



European Commission

No 26 September 2005

# Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe



## Are rules needed for eco-labelling schemes for fisheries products?



**Control**  
Green light for the Fisheries Control Agency

**Vigo**  
Europe's leading fishing port is home to the Control Agency

**Discovery**  
Aquaculture in Hungary and Slovakia

# Calendar

## Shows and exhibitions

### • DanFish International – Fishing exhibition, Aalborg (Denmark), 13-15 October 2005.

The 3 day DanFish International 2005 exhibition is one of the largest fishing events in Northern Europe. The exhibition is hosted by the northern Danish city of Aalborg, home of the exhibition since 1974.

#### > For more information:

Tel: +45 99 35 55 55

E-mail: fair@akkc.dk

Web site: <http://www.danfish.com>

### • NEAFC – Annual Meeting, London (United Kingdom), 14-18 November 2005.

The 24th Annual Meeting of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission will take place at its headquarters in London. On the agenda: Committee and working group reports, recommendations for management measures for North-east Atlantic species, the NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement, amending the NEAFC Convention, the ecosystem approach to fisheries management and integration of fisheries and environmental policies, and other matters.

#### > For more information:

Tel: +44 20 7631 0016

E-mail: [info@neafc.org](mailto:info@neafc.org)

Web site: <http://www.neafc.org>

### • ICCAT – Regular meeting, Seville (Spain), 14-20 November 2005.

The 19th Regular meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna is being held in Seville at the invitation from the European Union, the Government of Spain, and the Autonomous Community of Andalusia. On the agenda: Committee and working group reports, plans for a revised Compendium of ICCAT Conservation and Management Measures, and other matters.

#### > For more information:

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Web site: <http://www.iccat.es>

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#### Note to readers

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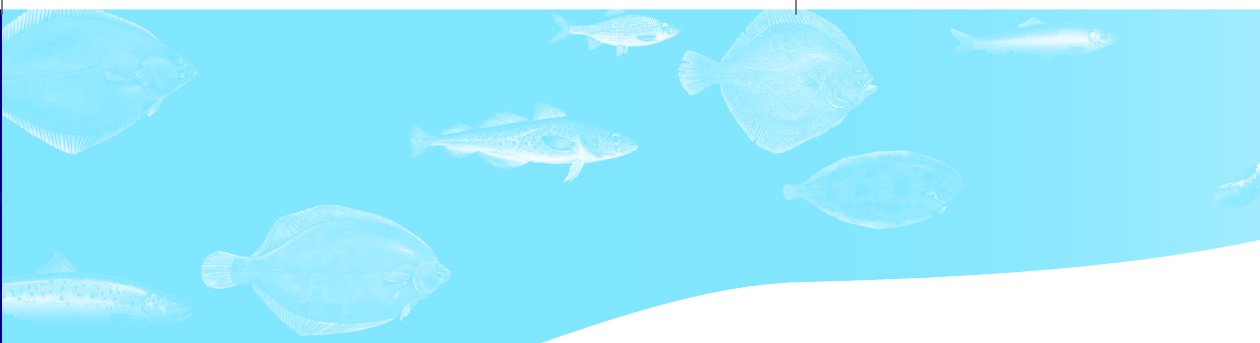
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## Two initiatives to take forward the Common Fisheries Policy

**Implementation** of measures agreed under the reformed common fisheries policy in 2002 continues. The start of the year saw two important initiatives translated into reality: the establishment of the Community Fisheries Control Agency and the kick-off of a public debate on the complex issue of eco-labels for fisheries products.

The creation of the Community Fisheries Control Agency aims to ensure more uniform, transparent and fair application of CFP rules on the ground. By pooling their means of control and planning joint interventions, the Member States, under the Agency's coordination, will be able to act more effectively to ensure that Community regulations are enforced. The Community Fisheries Control Agency will be based in Vigo, Spain, and is expected to become operational in 2006.

