

## EBFA welcomes new EU limits on seafloor litter

Brussels, 8 December 2025

**Marine litter is one of the most serious environmental issues facing the world's oceans. It threatens marine wildlife on which fisheries depend and pose risks to human health. Scientists have estimated that up to 12 million tonnes of plastic enter our oceans every year and most of it doesn't float. It sinks! To tackle this issue, the EU has just set new limits on seafloor litter. EBFA welcomes this move and highlights the vital role of EU bottom fishers, who are actively helping to clear the seafloor of litter and make a real difference to the health of our oceans.**

There are many factors contributing to marine litter increase, such as poor waste management and public attitudes towards littering, of which 80% comes from land<sup>1</sup>.

Fishers are witnessing the issue grow firsthand, especially considering most of the data is available thanks to their collections during bottom trawling. Fishers have already implemented substantial reductions and restrictive measures to allow the recovery of fish stocks, yet their livelihoods are increasingly threatened by growing external pressures such as marine pollution.

To tackle this issue, the European Commission has, for the first time, set measurable thresholds for seabed litter:

- In areas monitored through trawl surveys, no increase in litter is permitted.
- In areas monitored visually, litter must not exceed one item per 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

To meet the new thresholds, Member States must adopt appropriate measures within their marine strategies, as mandated by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

The European Bottom Fishing Alliance (EBFA) welcomes these new limits, hoping they will help the decrease of marine pollution just as previous measures have done for EU coastlines<sup>2</sup>, where litter has fallen by nearly one-third over the past five years. Margot Angibaud, EBFA Secretariat, declared: *"fishers depend on healthy oceans to do their work. They are an active part of the solution, removing marine litter every time their gear crosses paths with it. Fishers are actively participating in specific projects such as "Fishing for Litter" that already collected more than 13 million kilograms"*<sup>3</sup>.

To encourage fishers' role, EBFA calls on simplification to reduce administrative burden for those who generously contribute to marine litter removal. Indeed, they shouldn't have to bear the cost of waste management but be properly incentivised and compensated for their efforts.

Finally, EBFA urges European institutions to address the issue at the international level, in particular through ocean diplomacy in the ongoing plastics Treaty negotiations. This is crucial, considering that 88-95% of the global plastic load entering the seas comes from ten rivers, 8 in the Asian and 2 in the African continents<sup>4</sup>.

### Press contact

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20181005STO15110/plastic-in-the-ocean-the-facts-effects-and-new-eu-rules>

<sup>2</sup> [https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/marine-litter-eu-coastline-down-almost-one-third-2025-02-04\\_en](https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/marine-litter-eu-coastline-down-almost-one-third-2025-02-04_en)

<sup>3</sup> <https://fishingforlitter.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Schmidt, C., Krauth, T., & Wagner, S. (2017). Export of Plastic Debris by Rivers into the Sea. *Environmental science & technology*, 51(21), 12246-12253.