El Anzuelo

EUROPEAN NEWSLETTER ON FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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Atlantic cod *(Gadhus morhua)*: in need of recovery

Fredrik Ehrenstrom/Oxford Scientific Films

Breaking the cycle of crisis management

Clare Coffey
Editor

The current state of many of Europe's fish stocks is a clear indicator that all is not well in fisheries management. According to the UK's Environment Minister, 50 per cent of EC vessels are believed to be fishing for stocks that are below minimum biologically acceptable levels. In the case of the Irish Sea cod the picture is particularly bleak and an emergency recovery plan is being elaborated by the Commission as a consequence. The plan signifies a new or at least renewed emphasis on actively restoring stocks. The challenge now is to ensure that the stock is indeed allowed to recover properly, and that the opportunity is taken to ensure overall fishing patterns are compatible with the long term needs of the ecosystem.

Of course, it is always more desirable and efficient to avoid these situations arising in the first place. Policy makers must continue their efforts to develop and apply policies that place environmental issues at the heart of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The aim must be to support sustainable fisheries and aquaculture within the broader ecosystem context. This includes closer adherence to principles of prevention and precaution, and we therefore look forward with interest to a new Commission proposal on applying the principle to fisheries management which is due in October 2000.

These and other actions need to be reflected in two significant policy documents that are expected to emerge in the next few months. The EC Fisheries Biodiversity Action Plan is nearing completion and a final document is expected to be agreed by the Commission before the summer. More broadly, the issue of integrating environmental considerations within fisheries policy is to be the subject of a Council Strategy, following-up the commitment to integration in the Amsterdam Treaty.

These two documents should provide a critical opportunity to develop policy and contribute to 'greening' the CFP, particularly the conservation and management part of the CFP which, as the update reminds, is due for review in 2002. There is a danger that neither document will be sufficiently ambitious to tackle the problems faced by the sector. In particular, we will need clear targets and timetables to help secure change, and indicators to help measure progress towards environmental sustainability. Environmental organisations will need to make a strong and effective contribution to this process at both national and EC levels, so that the two documents really do set out an agenda for change.

Issue 6 of this Newsletter will be produced in Autumn 2000. If you have material to send or comments, please contact the assistant editor: Jodi Newcombe at the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) London, Dean Bradley House, 52 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AG, UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 7799 2244; Fax: +44 (0)20 7799 2600; email: jnewcombe@ieeplondon.org.uk

INSIDE

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Contributions from Euan Dunn (RSPB), Chris Poupard (EAA), Indrani Lutchman (Scales), Louise Heaps (WWF-UK).

IEEP London

The mist begins to clear...

Clare Coffey
IEEP London

The existing regime to manage and conserve EC fisheries is embodied in Regulation 3760/92 and its various daughter Regulations concerning quotas, technical conservation measures, monitoring and enforcement, etc. The basic Regulation 3760/92 was adopted in 1992 and requires the Commission to report by the end of 2001 on the fisheries situation in the EU and on how the regime has been implemented thus far. On the basis of that report, the Council is to decide, before 31 December 2002, on any adjustments that are necessary to improve its functioning.

The Commission has now produced its official report on the wide-ranging consultation exercise that was launched in March 1998 (see separate box). It has also published a review of the application of Regulation 3760/92 over the period 1996 to 1998, saying that 'the debate on the 2002 review creates an opportunity to start addressing the future challenges that the CFP will face in the coming years and the strategic priorities that will have to be pursued or reinforced'. To this end, the Commission has highlighted a number of priorities, including the following:

- better coherence between various objectives pursued by the CFP – including a clearer hierarchy between potentially conflicting objectives, such as conservation, economic efficiency and employment;
- taking account of the economic dimension of the policy – addressing issues such as subsidies and other forms of government support, various options for alternative fisheries management and consequences thereof;
- better integration of environmental and fisheries policies – including a review of the CFP's mechanisms to ensure environmental considerations are adequately addressed;
- improving management tools – such as the development of management objectives and strategies, discard policies and control arrangements;
- more accountable decision-making processes – particularly improving transparency and raising the level of stakeholder involvement in the consultation and decision-making process. Management also needs to be made more flexible, so that it can respond to the range of local needs; and
- maintaining the external dimension of the CFP – in particular, by realigning the Community's policy on third country fishing agreements, and strengthening the Community's role in international fisheries bodies.

These priorities will be borne in mind when the Commission drafts its report on the 2002 review.

THE EMERGING TIMETABLE

The Fisheries Directorate-General is now in the process of gathering the necessary material and data required for its report on the fisheries situation in the EU. The intention is to finalise the review of Regulation 3760/92 and suggest possible issues and ideas that might be addressed in the reform process, at the beginning of next year.

Actual Commission proposals for reform are not expected to follow until the end of 2001, thus allowing one year for negotiations if changes to the conservation and management regime are to be agreed before the end of 2002.

