



European Commission

No 48 August 2010

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN EUROPE



 **Traceability, labelling and certification:
informing consumers**

 **TAC and quotas 2011:** towards maximum sustainable yield

 **Reform:** actors join in the debate

 **Event:** Seafood 2010

Shows and exhibitions

Conxemar, Vigo (Spain), 5-7 October 2010

> For more information: www.conxemar.com

Aquaculture Europe, Porto (Portugal), 5-8 October 2010

> For more information: www.easonline.org

Conferences and meetings

NAFO, annual meeting, Halifax (Canada), 20-24 September 2010

> For more information: www.nafo.int

IATTC, meeting of parties, Antigua (Guatemala), 23 September – 1 October 2010

> For more information: www.iattc.org

SEAFO, annual meeting, Windhoek (Namibia), 11-15 October 2010

> For more information: www.seafo.org

CCAMLR, meeting of the Commission, Hobart (Australia), 25 October – 5 November 2010

> For more information: www.ccamlr.org

Institutional agenda

Committee on Fisheries, European Parliament, Brussels (Belgium)

- 30 August 2010
- 29 September 2010
- 26-27 October 2010

> For more information: www.europarl.europa.eu

Agriculture and Fisheries Council of the European Union

- 27 September 2010, Brussels (Belgium)
- 26 October 2010, Luxembourg (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg)

> For more information: www.consilium.europa.eu

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Note to readers

We welcome your comments or suggestions at the following address:
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E-mail: fisheries-magazine@ec.europa.eu

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- The site of Maria Damanaki, the new Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries > http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/damanaki/index_en.htm
 - A new application: European Atlas of the Seas > <http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeatlas>
 - The thematic site on fisheries has a new look > <http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries>
 - The address of the Maritime Affairs site is still > <http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs>

Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe is a magazine published by the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission. It is distributed free on request (see subscription coupon on page 12). *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe* is published five times a year and it is also available on the Maritime Affairs and Fisheries DG website: http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/publications/magazine_en.htm

Editor: European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Director-General.

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Consumers, key players for sustainable fisheries

A recent report by the European Commission points out that, of the hundred or so species exploited in the North Atlantic, the number in danger of extinction has been brought down from 23 in 2003 to 14 today. There is still room for improvement though, which is why the Commission proposes to reform the common fisheries policy. This process is expected to be completed by 2013.

A major part of the reform challenge will be not only to come to the aid of the sector to ensure a smooth transition towards sustainability, but also to restore the prestige of Europe's fish as a resource that has been caught in a responsible manner.

Consumers have real power. With their decisions to buy or not to buy, they can pressure the sector, pushing it towards more sustainable exploitation of resources. Consumers increasingly wish to be sure about the quality of fish in terms of freshness and hygiene, but also about whether it was caught without contributing to overfishing and the collapse of stocks. In short, they want to be assured that the fish they eat have been caught in line with their ecological and ethical values.

So consumers have to be informed by means of fair, transparent and verifiable labels. That is why the new common fisheries policy plans to make significant progress in the area of information to consumers. These advances are already in the works.

New enforcement rules, for example, particularly those that extend traceability requirements to the point of catch or breeding zone, will make product traceability easier and better from January 2011.

The Commission also plans to improve and flesh out existing labelling requirements. Many acknowledge that these requirements are not widely respected and that labels are hard to understand and to read. Sustainable fisheries labels represent an option that supplements mandatory labelling to help enlighten consumers' choices.

All these initiatives aim to guarantee greater transparency in the way the fisheries sector presents and delivers its products to consumers, who are right to be concerned about the sustainability of fisheries. More and more consumers want to be responsible in their choices and key players in the bid to make fisheries more sustainable.

The Editor



Fishing opportunities: target 2015



European fisheries already apply the MSY principle as part of long-term plans, like the plan for saithe. From 2015, all fisheries will have to use it as their benchmark. The Commission therefore proposes a programme made up of four annual phases.

