



European Commission

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# FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN EUROPE



 **Multi-annual plans:  
on track for maximum sustainable yield**

 **Markets:**  
COM in the spotlight

 **Maritime affairs:**  
European Maritime Day

## Shows and exhibitions

### **NEAFC, annual meeting of parties, London (United Kingdom), 9-13 November 2009**

The contracting parties to the regional fisheries organisation (RFO) for the international waters of the North East Atlantic meet once a year to adopt guidelines for the management of stocks important for European Union fleets.

**> For more information:**

Tel: +44 207 631 0016  
E-mail: [info@neafc.org](mailto:info@neafc.org)  
Website: [www.neafc.org](http://www.neafc.org)

### **ICCAT, regular meeting of the Commission, Recife (Brazil), 9-15 November 2009**

This important working session of the RFO for Atlantic tuna will focus on follow-up to the recovery plan for Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna.

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Tel: +34 91 416 56 00  
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Website: [www.iccat.int](http://www.iccat.int)

### **WCPFC, regular session, Papeete (Tahiti), 7-11 December 2009**

This meeting of members of the Western and Central Pacific tuna regional organisation will focus on scientific advice and stock management decisions.

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- 14 and 15 December 2009, in Brussels.

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We welcome your comments or suggestions at the following address: European Commission – Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries – Information, communication, inter-institutional relations, evaluation and programming Unit – Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200 – B-1049 Brussels or by fax to: (+ 32) 2 299 30 40 with reference to *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*.  
E-mail: [fisheries-magazine@ec.europa.eu](mailto:fisheries-magazine@ec.europa.eu)

For further information on maritime affairs and fisheries, please consult the following sites:

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## **Multi-annual plans: a key to sustainable European fisheries**

The establishment of multi-annual recovery plans has been a priority of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) since its 2002 reform. At the Sustainable Development Summit in Johannesburg in 2002, the European Union Member States pledged to exploit all stocks at their maximum sustainable yield by 2015. The concept of maximum sustainable yield involves setting a total allowable catch (TAC) for each stock that allows renewal of the species and exploitation under sustainable economic, environmental and social conditions. This concept applies to all stocks, vulnerable or otherwise.

This explains why the European Union has now scrapped the distinction between recovery plans and management plans, and today refers only to 'long-term' or 'multi-annual' plans. The example of the multi-annual plan for Western horse mackerel, to be applied starting next year to a stock in excellent health, illustrates this evolution. In this case, the idea is to achieve reasonable exploitation of the resource rather than having to intervene constantly in critical situations. The aim is a return to prosperity rather than a constant battle to avoid bankruptcy.

Some 40% of European catches are now taken within the framework of multi-annual plans. In some cases these plans have already produced results, although it will take years before their full effects are deployed, especially for stocks that were already seriously depleted.

Over just a few years, the sector's reaction to multi-annual plans has evolved radically. Although such plans occasionally met with opposition during the planning phase of the 2002 reform today they are welcomed. Thanks to long-term planning and smaller annual variations in TACs, the plans have demonstrated their worth as an instrument to manage fishing activity, and fishermen are starting to appreciate them for their true value. Their extension to the great majority of European fisheries is expected to be an important focus of today's reflection on further CFP reform, with the close involvement of the actors concerned, and particularly the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs).

**Joe Borg**, *European Commissioner  
for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries*





## Multi-annual plans: on track for maximum sustainable yield



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In addition to limiting TACs, multi-annual plans define other measures meant to guarantee the sustainable exploitation of a given stock: closing of fishing zones and closed periods, technical measures, follow-up measures, monitoring and inspections, and strict management of fishing effort.

**The European Union made a commitment to manage certain stocks under multi-annual plans within the framework of agreements with Norway and other neighbouring countries, as early as 1996. The first stock concerned was North Sea herring, followed by cod, haddock and mackerel. It was not until 2002, however, with the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, that the EU formally wrote this management principle into European legislation. Today, more than 40% of European catches are taken within the framework of multi-annual plans and there are clear signs that this is the right direction.**

When the Common Fisheries Policy was first under preparation in the early 1980s, the European Commission had proposed to reduce catches by 10% annually with the goal of gradually bringing stocks in Community waters to their maximum sustainable yield. The proposal was rejected by the Council of Ministers, who preferred to have an annual political say on exploitation levels as long as stocks did not present any particular problems.

The situation grew much worse during the 1990s. Catches of most stocks started to fall, the sign of a considerable decline in the quantities of fish. Annual cuts in TACs proved inadequate to bring the situation back to normal. It came to light at the time that more systematic and better planned measures were needed to ensure that vulnerable stocks could be returned to normal.

Consequently, the first 'recovery plans' were put in place for the vulnerable stocks exploited under agreements with Norway, such as North Sea herring (1996), mackerel (1999), Atlanto-Scandian herring (1998) and North Sea haddock (2003). In 2002, in connection with the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, the European Union adopted the principle of multi-annual planning for Community waters. Stocks of cod and hake from the Skagerrak to the west of Ireland were the first to benefit from the new principle, in 2004.