'The Commission has highlighted a number of priorities including more accountable decision-making processes'

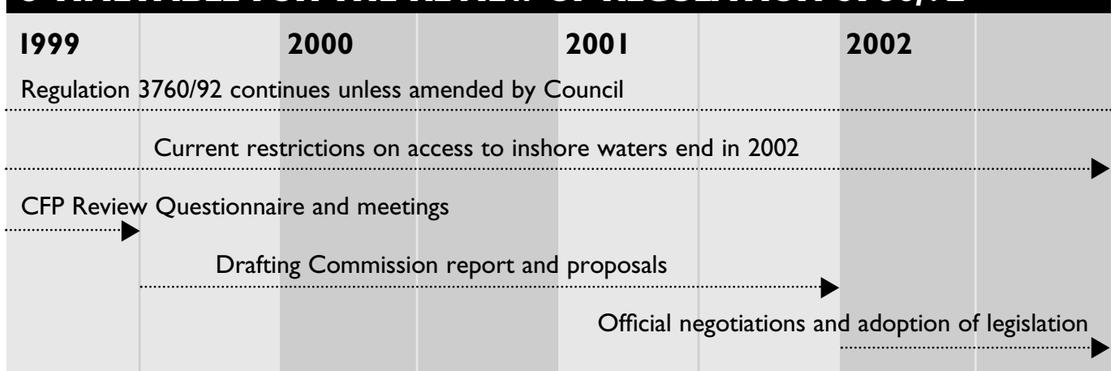
THE CARDIFF PROCESS: A LEVER FOR CHANGE?

The Fisheries Council of Ministers is currently charged with producing a strategy on the integration of environmental considerations within the CFP (see El Anzuelo Vol 4). The strategy is part of the 'Cardiff integration process' which has been promoted by consecutive Summits of Heads of State and Government. The initiative comes in response to the EU's new Treaty commitment to sustainable development.

The fisheries strategy is due to be submitted to the European Council or Summit in 2000; it is also to be reviewed by the Summit in June 2001, under Sweden's Presidency of the Council. Work on the fisheries strategy is currently being led by Portugal which holds the Presidency until the end of June 2000. It intends to discuss the strategy during the June Fisheries Council meeting.

There is currently little visible enthusiasm for the strategy. Nevertheless, the Cardiff process should provide an important opportunity to develop a broad and coordinated agenda for 'greening' the CFP over the medium to long term, including through the 2002 reform of Regulation 3760/92.

● TIMETABLE FOR THE REVIEW OF REGULATION 3760/92



● OUTCOME OF THE COMMISSION'S CFP REVIEW CONSULTATION MEETINGS

The Commission's report on the CFP stakeholder consultation meetings (COM(2000)14) was published in January 2000. In all, thirty meetings were held between 1998 and 1999. The numerous parties consulted believe that 'many components of the CFP need to be reviewed, modified or even completely changed'.

The Commission's summary of the meetings highlights the following issues.

- **Access to inshore waters – there were virtually no demands for the current inshore access restriction to be removed, with some demands (from the UK, Ireland and Portugal) for the inshore arrangements to be strengthened.**
- **International cooperation and third country fishing agreements – including calls for stronger Community involvement in international organisations. In the case of bilateral fishing agreements, there is a divide between northern and southern countries with southern states often calling for an extension of the agreements.**
- **Mediterranean policy – there were calls for rules binding all vessels fishing in this region and a strengthening of Community's international policy in the region. Some Spanish organisations advocated a 'regional' approach to the Mediterranean, including regional fishing effort reduction programmes (MAGPs).**
- **Decision-making – there was strong support for greater transparency and participation in the decision making process. Calls for 'regionalisation' were supported in the UK, Finland, Sweden and Ireland but viewed with some suspicion in Spain and France.**
- **Other issues raised included calls for the regulation of recreational fishing, and concerns over the possible consequences of enlargement of the EU.**

The Commission was generally satisfied with the outcome of the meetings which allowed a large number of people to participate in the consultation process. In particular, they provided an opportunity to raise local and regional issues which are rarely the subject of discussion in the Community institutions.

Recovery plans for North East Atlantic fisheries?

The role of recovery plans in EC fisheries management was brought to the fore by the December Fisheries Council where Ministers called for a recovery plan to address the critical state of the Irish Sea cod stock (see page 6). Considerable time has consequently been spent by the Commission in order to design suitable elements of such a plan, based on the involvement of industry representatives and relevant Member States.

Recovery plans can and should play an important role in helping to arrest the current decline in many of Europe's most important commercial fish stocks. Wherever possible, however, they should be elaborated within an appropriate framework, including guiding principles and objectives, rather than being developed on an ad hoc and reactive basis. The following article by Indrani Lutchman therefore explores the broader concept of recovery plans, identifying key elements that should routinely be considered as part of their development and subsequent implementation.

Indrani Lutchman
Fisheries Consultant

The sustainability of North East Atlantic fish stocks continues to be the focus of attention as the official review of the CFP approaches. At the Inter-Ministerial Meeting on Fisheries and Environmental Integration in Bergen in 1997, North Sea Ministers and the European Commissioner recognised the dire straits of regional fish stocks and committed themselves to the development of recovery plans for the maintenance of ecosystem integrity. In the United States, recovery plans are already an integral part of fisheries management strategies designed to rebuild fish stocks to healthy levels.

Since 1997, there has been much discussion in Europe about what such recovery plans might involve. With the wide diversity of fisheries in the North East Atlantic, this article suggests that there will be no single blue-print, 'one size fits all' plan. Instead, recovery plans will need to differ by fishery depending on their ecological, cultural and economic nature, as well as the specific objectives for the fishery.

ELEMENTS OF A RECOVERY PLAN

To date, the debate on recovery plans has focussed on two elements – a technical strategy promoted mainly by conservationists and based on the use of no-take zones, and an institutional strategy promoted mainly by the fishing industry to develop the concept of 'regionalisation' of fisheries management. While the fine details are still being debated, it is clear that successful recovery plans will actually require *both* technical and institutional components, based on clear objectives developed by the stakeholders of each fishery.

Objectives

Setting objectives is a fundamental step in any decision-making process, and must be based on contributions from all the stakeholders in that process. Stakeholders include both those people having an *interest* in the outcome of the process (fishers, conservation groups and members of the public concerned about natural resources, etc), and those able to *affect* its successful outcome (fishers again – by supporting or breaking regulations, policy makers, etc).