The year 2011 will mark a turning point. It will be the first stage of the gradual transition that will bring maximum sustainable yield into general practice by 2015. This process will imply a decrease in fishing opportunities for stocks that are overexploited today. These reductions will have to be supervised very strictly.

The European Union made a number of commitments in support of global biodiversity, in September 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. One concerned fisheries. From 2015, all stocks in European Union waters will have to be exploited at their maximum sustainable yield (MSY). In other words, the total allowable catch (TAC) for each stock will have to be calculated to secure the highest catches over the long term.

With that aim in mind, the Commission proposes to apply a programme in four annual stages, starting next year. This was the basis on which it launched its consultation on fishing opportunities for 2011, requesting the opinions of the Member States, Regional Advisory Councils, and the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Encouraging but insufficient

Despite noteworthy improvements since 2002, most European stocks are still being overfished. For the Atlantic shoreline (including the North Sea and the Baltic Sea), only 11 stocks are exploited at MSY. This is admittedly much better than five years ago, but there are still 28 overexploited stocks and another 60 whose state is not known precisely due to insufficient catch data. In the Mediterranean, the initial scientific findings show that 21 stocks are fished at MSY and 25 are overfished, but many stocks still have to be evaluated.

In this context of overfishing, application of MSY can imply more or less sizeable reductions in total allowable catches (TACs) to rebuild resources. To avoid an abrupt change that could destabilise the sector, the Commission proposes to phase in these cuts over four years. It has drawn up clear and transparent rules that will be applied to each stock depending on its state. The idea is that similar measures will apply to all stocks in a similar state:

- **Stocks already fished at MSY** – TACs will be set to maintain this long-term yield and will not vary by more than 25% from their 2010 level.
- **Stocks not fished at MSY, but inside safe biological limits** – TACs will be set to reduce overfishing by equal amounts in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 in order to reach MSY in 2015, but without changing TACs by more than 25%.
- **Stocks outside safe biological limits** – TACs will be set to reduce overfishing by equal amounts in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 in order to attain MSY in 2015, but without changing TACs by more than 30%.
- **Stocks under a multi-annual plan** – TACs will be set according to the management plan. Long-term plans will gradually be adapted to the MSY target.
- **Stocks of short-lived species** – A provisional TAC will be set and will be adapted as new data becomes available during the year.

These are the categories that have been scientifically evaluated and for which it is possible to calculate MSY. For the others, the usual management measures based on the precautionary principle will continue to apply, since MSY requires relatively precise findings on the state of stocks.

Based on the results of the consultation and on scientific advice, the Commission will draw up its proposals for fishing opportunities in September for the Baltic Sea and in October for the Black Sea, Atlantic zones and deep-water species. Its proposals will then be debated by the Council and Parliament.

Informing consumers Towards clearer and more precise fish labelling

What is the name of the fish I am buying? Was it fished or farmed? Where does it come from? This information is already required for all fish placed for sale on retail markets in the 27 countries of the European Union. Consumers' demands are evolving, however, and to develop their trust in European fishery products, the information given on labels needs to be improved. That is why the Commission's reform of market policy, which is already on the drawing board, will include a chapter on informing consumers.

To start, existing rules will be improved. Three types of information already have to be shown on the label of a fishery product sold on the retail market: the name of the species recognised by the different Member States, the means of production (fishing or farming) and the origin (catch zone, country of aquaculture production). There is broad consensus that the information being provided on these three aspects is neither precise enough nor clear enough.

First point to be improved: information on the commercial name of a species, which is not always explicit enough. Even worse, though, some names can even be misleading to consumers. Names that enhance the value of the fish are sometimes misused. 'Sole' for example, is used for both Atlantic sole and tropical sole; yellowfin tunny with red flesh is often sold as 'bluefin tuna' at a much lower price than that of genuine Mediterranean bluefin tuna. To keep consumers from being cheated on what they are buying, the Commission is considering the option of requiring both the scientific name of the species and the commercial name.