Over and above the application of legal provisions, the Commission wanted to launch a debate on other means that can contribute to the protection of fish resources and marine ecosystems. One such means, the introduction of eco-labelling schemes for fisheries products, also aims to increase their value. The Commission has just released a communication addressed to the European institutions and all stakeholders in the sector. It is meant to launch a wide debate on the question of eco-labelling of fisheries products. Three options are explored (see details in our article).

Since participation in a labelling scheme is voluntary, it is important for the process to be worthwhile for those making the effort. The credibility of such labels must therefore be sufficient to create real added value in the consumer's mind. To ensure such credibility and prevent a glut of labels based on vague standards, incomplete claims or even falsehoods, the Commission recommends the setting of minimum requirements for any eco-labelling scheme used in Europe. This preferred option does not shut the door on the others described in the communication, however.

Whatever the ground rules that may result from this debate, it is clear that a coherent Community policy on eco-labelling schemes would help stimulate consumer awareness of the environmental dimension of fisheries and would offer strong encouragement for professionals to develop practices that respect resources and the environment in general, over and above the legal rules applicable to all.

The Editor

# ○ Are rules needed for eco-labelling schemes for fisheries products?

Eco-labels are coming into wide use in a number of sectors. Fisheries products are no exception to this trend. Such labels correspond to consumer expectations in terms of information and transparency, and can serve as a financial incentive for producers to switch to more responsible fishing practices. But their growing number and the objective realities they cover can be a source of confusion.

**That** is why the Commission, via a communication, wishes to initiate a wide debate on the eco-labelling of fisheries products. Fishing & Aquaculture in Europe takes a look at this complex subject and at the Commission's themes of analysis in a set of questions and answers.

## What is an eco-label?

In the general sense, an eco-labelled product is entitled to bear a logo that assures the consumer that it has been produced in accordance with certain environmental standards. These can concern aspects such as the sustainability of the resource used as raw material, the environmental impact of the production method or the recyclability of the product. To be recognised, an eco-labelling scheme must involve three essential features (according to the International Standardisation Organisation): a certification standard (all the standards the eco-labelled product must meet), an accreditation body and independent certification bodies (charged with providing surveillance to ensure that standards are being met). The body managing the label thus guarantees to consumers that producers' compliance with the established certification standard is monitored strictly and on a permanent basis.

Participation in an eco-labelling scheme is proposed to producers on a strictly voluntary basis. The aim is to get consumers, who are informed by the label and wish to support such an initiative, to buy the labelled products rather than others. Consumers' purchases of labelled products serve to encourage producers to take up more environmentally responsible fishing practices.

An eco-label for fisheries products can be expected to pursue two objectives: sustainable resources and a sustainable ecosystem. It is an approach that strengthens existing legal requirements but cannot replace them. It is for the public authorities to protect natural resources through regulations. While eco-labels can help support sustainable fisheries, they cannot replace the policies implemented by the European Union and Member States. The idea is to go beyond regulatory measures and to encourage players to engage in responsible fishing practices.

## Why is the private sector interested in eco-labelling schemes for fisheries products?

It is logical for the food industry to respond to growing consumer demand for products that respect environmental standards. Fisheries products are no exception to the rule.

But it would be simplistic to limit operators' motivations to a mere marketing reflex. The need for a long-term approach to their source of supplies is also one of their concerns, and the eco-label will help to make it possible to continue exploiting stocks on a sustainable basis. In addition, with the eco-label, long-term relations can be established with the fishermen and fleets involved, which in turn permits longer-term contracts and potentially more favourable price conditions, something that is not possible with one-off purchases.

## How credible are the different eco-labels?

This is one of the problems of the current situation, where there are sometimes tremendous differences between labels on the market.

Indeed, existing labels include private initiatives by brands or specific distributors, with standards set by the brand itself and controls carried out internally. As a result, the company that creates the label judges its own case.

There are also private initiatives by producers and/or NGOs creating labelling schemes that comprise criteria and principles based on the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) code of conduct. These cover fisheries of different sizes and have the support of all or part of the operators in the fisheries concerned. So certain labels have established their reputation, create demand and are meeting with a degree of success.