Objective setting may be difficult in the North East Atlantic, due to the wide-ranging expectations of the different stakeholders. While scientists or conservationists may wish to protect spawning aggregations of fish, for example, those interested in socio-economic development may wish to protect livelihoods in fishing communities. While such objectives appear quite different, they are both based on underlying principles of sustainable use. Stakeholders may thus reach consensus by searching for common goals and priorities, and adopting flexible attitudes towards their key priorities.

Institutional Strategy

The institutional strategy defines who should be involved in the management process and how they should interact and operate. Though all stakeholders may contribute to the development of recovery plans, only a few will be directly involved in implementation.

The development of recovery plans will almost certainly require new **partnerships** to be formed between government and the various stakeholders in the fishery. Recovery plans developed in partnership with local people, and building on their detailed knowledge of local conditions, are far more likely to succeed than legislation developed by 'remote' ministries. The roles adopted should be based on the relative capacities of the different stakeholders in each area. The 'local' management unit will vary between regions depending on the distribution of fish stocks and the potential managers. While a local community may be an effective management partner for some stocks of immobile crustacea, for example, a regional (or even national) fisheries association may be a suitable partner for offshore fisheries exploited by fishers from many areas.

In addition, an integrated and **interdisciplinary approach** will be required. Concentrations of key resources (renewable and non-renewable) overlap in various areas of the North East Atlantic, leading to interactions between exploiters. The effectiveness of recovery plans for fish stocks will require that complementary activities are integrated and conflicting activities are avoided, segregated (ie undertaken in different areas) or reconciled (McGlade *et al,* 1997).

Technical Strategy

A recovery plan should consist of a combination of technical measures. The best combination will depend on a number of physical/geographical and biological characteristics of the fishery. The ideal combination is difficult to predict but may be improved gradually over time depending on the outcomes achieved. This in turn will depend on suitable monitoring and evaluation processes.

Recovery plans should focus on key components of the life cycle of the fish species and ecosystems. In the case of most North East Atlantic fisheries (eg. North Sea cod), recruitment overfishing has resulted in excessive exploitation of juvenile stocks. One objective could be to allow a higher proportion of immature fish to reach spawning age. The underlying approach would be to catch fish much more selectively, using measures to protect both concentrations of immature fish and individual juveniles. In order to achieve this a list of measures could be implemented, such as:

- permanent closed areas to protect entire fragile ecosystems;
- temporary closed areas to safeguard concentrations of juveniles; and
- technical conservation measures to improve the selectivity of fishing gear.

Effective implementation of these measures will be dependent on adequate control and enforcement schemes and in many cases, reduction of the overall fishing effort applied to these fisheries.

In the long-term, the success of recovery plans will require a more flexible or 'adaptive' approach to management. This approach recognises that the outcome of different management actions can be difficult to predict for complex, variable resources such as fisheries ecosystems. Faced with such complexity, management partners should monitor the outcomes of their new strategies, learning from their experiences rather than becoming 'stuck' in rigid management systems.

CONCLUSIONS

The elements of a recovery plan should be defined by the temporal, spatial and geographical nature of the fishery, and on its cultural, economic and social aspects. The success of recovery plans will depend on the integration of fisheries conservation with broader marine environmental objectives for the North East Atlantic. Fishery recovery plans having clear objectives, based on integrated local and scientific knowledge, and developed in partnership with stakeholders have the best chances of success. Recovery plans developed in this way will also have the backing of the primary stakeholders (fishers), and will therefore be feasible in a very practical way.

REFERENCES

Mc Glade, J.M., Price, A., Klaus, R. and Metuzzals, K. 1997. Recovery plans for the North Sea ecosystem, with special reference to cod, haddock and plaice. A report to WWF UK.

'Though all stakeholders may contribute to the development of recovery plans, only a few will be directly involved in implementation'

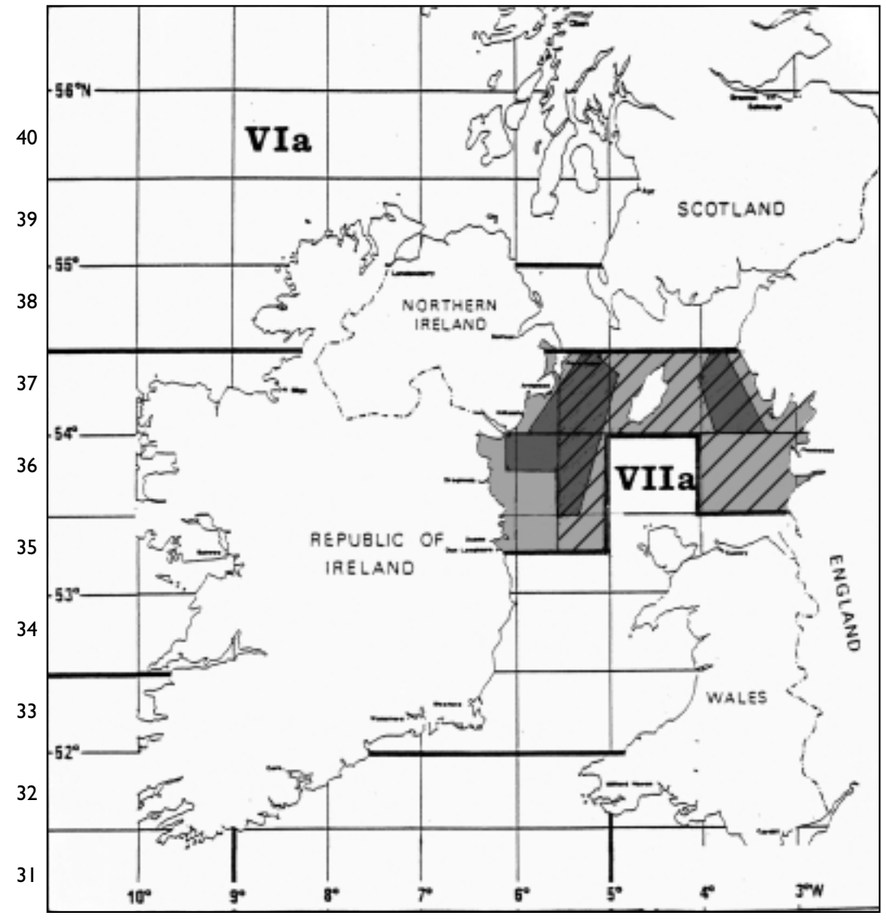
No demersal trawl, gill net, tramel net, tangle net or similar or hooking

