



The big environment news story at the moment is all about fish. This month has seen talks on reforming the Common Fisheries Policy, with a view to ending discards aiming to regenerate stocks by 2015. Predictably, though, there have been allegations of 'backsliding' by those nations who stand to lose most from the conservation move. Equally predictably, there has been a visible division in the camps between the conservation-minded northern states and the more short-term views of southern Europe, including France.

The main story on the DEFRA site, however, is that the UK's devolved governments have reached an agreement on allocating the quota on an individual national basis. That is assuming there are any fish left after the latest round of wrangling. Greenpeace has initiated an innovative campaign to lobby for a fair and sustainable system. You can 'Be a fisherman's friend' by sending the petition to the Fisheries Minister or even star in your own sea shanty.

The issue of discard has long been an international scandal. On the BBC Raymond Blanc was to be seen gaping in disbelief as cod was tossed back into the sea – dead – to feed the gulls because the quota had been exceeded.

Elsewhere in the world, *The Guardian* has reported that tuna contaminated with radiation from Fukushima has been found in California.

Aside from fish, gas has been in the news. Gas has been officially branded by the EU as a 'green fuel', according to a report in *The Guardian*. The farcical decision was apparently taken after lobbying by the gas industry to get its hands on billions of euros of subsidy. If true, and the report claims to have seen a secret document to that effect, it would prove to be perhaps the single most perverse decision made by the EU in its history. The rationale is that gas is less polluting than coal. The report claims that 'officials' have altered a document setting down the

terms for the research funding to make specific reference to gas. Wouldn't let them anywhere near our environment directory.

Meanwhile, a report by major investor in gas, Scottish Widows Investment Partnership, claims that in the US the switch to shale gas from coal is not delivering the advantages of lower emissions because the extraction companies are not capturing methane.

SWIP's head of sustainability Dr Craig Mackenzie is quoted as saying: "We need to reduce the climate impact of our emissions now in order to gain more time for societies to adapt, and to avoid short-term tipping points. By failing to control methane, the gas industry is letting much of the benefit of switching from coal to gas slip away."

Looks like we're all fracked!

Chris Stokes