Standards can nonetheless vary considerably from one to the next and there is considerable debate over the validity of the standards imposed. Some are not compatible with national provisions and preferences or they create barriers to trade. To date, no label is matched with an independent accreditation/certification





In the right conditions, certain fishing methods can be more selective than others.

process as required by the international guidelines adopted by the FAO in March 2005.

Finally, the concept behind existing labels is extremely variable. There are considerable differences between protecting a species (e.g. "Dolphin Safe"), certifying the ecological management of fish stocks, and promoting the ecological advantages of various fishing techniques. These differences need to be clarified to consumers.

The danger of seeing the very concept of eco-labels lose all credibility due to this lack of clarity is one of the reasons prompting the Commission to stimulate debate on a Community approach to eco-labels for fisheries products.

### What are the aims of a Community policy on eco-labelling schemes for fisheries products?

The objective of the reformed common fisheries policy adopted in 2002 is to "ensure exploitation of living aquatic resources in a way that provides for sustainable economic, environmental and social conditions". The eco-label is a way of integrating environmental concerns into the fisheries sector.

According to the Commission's communication, a policy in this area should aim to further the following objectives:

- **Sustainable fisheries and an adequate level of protection of the ecosystem**  
Eco-labels, if based on clearly defined criteria and appropriate indicators, can assist in both monitoring progress and raising public awareness of sustainability issues.
- **A harmonised approach throughout the Community**  
Consumers should be assured that all eco-labelling schemes in the Community follow basic similar guidelines and principles.
- **Transparent and objective information of consumers**  
When the label concerns in part non-product-related characteristics such as production methods and environmental impacts, clear and verifiable information must be available.
- **Fair competition**  
Labels cannot be misleading and should be more than promotional tools for individual companies.

#### ■ Open access

All eco-labelling schemes should guarantee open access, without discrimination, and the cost to be paid by participants should not be prohibitive for small and medium enterprises or for the small-scale fisheries sector.

#### ■ Development and trade

Labelling rules must address the concerns of developing countries, which fear seeing their products excluded from markets in the developed countries.

### What options does the Commission propose in its communication?

① The first option envisaged by the Commission is to let the private sector carry out its own initiatives without any intervention on the part of the public sector.

The Commission identifies straight away the problems created by this option, however:

- For consumers: without a precise definition of what an eco-label for fisheries products actually means, the development of serious and less serious labels would result in confusion and, in time, in a loss of confidence.
- For the internal market: different policies pursued by Member States or private operators could create barriers to free trade, with eco-labels in one State barring access to others on grounds of different criteria.
- For international trade: the public sector could not provide financial support for eco-labelling schemes without giving rise to complaints for trade distortion.

② The second option would therefore be for the European Union to create its own eco-labelling scheme for fish and fisheries products. In that case, the public authorities would set the standards to be met and would assign control activities to external certification bodies.

The Union has applied this option to other industrial staple products with the European eco-label. But that scheme does not cover food (and consequently cannot be used for fisheries products), beverages or medicines.

The Commission rejects this option for several reasons:

- For financial reasons: the administrative services responsible for assessment, certification and compliance verification would involve significant costs for the public authorities.
- For reasons of roles: the European Union's role is to protect resources by regulating fishing activity. If the Union were to establish stricter management

standards for an eco-label, confusion could result between legal standards and voluntary standards, leading to a loss of credibility for legal standards.

- For reasons of policy coherence: by developing eco-labelling schemes for certain fisheries, the European Union would have to make choices on techniques, gears and types of fishing activity. This situation would end up creating a contradiction between comprehensive management policy and field arbitration.

③ The Commission backs a third option: the establishment of **minimum requirements** for all voluntary eco-labelling schemes authorised on the European Union market.

Labels could thus develop freely through public and/or private initiatives as long as they comply with the minimum requirements.

The involvement of public authorities would be limited to the registration of eco-labelling schemes, and the verification of their compliance with the minimum requirements. Such requirements should cover technical as well as procedural and institutional aspects (see box).

