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## No. 7

### Contents

#### Promoting seafood

Region of the month: Mazara del Vallo - Sicily

The Common Fisheries Policy: processing

PESCA on the spot: transformation in Denmark

Interview of the month: Mr KLEINBENNE, of the trading and processing company, Frozen Fish International (Bremerhaven, Germany)

#### Newsflash

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◀ back

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## Promoting seafood

Consumption of seafood in Europe, averaging an annual 20 kg per head, remains at a relatively low level, in particular among the under-25s. By way of comparison, the Japanese consume almost 70 kg per head annually.

The European Commission, aware of the problem, has taken the initiative to set up a large-scale information campaign with the aim of making EU consumers better informed of the dietary qualities of fish, in particular a number of species which tend to be less popular nowadays, or the practical advantages brought about by new methods of packaging. In addition, consumers will be made more aware of the challenges surrounding the CFP in the area of resource conservation.

To launch the campaign, Ms Bonino wasted no time in getting behind the wheel of a jumbo truck proudly flying the colours of Europe set against a background of stylized fish! And so the European Commissioner gave the starting signal to the "European Fish Tour" to be undertaken by this campaign vehicle generously furnished with information material and product samples. The promotional vehicle set out on its tour from Brussels at the close of the "Seafood Europe" Exhibition and will end in Cologne this October with another big exhibition, "Anuga". By then it will have lauded the nutritional value of seafood products from Helsinki to Lisbon, from Dublin to Athens, and many other major European cities!

The information campaign will also feature other events aimed in particular at secondary schools, where information leaflets will be distributed and a prize-winning competition for promotional films on fish will be organized. Not to mention the inclusion of advertising on TV game shows, or the organization of a panel discussion on the prevention of cardio-vascular disease.

Unlike other areas such as agricultural products, it is the first time the Commission has set up an integrated programme on seafood at a European level. This fact was highlighted by Ms Bonino herself coming along to see that it got off on the right track.

### The Editor

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## Region of the month

### Mazara del Vallo: efforts to solve the fishing crisis

Mazara del Vallo is Italy's most important fishing port. It is located in western Sicily, the country's primary fish-producing region, in value as well as volume terms. The sector accounts for over 5,000 jobs in Mazara, a fifth of which are taken by immigrants from North Africa, with Tunisia close by.

The port is located on a coastal plain irrigated by two rivers and has been a natural harbour for fishing vessels since the beginning of time. Fishing really began to take off in 1920 with the introduction of motorization, enabling the development of deep-sea fishing to meet market demands. Traditional sardine and anchovy catches gave way to fishing for demersal species. Nowadays, trawlers are the port's largest fleet, making up over 55% of vessels, followed by the fleet using passive gears.

In the late-1970s, the fleet's increased fishing capacity led to higher catches, resulting in the depletion of fishing resources. In order to restrict fishing catches, a law was passed in 1982 setting out the creation of biological reserves to enable stocks to be replenished. Compulsory shut-downs were laid down for specified periods, along with regional compensation which fishermen affected by such measures were entitled to claim. This aid scheme is currently being examined by the Commission to verify that it satisfies competition regulations. The fishermen of Mazara anxiously await the resolution of the matter and the promulgation of a new regional fishing law.

In the 1980s, scarcity of resources led to many fishing vessels leaving Italy's territorial waters to fish the richer waters off North Africa. This development upset relations with Tunisia and Libya. Many vessels were seized and these States only agreed to return them and their crews in exchange for heavy fines and the confiscation of all the fish caught. Problems with Tunisia appear to have been resolved in more recent years with the help of intervention from the Italian authorities, although incidents still occur.

Swordfish-fishing, which has always been widespread throughout southern Italy, was once a thriving activity in Mazara. Nowadays, it merely plays a marginal role and they concentrate exclusively on small species, which the Italian market is more interested in. For this reason, the port has scarcely been affected by the problems associated with the conversion of vessels used to fish these species with drift nets.