Second point under discussion: information on the means of production could also be more precise. The use of terms such as 'small-scale fishing', 'line fishing' or 'caught by trawl net', 'seine net', 'longline', etc. would tell consumers what type of vessel or fishing gear was used to catch the fish on offer.

Third point: information on fishing zones is hard for consumers to understand. It is based on 12 catch zones defined by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO): Northeast Atlantic, Northwest Atlantic, Baltic Sea, Western Central Atlantic, etc. These zones are so vast that they lack clarity. The Commission wishes to propose the use of zones that are more meaningful to consumers, but this process entails certain difficulties. Names that are very regional, for instance, may not prove possible. Using the term 'Gulf of Riga cod' could be perplexing to Spanish or Portuguese consumers, whereas it would be perfectly clear to those living in Germany or Poland. The objective seems useful, but putting it into practice will require further analysis.



Three types of information must be shown on the label of a fishery product placed for sale on the retail market: the name of the species, the means of production (fishing or farming) and the origin. This information is not always clear enough or precise enough, nor are information obligations always respected.

Under debate

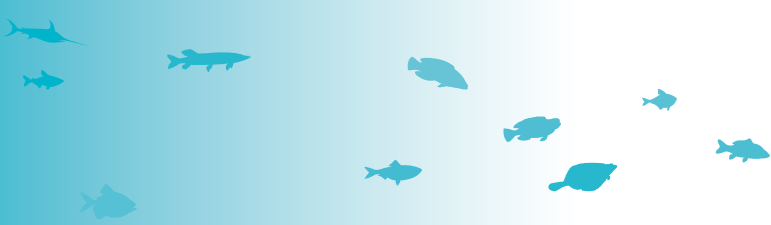
Another option for making information clearer and more precise could be to change the labels for farmed fish to show the region of production rather than the country. It is worth noting that a European frame of reference was introduced in 2009 for 'organic aquaculture' certification for farmed products and seaweed.

Labels will also become longer. A fourth type of information, namely whether the product is fresh or was previously frozen, will have to be provided to consumers from 1 January 2011. This information has become mandatory since the adoption, in November 2009, of the regulation establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy (CFP).

Apart from this latter point, the process is still in the analysis stage at present. The Commission is collecting proposals from the different stakeholders.

These debates are obviously fundamental for improving the image of European fishery products in terms of food safety, quality and conformity with rules on sound fisheries management.

Everyone knows that fish is excellent for the health and that some are more healthful than others, but suitable labelling of fishery and aquaculture products will do a lot to help (re) gain consumer confidence.



Where does the fish on my plate come from?



With an effective traceability system, control authorities know, almost in real time, which operators handle the lots of fish after catch.

Tracing a product back up the supply chain all the way to the vessel's deck is possible thanks to traceability rules for fishery and aquaculture products. These identify every operator, from the retailer to the fishing vessel. Originally put in place for control purposes, traceability also helps consumers to know what they are buying and to be sure that they are paying a fair price.

Since 1 January 2010, the implementation of new rules on fisheries control has further strengthened product traceability. Let's look at how the system works, from sea to plate.

At sea

When the fish is hauled aboard the vessel, the master must submit a **catch declaration** to the control authorities without delay. For each species, the declaration mentions the estimated quantity, date and zone of catch, gears used and the vessel's home port, and the start and end dates of its season. If lots are transhipped to another vessel, the masters of the fishing vessel and of the transport vessel must both submit a **transhipment declaration** to their control authorities: these identify the vessel, give a detailed description of the goods and indicate their destination.

At the wharf

Upon landing, catches must as a rule be **weighed** on scales approved by the control authorities. It is generally the auction centre where the fish will be sold that is responsible for the

accuracy of the weighing. This responsibility can also be taken on by the producers' organisation (PO) to which the vessel belongs or, for direct sales, by the buyer.