This "safety net" of compulsory criteria would do away with the risk of distorting competition and would offer each operator the flexibility needed to find or create an eco-label adapted to each one's type of fisheries or financial means – an advantage for small and medium-sized enterprises and for operators from the developing countries. In addition, the seriousness of eco-labels on the market would be guaranteed. They would have credibility in the eyes of the public and could play to the full their role of offering a commercial incentive for more responsible fisheries practices.

### What will happen now?

With its adoption of this communication, the European Commission wishes to promote a debate on the question with the European institutions, Member States, the fisheries sector as a whole, environmental protection associations and consumer groups. The first discussions have revealed the many different views on the subject. That is precisely what makes the debate so important. While the Commission prefers the "minimum requirements" option, the other two options have not been ruled out.

What is more, while debate reveals the need for Community action, whatever form it may take, many questions will still need to be answered before such action can materialise as legislative proposals:

## Minimum requirements

If the European Union should decide to establish minimum requirements, the Commission will propose a breakdown of criteria into 5 points, namely those it defended in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) during the development of guidelines for eco-labelling programmes. Adopted in March 2005 worldwide, these guidelines are now the standard reference for any new eco-labelling scheme.

**1. Precise, objective and verifiable technical criteria** – An eco-label has to deliver what it promises. Consumers should be able to monitor and measure whether the promise is being kept. Vague promises of sustainable fishery practices, for example, are not enough. Concrete sustainability criteria have to be defined: management plan, taking of adult fish only, selective gears, etc.

**2. An independent third-party accreditation process** – In accordance with the ISO 14024 guidance standard, the different parties involved in the award of an eco-label must be independent from one another. The accreditation body establishes label criteria; it grants accreditation to certification bodies that check whether the product conforms to the criteria and grants certification, in other words, the right to bear the logo.

**3. Open access** – An eco-labelling scheme must be open to all operators, without discrimination, to avoid creating barriers to the free movement of goods. This is an obligation under international trading rules. The aim of this requirement is to keep from excluding the developing countries and small and medium-sized enterprises.

**4. Strict controls** – In addition to accreditation/certification procedures, eco-labelling schemes must be properly controlled to ensure that they comply with the minimum requirements, that certification is satisfactory and that the information provided to consumers is accurate.

**5. Transparency** – Consumers should know what criteria are covered by an eco-label and should thus have easy access to information on the certification standard. Product information at the point of sale should also reflect the certification criteria, to keep from misleading consumers.

- First, the scope of an eco-labelling scheme needs to be defined: should eco-labels cover an entire stock being fished under optimal conditions or can certification be issued to a few operators using selective techniques (even on an over-exploited stock)?
- Is it possible to consider the use of eco-labelling schemes for over-exploited stocks?
- Next, there is a need to work out how an eco-label can define its objectives: these must obviously be realistic and applicable while going beyond mere compliance with regulations.
- Relations between the different links in the production chain, from fishermen to consumers, also have to be organised in such a way as to result in a fair distribution of the advantages of an eco-label.
- Finally, agreement will need to be reached on assessment criteria for eco-labels: should these refer to the technical means used by a fleet or to the real results of the type of fishing practices?

All these questions will be debated at meetings between the sector's different political and economic actors.



## The two main eco-labels for fisheries products

Eco-labels specific to fisheries products began being developed around a decade ago. The two labels described below are the most widely known:

### “Dolphin Safe/Dolphin Friendly”

This definition – which is not exactly an eco-labelling one – has been launched in the 90s by an US NGO, Earth Island Institute (EII). It identifies tuna caught without any encirclement of dolphins. Currently two different interpretations of “Dolphin Safe” tuna are challenging one another: that of EII, which, as mentioned, does not allow fishermen to encircle dolphins schools during the fishing operation to catch tuna (notably yellow fin tuna), and that of the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Programme (AIDCP) the sister organisation to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) (1) which imposes some particular obligations and provisions to be respected and implemented during the fishing operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and whose principal aim is to reduce the dolphins by-catch, during these operations, towards level approaching zero.