HOWEVER

Permitted to use demersal trawls between 70-99 or 80-99mm as long as no mesh greater than 300mm. Only one mesh-size range on bard. (70-79mm catch composition applies)

AND

Beam trawling permitted provided mesh size at least 80mm for flat fish or between 16-31mm (to allow the inshore shrimp fishery to continue)



From 14 Feb 2000 until 1 May 2000

RECOVERING THE IRISH SEA COD STOCK

Ministers meeting at the December 1999 Fisheries Council expressed an urgent need to develop and implement a plan to support the recovery of the Irish Sea cod stock. Their concern stemmed from scientific advice provided by ICES, indicating that the spawning stock biomass (SSB) of the stock was far below the proposed precautionary levels and that short term predictions indicated a serious further decline in SSB to record low levels. ICES consequently recommended that 'fishing mortality on cod should be reduced to the lowest level possible in 2000', accompanied by a recovery plan to rebuild the spawning stock.

The Commission responded by arranging consultations with fisheries managers, industry representatives and scientists from all Member States which have cod quota in the area. It then used powers available to it under Article 15(1) of Regulation 3760/92 to adopt an emergency measure. The result is a closure of the cod fishery in parts of the Irish Sea to allow as many cod as possible to spawn between mid-February and the end of April. At the same time, and due to the different nature of fisheries in the Irish Sea, the closure is designed so as to minimise negative impacts on other fisheries targeting Norway lobster, shrimps and flatfish.

These technical measures are intended to be just the first elements of a recovery plan, with additional measures to follow in due course.

Protecting young fish in the sea

A recent Irish report, entitled 'Protecting Young Fish in the Sea', calls for all fishermen in the EU to agree on the need for conservation to protect fish stocks. The report, drawn up in consultation with Irish fishermen, is being used by the Department of the Marine to put forward its views in Europe. It recommends five major additional conservation measures, including increased mesh sizes, a maximum length for gill nets and closed areas for spawning.

For further details contact: Mr Michael Keatinge, Fisheries Development Executive, BIM (Irish Sea Fisheries Board), PO Box 12, Crofton Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin, Ireland; tel +35 31 284 1544 ext. 235; fax +35 31 284 1123; email CFP@bim.ie; http://www.bim.ie

Managing Baltic Sea fisheries

A recent report by a specialist IUCN Fisheries Working Group expresses concern about the management of fisheries in the Baltic Sea. The report recommends that immediate action be taken to prevent over-fishing and to ensure that fisheries are managed in accordance with the precautionary approach.

The Group found that pollution both in the form of eutrophication and of contaminants was having a major impact on the Baltic ecosystem with current levels of pollution being unsustainable and posing a possible threat to food safety.

While the report welcomes the Baltic 21 Action Programme, it advises that additional short-term actions be taken to secure sustainable use of fish resources. Stressing the importance of control and enforcement, the Group recommends that a survey be conducted to evaluate the quality and efficiency of fishery controls in the Baltic.

For further details contact: Ms Despina Symons, ESUSG (European Sustainable Use Specialist Group) Fisheries WG Secretariat, c/o EBCD (European Bureau for Conservation and Development), rue de la Science 10, 1000 Brussels; tel +32 2 230 22 28; fax: +32 2 230 26 39; email esusg@skynet.be

Pedro Bistro

A male fiddler crab *(Uca tangeri)*: bearing arms in Southern Portugal

CONSERVING FIDDLER CRABS IN PORTUGAL

According to the New Scientist (19/2/2000), a study by the Superior Institute of Applied Psychology in Lisbon has found that fiddler crabs (Uca tangeri) on the coast of southern Portugal are under threat because of the popularity of the crabs' claws as a local snack.

Fishermen break off the single, large claw of the male species and then release them back to sea. Male crabs use the claw to attract females and for self-defence. Although the claw eventually regenerates, the amputated crabs are at a significant disadvantage. The result has been a decline in fiddler crab populations in areas where the claws are harvested.

The Institute is planning to present the findings to the local fisheries department in Ria Formosa, which will consider controls on claw harvesting to protect the crabs.

For further details contact: Rui Oliveira, ISPA, Rua Jardim do Tabaco, 34, 1149-040 Lisboa, Portugal; http://www.ispa.pt

Cornish lobster hatchery

Britain's first independent, non-profit commercial lobster hatchery is due to be completed in May this year in Cornwall as an effort by the Sea Fisheries Committee (SFC) to bring stock back into the South west region of England. The £450,000 project has received financial support from a number of corporate sponsors as well as the EU.

Cornish fishermen will be able to support the project by donating female lobsters for breeding and also by helping CSFC to identify suitable release grounds for the juvenile lobsters.