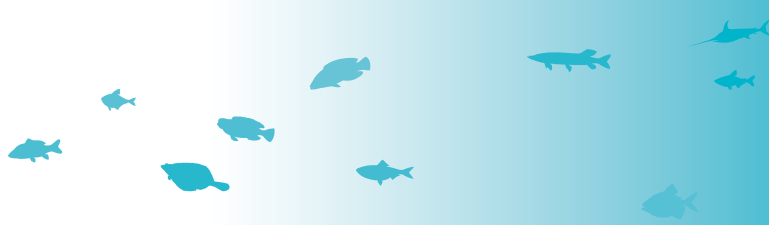
Before their first sale, fish, molluscs and crustaceans must be divided into **lots** of the same species, generally presented in crates graded according to the requirements of the PO or the auction centre to which the vessel delivers its products. This sorting operation often takes place on the vessel, before reaching the port, so that the fish can be weighed by lots. In the logical next step in the traceability process, the lot is the basic unit that will be traced throughout the fish marketing chain.

It is often during the weighing that information on the fishery products is placed on the lot, generally in the form of a bar-code or electronic chip. **This information** will accompany the product up to the retail sale. Apart from the lot identification

Electronic transmission

The new control scheme imposes the electronic logbook (electronic reporting system, ERS) for all vessels more than 12 m in length, with a daily declaration during fishing trips (before arrival in port for catches taken the last day out). This provision is being phased into place. It is currently mandatory for vessels over 24 m in length. In 2011, it will apply to all vessels over 15 m in length. In 2012, it will be the rule for vessels 12 m or more in length. For vessels up to 11.99 m, the paper logbook will remain in use and catches must be declared every two days.





number, this information must at least include the catching vessel (or the aquaculture farm), the species (international code, commercial name and scientific name), dates and catch (or harvest) zone, exact quantity and whether the products are frozen or not. This last piece of information was introduced by the 2010 regulation. It is important for the subsequent conservation of the fish and lets consumers make a distinction between fresh fish and once-frozen fish.

On the basis of the weighing, the vessel master completes a **landing declaration** that describes the species landed, their exact quantity and the port of landing. Generally, the auction centre, PO or fishermen's association takes delivery of the goods and stores them until the sale begins. The body receiving the goods must submit a **take-over declaration**. In addition to the information contained in the previous declarations, the description of the goods and the place of storage must be detailed. Like the other declarations, the take-over declaration must be transmitted electronically and without delay, within 24 hours for entities with annual turnover of more than EUR 200 000 and within 48 hours for the others.

At the auction

This stage marks the first sale of the lots. In the traditional circuit, this happens at the auction, where each lot is put on the block and sold to the highest bidder. In most cases, the first buyer is a fish wholesale trader, although retail traders, restaurant owners and processors sometimes also buy at auctions. Direct sales circuits also exist. In this case, the fish are delivered directly from the vessel's hold to the cold storage plant of the wholesaler or processor who has reached a prior agreement with the vessel owner. Whatever the type of first sale, the buyers must always be approved by the state and identified in a national list.

Once the first sale has taken place, the seller issues an invoice plus a **sales note that is transmitted to the control authorities**. This note adds further details to the other declarations: identification of the buyer, place and date of sale, invoice references and price. It goes without saying that the sales note and the information in the invoice must match, not only for fisheries inspectors, but also for the tax authorities...

On the road

For direct sales, lots of fish are sometimes transferred directly from the vessel to a lorry that will transport them, for example, to an auction or a processing plant located outside the port, sometimes very far away. In this case, the lots leave the port without a take-over declaration or sales note. This scenario is authorised provided the haulier draws up a **transport document**. It must be completed before the lorry leaves the port and either transmitted immediately by electronic means to the competent control authorities or accompany the goods to their destination, where it must be transmitted to the competent control authorities within 48 hours following unloading.

Small quantities

Not all fish, molluscs and crustaceans must necessarily go through the classic supply chain. An ordinary consumer can always buy fish informally at the wharf, directly from the fisherman. This type of sale must nevertheless be authorised by the state and not result in income of more than EUR 50 a day for the fisherman. By the same token, sales notes are not required for purchases of quantities of less than 30 kg for private consumption.