Shrimps, along with hake, mullet and sole, are among the main species in Mazara. However, the Sicilian shrimp market, in addition to other species, is subject to negative effects from large-scale imports of foreign products, especially from Thailand, Argentina or Bangladesh, which tend to reduce prices and saturate the domestic market.

The local economic situation is worsened by the lack of any real wholesale market. The current structure dates from 1929 and is located on the banks of the Mazara River, where fishing boats would traditionally land. The building's inefficiency has led to many producers using other marketing channels for some time now. Today, a mere 3% of output passes through the market. Views are converging towards the need for a new modern and efficient building, however, which could attract more fishermen.

#### Data sheet

#### Mazara del Vallo

- *Location*: Sicily, Italy
- *Type of fishing*: trawl, nets, longline, lines, pots
- *Fleet*: 340 boats, including:
  - 190 trawlers
  - 100 with passive gears
  - 50 multipurpose fishing vessels
- *Fishing grounds*:
  - oceanic (Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Senegal) for 15 vessels
  - Mediterranean, beyond 40 miles (25 vessels)
  - Mediterranean, between 20 and 40 miles (167 vessels)
  - coastal grounds (133 vessels)
- *Catches*:
  - *volume*: **28,200 tonnes**
  - *value*: 195 billion lire (approximately **ECU 100 million**)
  - *species*: 12,116 tonnes of hake (*Merluccius merluccius*), 2,700 tonnes of shrimps (various species, including *Parapaeneus antennatus*), 1,030 tonnes of gurnard (*Mullus surmuletus et Mullus barbatus*), 735 tonnes of sole (*Solea sp.*), squid (*Loligo vulgaris et Illex coindetti*)
- *Number of fishermen*: 1,600 regular and 400 casual fishermen
- *Processing*:
  - *number of companies*: 8, mostly in shrimp packaging
  - *jobs*: 150 people

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 [back](#)



## Common Fisheries Policy Processing of seafood

The fishing and aquacultural product processing industry in Europe shows highly contrasting features. Part of the industry has been transformed by adapting to new legislative standards and market requirements. Alongside ultramodern firms, however, there is still a significant part of the industry which has not been modernized and is faced with problems of competitiveness and marketing.

These weaknesses are all the more damaging since all firms in the industry must take account of the generally high production costs in the context of increased competition from products with low added value from third countries.

### *The CFP supports the transformation of the processing industry with the FIFG.*

Since 1994, actions in this field have been taken by the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG). The budget allocated to the processing and marketing sectors exceeds 20% of the FIFG, i.e., approximately ECU 600 million.

The CFP envisages involvement in financing the investment of various types of activity, with an emphasis on novelty and enhancement. After all, one of the main features of European products is their quality and high added value.

To be more specific, the four categories of activity likely to benefit from CFP backing include:

- an improvement in the quality and hygiene of the production processes, in particular the packaging and processing stages, through the renovation of premises and the setting-up of new marketing practices, among others;
- the restructuring and modernization of firms in difficulty, ensuring that firms are not encouraged to overproduce by too great a development of the processing industry;
- the promotion of technological innovation (e.g. in presentation and packaging) and the development of new products;
- an increase in the added value of aquacultural products.

### A large-scale conference within the PESCA framework

Within the framework of the PESCA Community initiative, the Commission organized a conference on the theme of the processing industry in Brussels on 26 and 27 June last. Over 300 professionals and parties connected with the industry gathered to consider the following four specific fields:

- producer-processor relations
- the impact of research on the industry
- quality-related problems
- the impact of new consumer habits.

A summary of the conference proceedings will allow information to be provided on the measures to be implemented to ensure the industry's prosperity.

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 [back](#)



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## **PESCA on the spot**

### **In Denmark: diversification towards tourism and communications**

According to the Danish Fisheries Directorate, three projects are being, partially financed by PESCA in Denmark.