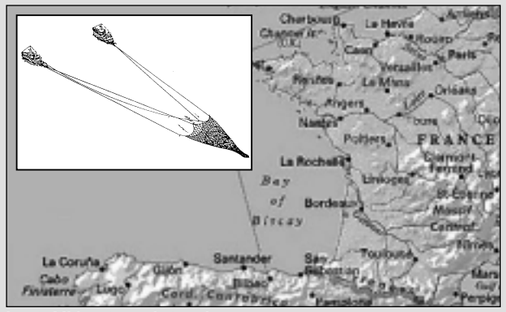
Ten percent of these 60mm young lobsters produced at the hatchery are to be micro-tagged and subsequently monitored in order to build a database on growth and dispersal.

For further details contact: Mr Edwin Derriman, Chief Fishery Officer, Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee, Old Bonded Warehouse, Quay Street, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 4BD; tel +44 1736 369 817; fax +44 1736 331 020; email seafisheries@seafisheries.fsnet.co.uk

TRAFFIC report 'Slipping the Net'

A recent report from TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring programme of the WWF and the IUCN, calls for a 10-year recovery plan for swordfish and bluefin tuna. The plan would aim to reduce fishing quotas by up to 25 percent and prevent over-fishing in fragile areas of ocean.

Surveys carried out at Spanish landing sites found that 83 percent of the bluefin tuna landed from the Mediterranean and more than half of those



Inset: Mid-water pair trawls

DOLPHINS IN THE BAY OF BISCAY

Over four hundred cetaceans were found dead along the French coast in the Bay of Biscay this February, according to the Centre for Research on Marine Mammals (CRMM) in La Rochelle. These numbers are thought to represent just the tip of the iceberg, with thousands dying each year in the Bay as a result of being caught in mid-water pair trawls used to fish anchovies.

Dolphins are often mutilated in order to release them from the trawls. They may also be slit open to ensure that they sink to the seabed rather than float into sight of regulators. CRMM would like to conduct a study on the impact of trawling fisheries on cetaceans in the Bay in order to establish the extent of the problem. They estimate that about 80% of the dolphin deaths are currently due to incidental capture in fishing gear, as this is the proportion of carcasses found with clear by-catch signs. Meanwhile, fishermen argue that only 20% of deaths are due to fishing.

CRMM blames not fishermen, but price conscious consumers and an apathetic government. The Deputy of Greens of Gironde, Nöel Mamère, is calling for a 10 year moratorium on pair trawls in the southern part of the Gulf of Gascogne, from Arachon to La Coruña in Spain; and for reinforcement of controls on all types of fishing methods.

For further details contact: Anne Collet, Centre de Recherche sur les Mammifères Marin (CRMM), Institut de la Mer et du Littoral, Port de minimes, 17000 La Rochelle; tel +33 5 46 44 99 10; fax +33 5 46 44 99 45; email acollet@univ-lr.fr

landed from the eastern Atlantic were below the minimum size set by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. The continued harvesting of undersized fish is threatening the future viability of these fisheries, says TRAFFIC.

For further details contact: Caroline Raymakers, TRAFFIC Europe; tel +32 2 343 82 58; fax +32 2 343 25 65; email craymakers@traffic-europe.com; http://www.traffic.org

Prospects for aquaculture

The aquaculture industry is expected to grow in terms of output and employment, despite increasing environmental concerns. This was the key message from Fisheries Commissioner, Franz Fischler, who was speaking at a PESCA conference on the 'Future of Aquaculture in Europe'. Problems relating to food safety and environmental protection could be resolved by improving the quality of on-site management, developing broader integrated management plans for coastal and rural areas, and developing new technologies.

For further details contact: Mme Chiara Gariazzo, Communication and Information Unit, DG Fisheries, Commission of the European Communities; tel +32 2 299 9255; fax +32 2 299 3040; email chiara.gariazzo@cec.eu.int

Modifying fish

A model developed by Purdue University, Indiana, USA provides a warning about the potential dangers of introducing genetically modified (GM) fish into the wild.

Researchers found that modified individuals became sexually mature faster than normal fish and produced more eggs. In addition, using natural size variation they found that the larger GM males tended to attract four times as many mates as their smaller rivals. However, only two-thirds of engineered fish survived to reproductive age compared with wild fish. So the spread of the growth hormone gene could make populations dwindle and eventually become extinct.

Using a computer model and extending the research to situations where transgenic fish remained larger at sexual maturity, which would perhaps be the case with salmon, the researchers found that a wild population of 60 000 fish became extinct within 40 generations. Even a single GM fish could have the same effect; however, the probability of that is low because of stochastic events. Biologists in Canada and New Zealand are experimenting with salmon engineered in a similar way. Although no one has begun commercial production for public consumption, at least two commercial companies have started the process.

For further details contact: Dr. William M. Muir, Professor of Genetics, Department of Animal Sciences, Purdue University, W. Lafayette, IN 47907-1151 USA; email bmuir@purdue.edu; tel +1 765 494 8032; http://www.ansc.purdue.edu/faculty/muir.htm

Reforming the market in fish products

Reforms to the EU's fisheries marketing regime were agreed in December 1999. The new rules seek to contribute to the responsible management of fishery resources, in particular, by encouraging fishermen to fish only what can be sold and by improving basic information to consumers. The new rules strengthen the role of Producer Organisations and encourage better links between the catching, processing and retailing sectors.

The Common Organisation of the Market in fishery and aquaculture products is an integral part of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). It aims to apply common EU-wide marketing standards; facilitate the establishment of official Producer Organisations; institute a price support system for products, and establish a regime for trade between the EU and third countries.