This transport document identifies the goods in the same manner as the earlier declarations and also gives the references of the transport vehicle, the place and date of loading, the destination and the identity of the recipient.

At the shop

This is where the first sale comes to an end. The wholesalers and processors have bought their goods. They must then process and sell them to retailers (fish shops, supermarkets or restaurants) or to intermediaries (exporters, central trading groups, etc.). The lots can naturally be grouped, split or divided among different buyers as long as their origin can still be traced. The information must therefore be duplicated in the same number of groupings or divisions of the lots and the sales documents must contain an express reference to the original lot.

The retailer has an additional obligation related to informing consumers. The sales label must legibly show the following compulsory information: species, type of production (catch or farming), geographical zone of catch or farming and, for products sold in the fresh food department, whether they have once been frozen or not. At this stage, these are the only mandatory information requirements, although this could change in the future (see p. 5).

However, in case of verifications of compliance with CFP rules or, for instance, a sanitary problem with a product, it is now possible, based on the information that accompanies each lot, to move back up the supply chain all the way to the catch declaration. This is useful for fisheries controls. It is also useful for consumers, who have the possibility to learn the answer to a fundamental question: 'Where does the fish on my plate come from?'

‘Sustainable fisheries’ certification: a label that has to be earned



The Commission intends to ensure that labels respect FAO guidelines. These directives impose a rigorous award procedure to keep a fisheries player from being both judge and judged in the award of the label.

European consumers are more and more concerned about the impact of fishing on fish stocks and marine ecosystems. To address their concerns, ‘sustainable fisheries’ environmental labels are multiplying and the number of certified fisheries is growing constantly. Earning ‘sustainable fisheries’ certification is the result of a long process that meets very strictly established and controlled rules.

Respect for the environment has the wind in its sails. As it is becoming a real sales argument nowadays, more and more producers seek to demonstrate their environmental commitment. This is the principle of ‘sustainable fisheries’ labels awarded to fisheries that go beyond legal requirements on respect for stocks and ecosystems, and wish to publicise their good practices.

The FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation) put out guidelines for such labels in 2005. Its directives detail the procedure for setting up ‘sustainable fisheries’ certification. The procedure is rigorous in order to keep a fisheries player from being both judge and judged in the award of the label. In other words, a company that markets frozen fish cannot create its own label and award it itself to its suppliers.

Three independent bodies

How does a certification process come about? First, the promoter of the label must develop standards to be met by certified fisheries. It thus becomes a **standards setting body**. Its specifications must respect the minimum criteria set by the FAO. These concern the state of the stocks exploited, the management system and the fishery’s impact on the ecosystem.

To sum up:

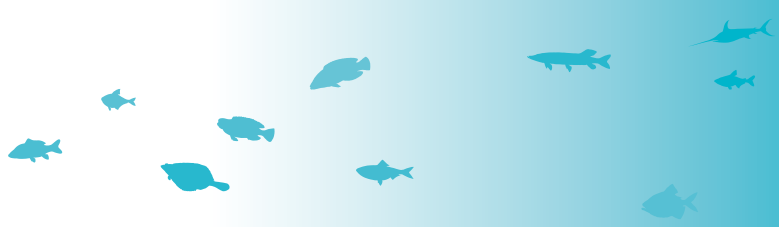
- **The state of stocks** – The stocks concerned are not over-fished; the fishery must guarantee that they will be maintained for present and future generations; in the event of a decline in biomass, measures must be taken to restore stocks to sustainable levels within a reasonable period.
- **The management system** – The fisheries must respect legal management measures for the zone concerned. Data on the state of stocks must be collected and kept up-to-date. In the absence of scientific data, a precautionary approach must be adopted.
- **The impact on the ecosystem** – It is imperative to evaluate constantly the fishery’s impact on the ecosystem and to be able to provide a concrete solution if a negative impact occurs.