Actually the competition between these two different interpretations of “dolphin safe tuna” has some effects and consequences on the free movement of tuna products: the USA have, since the beginning of the 90s, adopted within their internal legislation the EII definition of “dolphin safe tuna”, and consequently all tuna caught according to the AIDCP rules cannot be marketed on the US market as “Dolphin Safe”.

The European Union is in the process of becoming a full Member of the AIDCP and it takes part in the proceedings of this Agreement together with the other Contracting Parties, including the US. The AIDCP Certification Scheme and Label is a voluntary system within the AIDCP and the EU Council of Ministers is currently examining if the scheme should be implemented in the European Union.

### The Marine Stewardship Council

The MSC label was created in 1997 on a joint initiative by Unilever (which markets brands such as Iglo, Findus and Birds Eye) and the WWF. It aims to guarantee consumers that the product comes from well managed fisheries and has not contributed to the environmental problem of over-fishing.

To date, 10 fisheries have been certified, among which four European fisheries. Over 180 products around the world carry the MSC label. Twelve fisheries are currently undergoing assessment. The large-scale MSC initiative is nonetheless open to criticism because the certification process is carried out by the label owner rather than by an independent third party. The process of developing the MSC principles also has shown that there are reserves on the side of developing countries, which fear that their products may be excluded from developed country markets.

Along with eco-labels of multinational scale, private initiatives are also being taken by commercial brands or distributors, the credibility of which is not always easy to establish.

(1) The regional tuna fisheries organisation active in the eastern Pacific (US side).

## ○ In the news

# An Agency to improve fisheries control



The Fisheries Control Agency will have the job of coordinating Member States' surveillance activities, ashore and at sea, by organising the joint deployment of multinational teams, for example.

**The Community Fisheries Control Agency<sup>(1)</sup> was established in April 2005. Its role: to coordinate Member States' control and inspection activities. Its objective: to guarantee effective and uniform application of the rules of the common fisheries policy wherever the European fleet is active. Its seat: Vigo, Spain.**

**To** grasp the importance of this new agency, it is vital to look into the way monitoring activities are conducted. The basic principle is that the Member States are responsible for applying the rules of the common fisheries policy. They must do so on their territory, in the waters under their sovereignty and for fishing vessels flying their flag, regardless of their zone of activity. Until now, however, there has been no systematic coordination of Member States' inspection and surveillance activities and their practical arrangements, frequency and strictness vary from one State to the next. What is more, most of the Member States have placed monitoring and implementation of the CFP under the responsibility of several authorities, with either national or regional competence (fisheries inspection services, coastguard, navy, customs, police, etc.); many of these authorities have other responsibilities not related exclusively to fisheries. This situation further complicates the coordination of fishing inspection activities.

As a result, the consistent and harmonised application of CFP rules on the ground is even more difficult and the fisheries sector complains of patchy control activities and a lack of uniformity from one zone to the next.

### **The culmination of strategic analysis**

Analysis of and action on the subject are nothing new. The harmonisation and coordination of control strategies was one of the major pillars of the 2001 Green Paper, which, with a view to the reform of the common fisheries policy, proposed the creation of a joint inspection structure as a way of

guaranteeing effective implementation of CFP measures.

The introduction of harmonised rules for the application of regulations constitutes one of the pillars of the reform of the CFP adopted in 2002. Simultaneously, the Council of Fisheries Ministers called on the Commission to work on "creating a common inspection structure".

### **The Agency's mission**

The objective of the Agency is to organise operational coordination of fisheries control and inspection activities by the Member States in accordance with the Community's control and inspection obligations.

It will also, in its area of competence, help the Member States carry out their tasks and obligations under CFP rules and harmonise implementation of the common fisheries policy throughout the Community.

Another of its tasks will be to help Member States to report information on fishing activities and control and inspection activities to the Commission and third parties.

Finally, the Agency will coordinate operations to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in accordance with Community rules.