The recent changes were initiated in response to a number of factors, including concern over fish stock depletion, changes in consumer habits and the EU's strong and growing dependency on imports.

For further details contact: Mme Chiara Gariazzo, Communication and Information Unit, DG Fisheries, Commission of the European Communities; tel +32 2 299 9255; fax +32 2 299 3040; email chiara.gariazzo@cec.eu.int

Marine Stewardship Council launches labels

The Marine Stewardship Council is to launch its first MSC labelled fishery products: the Australian rock lobster and the Thames herring. The label forms the essence of the MSC mission which is to inform the consuming public about sustainable fishing and to promote the MSC brand of sustainable products.

As MSC acknowledges, the label will only work if consumer demand is generated.

For further details contact: Secretariat, The Marine Stewardship Council, 119 Altenburg Gardens, London SW11 1JQ, United Kingdom; tel +44 20 7 350 4000; fax +44 20 7 350 1231; email Secretariat@msc.org; http://www.msc.org

EU agrees to cuts in fish quotas

Annual negotiations on new Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for the year 2000 took place in December 1999. TACs for most Community stocks were reduced below 1999 levels, with waters around the British Isles subject to some of the largest cuts (see also Focus Article). The agreement was nevertheless criticised by some environmental groups for failing fully to reflect the recommendations of ICES and the Commission.

The most contentious part of the TAC negotiations concerned anchovy, with both the Commission and the Council Presidency pressing for an 85 per cent reduction in the

Keith Ringland/Oxford Scientific Films

Atlantic salmon *(Salmo salar)*: jumping a waterfall in Scotland

INFECTIOUS SALMON ANAEMIA

Chris Poupard
EAA

A recent outbreak of the salmon disease Infectious Salmon Anaemia (ISA) in Scotland has resulted in the compulsory slaughter of hundreds of thousands of farmed salmon and has led to significant job losses.

There are suggestions that the disease was introduced to Scotland by illegal movements of live fish. The Scottish Office's policy of self-regulation for the salmon farming industry has been partly blamed for the situation.

While the salmon farming industry has called for compensation and a downgrading of the status of ISA from a List 1 disease requiring quarantine and compulsory slaughter, there is new evidence that the virus has been found in eels, seatrout, brown and rainbow trout in the wild.

Both the EC and Norway have signed up to an international resolution (the Oslo resolution) subject to the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) treaty, and have undertaken to "minimise the risk of transmission of diseases and parasites to wild fish".

For further details contact: Gabriella Bianca, European Angler's Alliance, 2 rue Francart, 1050 Brussels, Belgium; tel +35 2 502 0494; email: gabriella@skynet.be

Getting fulmars off the hook

Euan Dunn
Marine Policy Officer
RSPB

With fish stocks dwindling in the shallow, European seas, longlining is expanding into deeper waters everywhere. Spanish and Norwegian vessels ply longlines along the Atlantic shelf edge to catch cod, hake, ling and tusk. Icelandic and Faeroese longliners fish their own waters further north. Longlining is a relatively selective method of fishing with little impact on the sea bed. However, it can lead to significant incidental bycatch of seabirds.

The UK's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) consequently launched a major study to investigate how many seabirds are caught by Nordic longliners and to evaluate methods of addressing this problem. The RSPB's Norwegian BirdLife International Partner (NOF) and the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) partnered the study. It took place over two years and involved placing observers supplied by NOF on Norwegian longliners in the Norwegian Sea.

Norway has over sixty large offshore longliners and hundreds of smaller inshore longliners. Each offshore vessel sets 30,000-40,000 baited hooks a day on lines which can be several kilometres long. As the lines are deployed, scavenging seabirds snatch at baited hooks before they sink, get accidentally caught and drowned. Recent work by the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research (Bergen) has indicated that the bait loss incurred reduces fishing efficiency, so both bird conservationists and the fishing industry have a vested interest in finding solutions.

The RSPB study found that the birds caught in the North Atlantic by longlining are nearly all fulmars. The estimated annual toll from Norwegian, Icelandic and Faeroese fleets is between 50,000 to 100,000 fulmars, and possibly many more. This does not pose a direct threat of decline or extinction as fulmar numbers have increased in recent decades. But the study demonstrates some simple ways of reducing bycatch levels, for example by setting lines underwater, out of view from scavenging seabirds. Such measures are also called for under the 1999 FAO initiative to develop National Plans of Action (NPOAs) to reduce seabird bycatch in longline fisheries.

RSPB and BirdLife International will be pressing those countries with clearly identified problems to adopt NPOAs. FAO member countries are due to produce progress reports by February 2001, including an assessment of the need for NPOAs in their waters or for their fishing fleets. Longlining in Community waters and in overseas territories require also the European Community, Spain, the UK and France to address these FAO plans of action.

For further details contact: Euan Dunn, Marine Policy Officer, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2DL, England, UK; tel +44 1767 680551; fax +44 1767 692365; email euan.dunn@rspb.org.uk

Bay of Biscay stock. According to the press, this prompted an angry French minister to walk out of the meeting. A compromise was finally reached, however, whereby the existing TAC will be maintained for six months until additional scientific assessments are undertaken.

Indicators for change

The latest set of FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries (No 8) has been published, covering 'indicators for sustainable development of marine capture fisheries'. The voluntary guidelines explain the need for a broad system of indicators, including indicators relating to ecological, economic, social and institutional change.

Several frameworks for designing and organising indicators are examined and a number of potential difficulties identified, such as data needs, cost-effectiveness, institutional requirements, capacity building and co-ordination.