Second, the promoter chooses an **accreditation body** (or even several). This body is charged with evaluating and verifying the technical and financial capacity of the certification bodies and making sure that they are independent and neutral.

Voluntary information for consumers

Sustainable fisheries labelling is voluntary information, meaning that it is not part of the information required on sales labels (see p. 5). Nor should environmental labels be confused with other types of voluntary information that can be found on fishery products, such as nutritional claims (proteins, fat content or omega 3), organoleptic properties (freshness, presentation and colour), the social context of its production (fair trade), etc.





The different 'sustainable fisheries' labels for marine fishery products

- **The Dolphin Safe** label used on tinned tuna. This was one of the first labels promoted by different bodies starting in the early 1990s. These labels remain controversial and concern only bycatches of dolphins. Similar initiatives have been developed for bycatches of turtles.
- **The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)**, initiated in 1997 by Unilever and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) before becoming independent. It certifies a fishery or fish stock combined with the use of certain materials and fishing practices. The MSC operates worldwide but the majority of the fisheries it certifies are in developed countries.
- **Friend of the Sea (FOS)**, created in 2006. This label certifies both farmed fish and fish caught at sea, in developed and developing countries.
- **The KRAV, 'fisheries' label**, established in 2004 but limited to Sweden and Norway. Certification is a two-phase process: once the fishery has been certified, vessels wishing to exploit the stock must in turn be certified.
- **The Marine Ecolabel Japan (MEL-Japan)**, set up in late 2007. This private not-for-profit organisation, which forms part of the Japanese Fishing Association, certifies Japanese fish for release on the Japanese market.
- **The Icelandic logo for responsible fisheries**, created recently.

Third, the accredited **certifier** is responsible for checking that the fishery applying for certification meets the specified standards. If this is the case, it awards the label. It must then carry out regular controls and audits to ensure that the fishery continues to comply with the standards.

A rigorous, long and costly procedure

That sums up the theory. But how does a 'sustainable fisheries' certification procedure take place in practical terms?

Let's take the example of a fishermen's association that wishes to certify one of its fisheries. It must first choose a label. Next, it collects the data needed for its application package (statistics, scientific reports, etc.). Once these data have been assembled, it chooses an accredited certification body, which will conduct a pre-assessment. This preliminary, which can take from one to nine months, assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the fishery. At the conclusion of this first audit, the certification body can advise the fishermen's association to abandon its initiative, to carry out further studies or, if its application is well founded, to continue the procedure and move on to the phase of full assessment.

The full assessment is conducted by a team made up of an official of the certifier and a team of experts. These specialists study in detail the indicators that reveal whether the fishery meets the label's standards. Throughout the assessment, the fishermen's association can assign experts to scrutinize the certifier's work in order to make sure that the study is being conducted transparently and independently. At the conclusion of the audit, the fishery is given a score based on the performance indicators and is awarded (or turned down for) certification. To date, no fishery has obtained unconditional certification: award of the label has always been conditional on requirements to change certain actions or management practices.

Another important aspect is that certification encompasses the entire chain of responsibility. This means that, before the label can be awarded to the product, every link in the chain – the fisherman, but also the wholesaler, processor, distributor and so on – must apply sustainable fisheries practices. There must be a guarantee that products sold with the label actually come from the certified fishery concerned.

'Sustainable fisheries' certification is therefore a rigorous, demanding and transparent process. The conclusions of the fishery's assessment must be made public, for example on the website of the label's promoter. The complete assessment takes from five to 24 months or even longer if a stakeholder – for example an environmental NGO or a competing fishery – objects to the final decision. To respond to the objection, the fishermen's association has to conduct further studies.

This sometimes lengthy procedure of eco-labelling can also be costly. For the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label, for example, certification of the small Cornish handline mackerel fishery cost EUR 15 000, while certification of the much larger Alaska pollack fishery added up to EUR 200 000. Such expenditure is nevertheless eligible for aid under the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). Fishermen embarking on this process can thus receive financial support.