### **Operational coordination**

One of the Agency's main tasks will be to organise operational coordination between Member States. In concrete terms, it will have to coordinate the joint deployment of Member States' inspectors and means of action. Depending on the strategy determined at Community or international level, and acting in concert with the national authorities, it will establish joint deployment plans with specific aims (specific fisheries, recovery plans, fleet, areas, etc.).

(1) Established by Council Regulation 768/2005.



## In brief

### Structure and functioning of the Agency

A Community body having legal personality, the Agency has an Administrative Board and operates under the responsibility of an Executive Director, who manages and represents it. It also has an Advisory Board composed of representatives of the Regional Advisory Councils, which are made up of all parties interested in fisheries management.

#### The Administrative Board

It is composed of one representative per Member State and six representatives of the Commission, appointed for five years. The term of office may be renewed.

The Administrative Board appoints the Executive Director, establishes the work programme taking into account the opinions of the Commission and the Member States, and adopts the budget and the general report of the Agency for the previous year.

The Chairperson of the Administrative Board is elected from among the Commission representatives and the Deputy Chairperson from among its members, for a term of office of three years renewable once.

The Administrative Board takes its decisions by an absolute majority of votes.

#### The Executive Director

The Executive Director manages all the Agency's activities, under the authority of the Administrative Board, and takes the necessary steps for the implementation of the work programme. He/she is appointed for a term of office of five years renewable once. Without prejudice to the respective competencies of the Commission and the Administrative Board, the Executive Director may neither seek nor take instructions from any government or any other body.

#### The Advisory Board

One of the essential points of the reform of the common fisheries policy in 2002 was the strengthening of participation by fishermen and other interested parties in the CFP process. Accordingly, the Agency has an Advisory Board composed of members of the Regional Advisory Councils, with one representative appointed by each Council, to ensure close cooperation with all the parties concerned. The members of the Advisory Board advise the Executive Director in the performance of his/her duties and one of its members participates in the deliberations of the Administrative Board without the right to vote.

To execute such plans, it will set up multinational inspection teams that will use the means made available (vessels, aircraft, vehicles, etc.) by the Member States concerned.

#### Training and new technologies

The Agency may also be charged with training inspectors, facilitating the use of new technologies, establishing joint control procedures and so on. It may also provide contractual services to Member States at their request and at their expense (i.e. chartering and operating inspection vessels and recruiting observers).

#### Action beyond Community waters

The European Union is also obliged by a number of international agreements and by its participation in regional fisheries organisations (RFOs) to carry out controls and inspections of the Community fleet operating outside EU waters. That is particularly the case for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO) and the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC).

To ensure the effectiveness of such measures over the past decade, the Community and the other contracting parties have taken on operational tasks related to inspection and control activities in international waters. For example, the Commission has chartered a surveillance vessel in the North Atlantic since 1990, on behalf of the Community, and sends observers to a number of areas.

The new Agency will have the task of coordinating Member States' surveillance and inspection activities imposed by the European Union's international obligations.

With this new structure, application of the CFP will doubtless be stricter, but also fairer and more transparent. Improved surveillance is expected to improve compliance with CFP rules and consequently to enhance the protection of fish resources.

#### Useful information

- Establishment of the Agency will not change Member States' obligations in terms of application of CFP measures or those of the European Commission aimed at guaranteeing Member State compliance.
- Its budget for 2006 is € 5 million and will evolve in terms of the Agency's activity.
- The Agency will be based at Vigo, in Galicia.
- It will have a staff of around 50.

## ○ In the news

# Vigo, Europe's leading fishing port and home to the Agency

**Vigo** enjoys a particularly advantageous situation. A natural port nestled in the hollow of a ria, protected by the Cies islands, Vigo has been a fishing town since well before Roman times. Situated in the extreme North-West of Spain, in the Galician province of Pontevedra and close to the Portuguese border, the town boasts the number one fishing port in Spain and in the European Union.



Vigo, the seat of the Fisheries Control Agency, has based its economy on the sea and fisheries since time immemorial. It is Europe's leading fishing port and a major fish processing and trading centre.

