be decentralised," he said.

"The outcome of this council seems to be that that's been accepted by all. We weren't absolutely sure that the Commission would be ready to let go and decentralise, but certainly that seems to be the theme.

"And that's highly welcome."

Earlier in the day, Denmark said Europe's 80,000 fishing boats should be fitted with surveillance cameras to stop fishermen throwing back less valuable fish.