'Sustainable fisheries' certifications are growing. Initially, this type of label mainly concerned third-country imports (pollack and salmon from Alaska, herring and blue grenadier), then highly targeted European fisheries such as saithe, mackerel and herring, but now it is spreading to fish for which consumer demand is much higher, such as cod and haddock.

Reform: actors press for change



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The Palexco in La Coruña is a glass-encased convention centre located in the midst of the port facilities. It was the stage for a meeting of fisheries stakeholders who came together to discuss the forthcoming reform of the common fisheries policy. Fisheries stakeholders spent two days debating three key points of the reform in three parallel workshops: fisheries governance, access to waters and resources and small-scale coastal fisheries.

In the framework of the forthcoming reform of the common fisheries policy, a major conference was held last May in La Coruña to give operators the occasion to compare their views among themselves and with the European Commission. The final report from the conference then quickly landed on the table of the Council of Fisheries Ministers, 160 km away in Vigo, where the ministers were meeting informally for an initial review of foreseeable options.

The Palexco in La Coruña is a glass-encased convention centre located in the midst of the port facilities. Light flows in from all sides, fostering enlightened and energetic debates. In early May, the centre teemed with people concerned with fisheries: European, national and regional officials, representatives of vessel owners' associations, fishermen, producers, marine environmental organisations, etc. The Spanish Presidency of the European Union and the Commission were keen on bringing together all the different 'concerned actors'.

The aim was to hold a wide debate to complement the consultation that followed publication of the Green Paper on Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Participants spent two days debating three key points of the reform in three parallel workshops. The first focused on fisheries governance. The second workshop dealt with access to waters and resources, and the third with small-scale coastal fisheries.

It would be hard to sum up the workshop debates here. For more details, readers are invited to see the conference documents published on the CFP reform website (<http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform>). In addition to the summary of the workshop debates, the site also publishes the presentations made at each and the contributions of certain associations.

The aim of the conference was not to adopt decisions, but rather to draw up an overview of the issues still to be addressed in order to enrich the policy-makers' debates. That is precisely what happened the following day at the Marine Museum in Vigo, at the informal Council of Fisheries Ministers, in which Carmen Fraga Estévez, Chairwoman of the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament, also participated. The ministers took note of the conference conclusions and placed the reform on track in the institutions. The Commission is set to present its proposal by the summer of 2011.

Seafood: a can't-miss fair

The European Seafood Exhibition is the world's largest fair for fishery and aquaculture products. It drew 24 000 visitors and exhibitors this year. Hundreds of professionals converge on Brussels every year in late April to participate. The exhibitors all have one thing in common: they are looking for buyers on the European Union market, the world's number one market in terms of value of fishery and aquaculture products.

Seafood is first and foremost 1 600 exhibitors. They come from the four corners of the globe (144 countries), demonstrating concretely that the seafood market is one of the world's most globalised. Although other continents are well represented, European traders are present in large numbers, often at national or regional stands. The event takes place at the Brussels Exhibition Park, at the foot of the Atomium. Ten or so exhibition halls are grouped around a central building with an imposing 1930s art deco facade.

Different links in the seafood supply chain are represented. These include, for example, importers in search of sales outlets, such as an agency that markets wild fish from Alaska. Its flagship products are the five native species of salmon but it also supplies white fish such as Pacific halibut and sablefish. Apart from the gourmet quality of these fish, the agency defends the sustainability of the fisheries concerned, a sales argument that is heard more and more... In another hall, a company from Luxembourg specialised in caviar presents samples of different types and qualities of its range of products.

Producers are also on hand to present their new products and classic best sellers. This year, a Peruvian aquaculture firm offered its first large-scale productions of arapaima (*Arapaima gigas*), a large freshwater fish. Its farming operations have moved beyond the experimental stage and the company aims to make its business successful at international level.

Industry also attends Seafood in search of new clients or distributors. A firm from Brittany, France, specialised in catering, presented breaded fillets for school cafeterias. Traditionally made from Nile tilapia, the line has been expanded to include a variation made of European hake, as the result of a supply agreement concluded with fishermen from the port of Lorient.