For the report see: http://www.fao.org/fi/agreem/codecond/gdlines/guide8/guide8.asp; or email the FAO Fisheries Department: FIPL-Inquiries@fao.org

Biodiversity and EU fisheries policy

A new WWF-UK project seeks to promote and develop strategies for integrating biodiversity considerations into EU fisheries policy. The project, funded by the European Commission and the Oak Foundation, aims to identify common goals and policy solutions through a series of one-day workshops on:

- Institutional structures, 15 March 2000, Göteborg;
- Subsidies and financial incentives, May 2000, London; and
- Ecosystem approach, May 2000, Barcelona.

The results of the project will form the basis of recommendations to DG Environment on the integration of biodiversity concerns into EU fisheries policy.

For further details contact: Louise Heaps, Marine Fisheries Officer, WWF-UK; fax +44 1483 426 444; email lheaps@wwfnet.org

Curbing sandeel fishing

The EU has adopted a one year measure to close 20,000 square kilometres of sandeel fishing grounds from mid-Northumberland, England, northwards including the Grampian coast in Scotland, to protect important seabird colonies. The European Commission is also proposing to extend the closure for a further two years.

Denmark takes most of the one million tonnes of sandeel quota for the North Sea, with the catch subsequently reduced into fish meal and oil. However, sandeels also provide an important food source for populations of many seabirds, such as kittiwake, puffin and gannet, as well as for fish such as cod and mackerel.

The sandeel closure provides an important opportunity to assess the connection between the 'industrial' fishery and the breeding success of seabirds. If it works, consideration may be given to introducing similar closures elsewhere.

For further details contact: Mr Simon Waterfield, Fisheries Dept. IIIB, Room 421d MAFF, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR; tel +44 20 7 238 6546; fax +44 20 7 238 5721

Marine aspects of the habitats Directive

A recent case in the UK High Court found against the UK concerning its lack of application of the EC habitats Directive beyond the 12 nautical mile limit, in the UK's 200 mile zone. The case, brought by Greenpeace, has significant ramifications for the UK.

The subsequent decision by the UK not to appeal is expected to generate more widespread application of the marine aspects of the habitats Directive by other Member States. The UK will now have to demonstrate that it can achieve favourable conservation status for all coral reefs and cetaceans, particularly prior to offshore oil licensing.

For further details contact: Mr Rob Gueterbock, Greenpeace UK, Canonbury Villas, London N1 2PN; tel +44 20 7 865 8100; fax +44 20 7 865 8202; rob.gueterbock@uk.greenpeace.org

New structural funding rules agreed

In November 1999, Ministers finally agreed the detailed rules and arrangements governing Community structural measures to assist the fisheries sector over the period 2000-2006.

The new rules include a specific measure to support the small-scale fisheries sector, as well as providing funding for 'collective' projects to support fisheries management. Many of the measures previously funded under the PESCA Community Initiative are also eligible.

The new rules relate to the fisheries Structural Fund – the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance or FIFG. FIFG is distributed via sectoral or regional multi-annual programming documents which are agreed between the Commission and the Member States.

Most FIFG funding will be targeted at so-called 'Objective 1' areas, although FIFG will also be available outside these areas. In addition, fisheries related projects can also be funded under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in Objective 2 areas, particularly those identified as 'declining fisheries dependent regions'.

Final expenditure programmes for FIFG are to be agreed by the summer of 2000, although this timetable is expected to slip in many cases. Mechanisms for distributing the funds will vary according to the priorities of individual countries. Readers should contact their national fisheries ministries for further information on how FIFG funds will be targeted and delivered in each Member State.

NATURE CONSERVATION AND FISHERIES

FIFG funds can be used in a variety of ways, although in practice their use has often been limited to conventional infrastructure projects. Developing more innovative ideas to support nature conservation and fisheries was the subject of an IEEP workshop held in Plymouth, UK in November 1999.

The meeting was attended by practitioners, administrators and academics, with financial supported provided by the European Commission and English Nature.

The aim of the meeting was to inform interested groups of the opportunities presented by the new funding round, and to encourage the take-up of funds for environmentally sensitive projects, such as the development of fisheries management plans, the use of incentives to reward more sustainable practices, and support for local processing and marketing to add value to sustainable coastal fisheries.

For more information contact:

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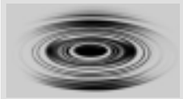

Apart from acting as a source of independent information on fisheries and the environment, *El Anzuelo* aims to present different perspectives on the issue, and thereby encourage discussion and debate among the various players. If you wish to respond to material included in this or the previous issue, we would be happy to hear from you.

POST-SCRIPT: COCKLES AND THE WASH

There have been numerous responses to the reader's letter about cockle fishing in the Wash in England (Destruction of sustainable cockle fishing in the Wash, El Anzuelo, Vol 4, back page). From the UK, local commentators have written to refute the claims in the article and to present an alternative view of the fishery. While we do not have the space to print the full text of these letters, some key passages are quoted below:

■ Prior to 1992, all cockling on the public fishery had been done by hand taking. This meant that the catching vessel dried out on the sand and the crew then collected as many cockles as possible, before the following tide refloated their boat. They were assisted by gathering cockles by the method known as "blowing" which necessitated laying out a heavy anchor and by using the engine to rotate around it in two or three circles, just before the water left the sand. A skilled operator, in fine weather, could successfully blow the cockles out of the sand into ridges, which made collection much easier. The practice was much frowned upon by environmentalists who considered that it was damaging to the sands, and it was subsequently banned.