Vigo is first and foremost an important fleet. More than 400 vessels are members of the local vessel-owners' cooperative. It is composed of 35 seining vessels that fish for sardines, Atlantic horse mackerel and common mackerel on the Galician coast; 100 long liners active in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans that catch swordfish and different types of sharks and tunas; 111 Gran Sol vessels that fish mainly for megrim,



anglerfishes and European hake in Community waters; 70 large freezer trawlers that fish for halibut, rock grenadier, redfish, deepwater prawn, etc. in international zones such as the NAFO (1) and NEAFC (2); and 102 freezer trawlers owned by joint ventures, fishing primarily for hake and squids and, while operating in the waters of other States, sometimes come to unload catches and make repairs in the port of Vigo.

As for coastal fishing, the Federation of *Cofradías* of the Province of Pontevedra is made up of 4 000 vessels, including seining vessels that fish for sardines, Atlantic horse mackerel and common mackerel, and other small craft using smaller gears such as gillnets (sea spider, turbot, sole, red sea bream and hake) or fish pots (octopuses, velvet swimcrab, etc.). Part of the coastal fishing fleet is directly concerned by the recovery plan for stocks of southern hake and Norway lobster proposed by the Commission in 2004, which is still being debated by Parliament and the Council.

In 2004, 86 000 tonnes of fresh fish and 496 000 tonnes of frozen fish were landed at the port. More than 55 lorries are loaded daily. Others unload fish coming from throughout Galicia and even from other European Union countries, to sell them at the El Berbés auction market, where they get higher prices.

Vigo is also an industrial and commercial activity based on fisheries products. The fish preserving industry was introduced by Catalan tradesmen at the end of the 18th century, leading to the town's growth. More than 60 firms active in the trading and processing of fish, molluscs and crustaceans are based in Vigo. Industry is not limited to fish and seafood alone, however. Vigo is also a large-scale commercial port (4.7 million tonnes of varied goods in 2004) which stimulates an industrial activity based on shipbuilding, transport, refrigeration technology, etc.

So it is not by accident that the main Spanish fisheries associations are based in Vigo. These include: the Spanish fish traders' association (Acopevi), whose 91 members market their goods throughout the peninsula and on the islands; the Spanish association of wholesalers, processors, importers and exporters of fishery and aquaculture products (Conxemar), whose members include 256 firms across Spain; and the Spanish association of preserved fish manufacturers (Anfaco).

## Discovery

We conclude our fisheries overview of the 10 new Member States with Hungary and Slovakia, two landlocked States where production is primarily based on aquaculture.



### Hungary: a fresh water activity

**Hungary has no coast. Yet the huge Pannonian Plain encompasses 140 000 hectares of surface water, including**

**the Danube. It is in this system of rivers, lakes and ponds that 5 000 people make a living from annual production of just under 20 000 tonnes of fish.**

**Aquaculture** accounts for two thirds of this production. The sector's 1 400 workers are employed in the natural and artificial ponds of the plains in the southern and northern parts of the country, and in the Transdanube region. Common carp makes up 85% of the 12 000 tonnes produced. The other species are very diverse: rainbow trout, catfishes, eel, and pike.

Carp is also the main caught species (57%). Indeed, a freshwater commercial fishing activity provides a livelihood for 3 500 fishermen and produces just over 3 000 tonnes of fish, a quantity equivalent to the yearly catches of the 370 000 amateur fishermen.

#### No culinary tradition

With an average of 3.8 kg a year per inhabitant, Hungary is the EU country with the lowest consumption of fish. As a result, the processing industry is not very well developed (17 firms). Most production is sold fresh, refrigerated or frozen. The same holds for exports (4 200 tonnes), of which 70% are non-processed products, with no added value. Imports are mostly frozen fish, fish fillets and preserved fish.

For the 2004-2006 period, the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) is contributing € 4.3 million for restructuring of the Hungarian fisheries sector. The bulk of this amount is being used to develop the aquaculture and processing industry and for the marketing and promotion of fisheries products.