Purchasing managers

Seafood is also thousands of visitors who criss-cross its alleyways, one hall after another, where exhibitors rival with one another to invite them to taste their samples. The stakes are huge. Seafood is an event for professionals and most of these visitors are potential buyers. According to a 2008 statistical study, 81 % of visitors have purchasing power and 77 % leave the three-day event with plans to buy products or services they discovered in Brussels.



Seafood is first and foremost over 1 600 exhibitors. They come from the four corners of the globe (144 countries), vivid proof that the seafood market is one of the world's most globalised.

'That is precisely why Seafood is not to be missed', explained the marketing and R&D director of a firm from Brittany. 'There are several reasons to be there. First, it's a place where you establish visibility and where one visitor out of three is a buyer or purchasing advisor. Second, it's a platform where business deals are sealed. And third, as buyers, we have the opportunity to meet just about all our suppliers here.'

In this business dynamic, the appeal of Seafood is likely its function as a meeting place. *'The usefulness of this event', explains a representative of a Luxembourg-based company who has never missed the event in the last 19 years, 'is that, in 10 minutes, I can meet one of my leading customers and then one of my main suppliers. Last year, this was where the price of caviar was decided. We realised in informal talks between sellers and suppliers that the basic price was too high considering the crisis.'*

The European Commission is also present at Seafood every year, with a stand at the heart of the fair. It presents the latest developments under the common fisheries policy and gives exhibitors and visitors the opportunity to talk to its experts to learn about different points of regulations on import, marketing, control, measures to combat illegal fishing and so on.

In brief

□ Mediterranean: GFCM takes new measures

The General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) held its annual meeting in April in Athens, Greece. Based on the report by the Scientific Advisory Committee, it noted that more than 80% of the stocks evaluated are fully exploited or over-exploited, and that most fisheries are based on catches of juveniles or individuals of very small size and on very intense fishing effort. The experts called for rigorous management measures including the reduction of fishing effort to protect demersal species, development of a fishing capacity management plan and further studies on certain data-deficient stocks. The meeting approved a number of measures aimed at improving sustainable management of resources. The parties agreed on the compulsory use, for vessels more than 15 m in length, of a logbook in which catches of more than 50 kg must be entered daily during fishing trips, on fishing capacity management based on a regional list of vessels more than 15 m in length (a preliminary to the development of a regional plan of action for fishing capacity management) and on the drafting of an annual compliance report identifying the States parties that have failed to meet their obligations under the GFCM agreement. The logbook is already mandatory for European Union vessels of at least 10 m in length, although the weight limit for catches to be entered is 15 kg (except for small pelagic species and tunas). Also in the Mediterranean context, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki announced at the Council of Fisheries Ministers last March that the deadline of 31 May 2010 for the three and a half year grace period for the organisation of certain measures under the 'Mediterranean' regulation (see *Fisheries and Aquaculture in Europe*, No 39, August 2008) would not be extended and that the Mediterranean Member States had to bring their fisheries into compliance without delay.

Tunas: new protection measures in the Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) adopted a number of management and conservation measures at its annual meeting, last March in Busan, South Korea. Most were initiated by the European Commission. The measures include the development of a work plan concerning the introduction of a quota system for the main species of tropical tuna combined with the closing of a zone off the Horn of Africa: seining vessels will be prohibited there in November and longliners in February. Catches of thresher sharks are also now banned throughout the zone. On controls, the IOTC adopted the port state control scheme, in keeping with measures already approved by the FAO, to combat landings of illegally caught fish. It also decided to strengthen the powers of its Compliance Committee in order to remedy states' failures to meet their obligations. The participants also approved important decisions concerning the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, adding new vessels to the IUU list, and market-related measures. The IOTC also adopted a declaration condemning acts of piracy in the Indian Ocean and inviting the international community to support efforts to combat this scourge.

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