On 14th November 1988, new legislation, which emanated from Brussels, came into force, which effectively closed the cockle fishery on the eastern side of the Wash by prohibiting the sale of cockles for human consumption, unless they were processed to a far higher standard than the local processors of the time were capable of meeting. This was quickly followed by a similar Order covering the Westerly sands. The high cost of erecting, obtaining approval by Health Authorities and running such plant could not be justified unless a continuous supply of cockles were available – a demand, which it was considered, could only be met by dredgers. Accordingly after much discussion, soul searching and debate, dredging for cockles was permitted, with some foreboding, in the public fishery, from 23rd September 1987.

'Cockles are notoriously bad survivors'

Cockles are notoriously bad survivors – it has been estimated by CEFAS that even in a good year, the majority fail to reach maturity and when adverse weather strikes during the winter months, mortality is in the region of 90 to 95 per cent.

A further policy was introduced in 1995, whereby only 30 percent of available stock was to be taken in any one year. Whilst admirable in concept, this policy was not as successful as had been hoped, with there being very few of the 7,100 tonnes deliberately left in 1995 remaining on the sands in 1996. This was entirely due to the bad weather during the winter of 1995/96 and was in no way the fault of the dredgers as claimed.

Surveys in May showed a total of in excess of 13,000 tonnes of commercial sized cockles. Damage rates, both of the catch and of the returning riddlings were constantly monitored throughout the fishing season and were consistently below the acceptable norm of 10 percent.

CF Beach
Kings Lynn

■ In 1999 a scientific study was started by ESFJC Research Staff to assess breakages rates caused by the suction dredge form of fishing. This study will continue through 2000, but during the 1999 cockle season skippers were informed on a regular basis of their breakage rates and with a few isolated exceptions those rates dropped below 10 per cent by the second week of the season. The areas fished were regularly inspected at low tide and while there was obvious evidence of damaged cockles providing opportunistic food for birds there was certainly no evidence of "devastation" and even the dredge tracks were recolonised by cockles within a couple of tides.

To date not one person has taken out a licence to handwork cockles during this additional period.

All Sea Fisheries Committees have a statutory remit to take environmental matters into account when forming their policy or introducing local laws or regulations, and have a member with an environmental background sitting on their committee. While neither the decline of the cockle stocks nor

'The Wash is currently covered with more cockles than the experienced cockle fishermen have seen in one year in their lifetime'

IEEP London is an independent body for the analysis and advancement of environmental policies in Europe. While a major focus of work is on the development, implementation and evaluation of the EC's environmental policy, IEEP London has also been at the forefront of research and policy development in relation to the integration of environmental considerations into other policy sectors.

This Newsletter is part of IEEP's work programme on Policy Measures for the Sustainable Management of Fisheries which aims to identify, develop and build a consensus around alternative approaches, with a view to influencing the review of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2002.

The Newsletter is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust. It is sent free of charge to key practitioners in the Member States of the European Community. If you wish to subscribe to the Newsletter, or wish to register additional recipients, please fill in the form and fax to: Clare Coffey, IEEP London, on +44 207 799 2600. It is also available at www.ieep.org.uk

Name

Organisation

Address

their subsequent recovery is fully understood there is a determination with the ESFJC and the fishing industry to work together to ensure that the cockle fishery is sustainable.

The Wash is currently covered with more cockles than the experienced cockle fishermen have seen in one year in their lifetime. Indeed there are so many one and two year old cockles on the sands that 1999's year class had difficulty in finding any room to fall, and in some areas the cockles have taken over traditional mussel grounds.

RM Gay – Deputy Clerk & Fishery Officer
Eastern Sea Fisheries Joint Committee

■ It seems that most of the article is against the cockle dredge. Most fishermen at Lynn including the few remaining ex-hand workers accept that the dredge is here to stay and some work on the dredgers.

There is a case for hand working quota especially in the first half of the year when small Brown shrimp boats can suffer badly from poor catches, this would give them an alternative fishery. It would also offer five young men a financially viable way of entering the fishery.

Our job is to build a viable fishery for the future, not live in the past. Our main problem at the moment is that the leaders of the various groups, and there are several of them, cannot safely be put in a room together.

D Bunting
Kings Lynn

Meanwhile from Holland we received this interesting intervention:

■ We would like to respond to the alarming letter on 'destruction of sustainable cockle beds in the Wash' in the previous edition of El Anzuelo. The cockle fishery in the Netherlands is managed through a management plan. The plan is made by the cockle sector in consultation with scientists, nature conservation groups and the Fisheries Directorate within a framework set by the government. Although this co-management policy was not so much prepared to mediate conflicts amongst fishermen, but to address nature conservation issues, we believe that our experience may provide the Sea Fisheries Committee and the fishermen in the Wash with some suggestions on how to address the problems outlined in the aforementioned letter.

Under the nature policy framework substantive parts of the tidal flats are closed for the shellfish fishery to protect important habitats. In addition, in years with poor stocks, 60 percent of the mean food requirement for birds is reserved for birds and a quota is set for the fishery. In the latter scenario, 1/17 of the total quota is allocated to the fishermen using a hand rake in reserved areas.

We believe that the co-management policy has been fruitful for both the cockle sector and nature conservation. Many of the measures taken address the problems reported in the Wash, such as overexploitation of stocks, crushed and damaged shells, conflicts amongst fishermen over fishing areas and the allocation of good quality cockles.

Although there will always be some difference in opinion with the nature conservation interests over the feasibility of mechanical cockle fishing in a nature conservation area, we believe that the Dutch cockle fishery and its management plan is a good example of an ecologically and socially sustainable fishery. For any further information, please feel free to contact us.

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We would be interested to receive any further information or comment on the issues and options for improving the sustainable management of sensitive fisheries such as these.