The most significant project involves the restoration of a harbour located on the eastern Jutland coast (Bønnerup harbour). Two sea walls have been extended to prevent silting-up of the basins and fitted with windmills. This has been done both to improve facilities for the arrival of fishing boats and to facilitate the reception of yachts previously deterred by access difficulties. The proportion of the project, costing a total of ECU 2.6 million, which is eligible within the PESCA framework, is due to obtain up to 30% financial aid from PESCA.

A project involving the diversification of activities was put forward by a fisherman from Løkken, Jutland. He wanted to have his boat fitted-out so that it could be used for sailing or fishing enthusiasts during the low-activity period (May to September), which happens to correspond to the tourist season. The total cost of the project was ECU 132,000, 30% of which was financed by PESCA.

Finally, eight fishing communities received aid towards setting up a network intended to collate their experiences. Eight ports, among them the country's biggest, were involved, i.e. Esbjerg, Hirtshals, Skagen, Hanstholm, Thyborøn, Neksø, Frederikshavn, Grenå. 50% of the project, at a total cost of ECU 31,400, was financed by PESCA.

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◀ back



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## Interview of the month

### Interview with Jürgen KLEINBENNE of FROZEN FISH International, Bremerhaven, Germany

*Editor's note: intended as a medium for freely voiced opinions, the PESCA bulletin reflects the views held by professionals. Articles express the opinions of the authors alone.*

*Introduction:* Germany is the second biggest producer of processed seafood products within the EU. The processing industry employs approximately 12,000 people. Bremerhaven, the country's main fishing port, accounts for 4,500 jobs, a significant share of employment in the processing industry. These industries are fuelled by landings from the local fleet, but more so by imports.

*P.I. (Pesca Info):* Would you briefly tell us about your activities in the industry?

*J.K. (Jürgen KLEINBENNE):* Frozen Fish International belongs to the Unilever Group. The company produces frozen fish based products mainly for the European Unilever companies. More than 1,000 employees work at the factory site here in Bremerhaven.

The main raw materials are blocks of frozen whitefish which originate mainly from areas outside the EU (but only coldwater species). Roughly 70,000 tons of finished products are produced, taking into account the individual regional requirements of the receiving companies. The largest single product group is fish fingers.

*P.I.:* What are the difficulties facing the seafood trade within the European market?

*J.K.:* One of them is the extreme squeeze on margins which may force some producers to sacrifice quality, which is bad for the whole fish business. The EU is not self-sufficient in fish supply and relies heavily on deliveries from third countries. Therefore high import duty barriers are not necessary to protect EU fisheries but make fish products expensive for consumers. In Bremerhaven, there is a very high rate of unemployment and after other activities collapsed, fish processing industries constitute the main activity. So this industry needs to be protected.

*P.I.:* What would you propose to improve fish quality and the broader seafood trade within the EU?

*J.K.:* As it will be very difficult to get everybody in the fish industry and trade sectors under one roof, it remains the responsibility of the individual companies to achieve and maintain the best quality for their products. A common goal should be to trade only fish products from well managed sustainable fisheries. This would certainly gain confidence from the consumer and at the same time safeguard long-term business interests.

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 [back](#)





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## Newsflash

### Fish Industry Exhibitions at VIGO in the autumn

Two exhibitions will be held at VIGO this autumn: "VIGO 97 - Exposición Mundial de la Pesca" from 17 to 21 September 1997, dealing with fishing equipment and technology and the first "SAPROMAR 97" from 19 to 21 November, intended to be of a more general nature.

A second **call for proposals** relating to cooperation projects and networking between regions dependent on fishing within the framework of the PESCA Community initiative was published in the OJEC (97/C 152/08) of 21/05/1997. Final date for the submission of proposals: 17/07/1997.

This column is available to you if you wish to announce various events or actions likely to interest the fishing world.

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◀ back