### Slovakia: importing and processing

**Slovakia is a mountainous country and a large part of its territory is not suited to the development of aquaculture.**

**Total fish production is quite limited, at around 2 500 tonnes. Yet the processing sector has a strong presence...**

**Slovakia** has around 20 companies specialised in the processing of fisheries products. The sector generates around 1 000 jobs and has a turnover of € 30 million. Curiously enough for a landlocked country, some 15 of these companies deal in marine products, which explains the importance of the country's imports: 13 500 tonnes in 2003.

Five of the firms are specialised in the processing of local products such as carp and trout. They are supplied by the local aquaculture sector, which has around 1 000 workers (23% full-time). These companies raise fish in some 2 000 hectares of ponds – some dating back to the 16th century – and produce around 2 000 tonnes of fish, primarily common carp (52%) and rainbow trout (32%). This production is also used to restock ponds frequented by 100 000 amateur fishermen.

For the 2004-2006 period, Slovakia received European subsidies of € 1.8 million for projects relating to aquaculture (introducing new technologies, lessening environmental impact) and processing (improving quality and sanitary conditions, lessening environmental impact).

## In brief

### > Reconciling the competing demands on the resources of Europe's oceans and seas

In March 2005 the European Commission published a communication on a future maritime policy for the European Union. The communication sets out the Commission's vision for Europe's oceans and seas and makes the case for the need to look at such issues in a coordinated and integrated way rather than the current sector-by-sector approach.

The communication is the first step in the process of putting together a Maritime Policy for the European Union. The Commission expects to publish a Green Paper some time in the second quarter of 2006. A launching conference will then most likely be held to mark the occasion. This will be followed by a broad process of consultation where all stakeholders concerned will be asked to share their ideas and concerns. This process will include a series of regional conferences to sound out reactions to the Green Paper in Member States and more particularly in coastal areas.

The entire consultation process will undoubtedly take the greater part of a year if not more. Drafting a maritime policy would therefore begin some time in the second half of 2007 at the earliest. A maritime policy for the Union could be expected to come into force before 2010.

### Diverse economic activities

Europe has one of the largest maritime sectors in the world. What's more is that these extensive and diverse economic activities – transport, fisheries, tourism, energy production, etc. – take place in a relatively small maritime area. Maritime transport, for example, employs about 2.5 million people and handles more than 1 billion tonnes of cargo and 300 million passengers per year. Fisheries produce about 7.6 million tonnes of fisheries products annually. With activities such as gas and oil production at full capacity Europe's seas have also become important sources of energy. In addition to being very popular tourist destinations the Union's coastal regions are home to some 225 million people or 50% of the Union's total population.

The limited space in which Europe's various maritime activities operate means that competition for the use of this space can sometimes be quite intense. The aim of the Union's maritime policy will be to reconcile these competing demands on the resources of Europe's oceans and seas in such a way as to generate greater economic benefit in a sustainable manner. To this end the Green Paper will not only provide a vision for a future maritime policy for Europe but it will also identify concrete proposals and alternatives to achieve that vision.

In drafting the Green Paper and the ensuing policy the Commission will consider what has been done in other parts of the world in integrated maritime policies while focusing its attention on the specific characteristics of the European context. It will consider all human activities connected with the oceans in Europe and all policies affecting them. It will examine how these

activities can be better organised and how they might provide new sustainable economic opportunities for European citizens. As regards fisheries the Commission will present proposals to reconcile the interest of the fisheries sector with that of other sectors and ensure that the Union's maritime policy will continue to help the fisheries sector deliver economic benefits to the Union in a sustainable manner.

More information on the EU Maritime Policy is available at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/fisheries/maritime/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/fisheries/maritime/index_en.htm)

### > Seminar "Value addition and consumption of fishery products: a common challenge for consumers, producers, processors, traders and retailers"

This seminar was organised by the European Commission in Brussels on 29 June 2005. Around 100 participants, mainly actors of the fisheries industry and representatives of the sector, as well as members of the European Parliament and official representatives of the Member States attended the seminar. Commissioner Joe Borg's speech, the programme, speeches and a summary of the debate are now available on the DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs website, section "Events", at the following address: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/fisheries/>

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