Long-term plans had already been used for certain stocks since the 1960s in the United States, Australia and New Zealand, particularly to rationalise the exploitation of large pelagic stocks. So the European Union was lagging behind in terms of modernising its management methods. During the following years, however, fishing management for several vulnerable stocks was shifted



to multi-annual planning, starting with the most problematical: hake, Norway lobster (Iberian waters), sole (Bay of Biscay and North Sea), plaice (North Sea), cod (Baltic Sea), eel and herring (West of Scotland). Blue whiting (North East Atlantic) can be added to the list within the framework of agreements with neighbouring states.

At present, these plans regulate 41 % of catches of pelagic stocks and 44 % of catches of demersal stocks. These figures are expected to continue to grow in the future since new plans are in the development or adoption stages.

### **Objective: from biomass to mortality rate**

In 2002, a distinction was made between a 'recovery plan' and a 'management plan'. The former applies to a stock whose biomass (number of fish) falls below biologically safe limits or for which catches are so high that the stock cannot replenish itself. This means that there are no longer enough specimens that are mature (or that survive long enough before capture) to ensure the stock's future through reproduction. The aim of the recovery plan is therefore to bring adult biomass to a safe level under the precautionary approach. A management plan, on the other hand, applies to a stock that is not vulnerable but for which long-term maximum sustainable yield is guaranteed by setting a catch rate that guarantees this objective. To sum up, a recovery plan applies to a vulnerable stock whereas a management plan applies to a non-vulnerable stock and aims to make its exploitation sustainable over the long term.

Northern hake is a good example. In 2004, when the *recovery plan* was adopted, biomass was below the critical biological threshold of 100 000 t. The target set in 2004 was to bring the adult stock back over the precautionary-level threshold of 140 000 t while maintaining a moderate catch rate. The scientific findings of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) confirmed that this objective had been reached in 2008 and 2009. The number of mature individuals had returned to the level of the late 1980s. Northern hake should therefore be switched to a *management plan* from 2010.

Today, however, the European Union has dropped this distinction between recovery and management plans and refers only to 'long-term' or 'multi-annual' plans. Whatever the situation of the stock, the goal is ultimately to reach maximum sustainable yield by setting an appropriate exploitation rate. Multi-annual plans are not restricted to vulnerable stocks alone. At the Sustainable Development Summit in Johannesburg in 2002, the European Union Member States pledged to exploit all their stocks at maximum sustainable yield by 2015. Long-term planning is therefore essential. The example of the multi-annual plan for Western horse mackerel, which will be applied from next year to a stock in excellent health, gives a pretty good idea of this evolution.

### **Limited variation in annual TACs**

TACs are set every year in terms of the exploitation rate laid down by the plan. This is the work of scientific experts. They determine the TAC based on the best possible knowledge of the stock's situation. These TACs are adopted annually by the Council of Fisheries Ministers and vary in terms of the biomass of the stock concerned. If the plan has been well devised, applied and respected, biomass should at least remain stable and at best progress from year to year.

Most plans limit the variation in TACs from one year to the next, both upwards and downwards. For Northern hake, for instance, the recovery plan limited this variation to 15 % and the next plan limits changes in the TAC to 10 % at most from one year to the next until 2012, and subsequently to 20 %. This limited variation is seen today as a criterion for success. It means that improvements, which are often short-lived, cannot be used by policy-makers to increase fishing opportunities beyond reasonable levels. It also provides greater stability for fishermen, who have to be able to plan their future activities with reliable exploitation projections.

We should also point out that a decrease in the *rate of exploitation* does not necessarily mean a decrease in *quantities caught*, because if the stock increases quantities will also rise even if the rate of exploitation drops slightly.

### **Protecting immature fish**

Reducing TACs is not enough on its own. Protecting immature fish and spawning grounds, for example, is also vital for guaranteeing the sustainable exploitation of a stock. The multi-annual plan for hake and Norway lobster in Iberian waters establishes two summer closing zones off the coasts of Galicia (Spain) and Alentejo (Portugal), where Norway lobster are found. The plan for Baltic cod bans fishing from 1 May to 31 October in the Bornholm, Gdansk and Gotland deeps, home to large numbers of juveniles. The plan also prohibits demersal fishing in July and August in the central Baltic and in April in the western Baltic, to avoid disruptions to the spawning period. Restrictions in mesh size are imposed for North Sea fisheries under the management plans for cod, hake and flat fishes.

A multi-annual plan also implies a specific monitoring programme. Under the plan for Northern hake, for instance, transshipment from one vessel to another is prohibited, catches of hake must be stowed separately, authorities must be notified of landings in advance, catches must be weighed upon landing, catches of more than 2 t must be landed in designated ports, and so on. Similar measures exist for all plans in order to facilitate inspections and curtail illegal landings. The Member States are also required to develop national inspection programmes for the fisheries targeted by each plan.

## Managing fishing effort

Lastly, certain multi-annual plans contain important measures to restrict fishing effort. The overcapacity of the Community fleet is one of the most obvious causes of overfishing. There are too many vessels for the resources available. Over the longer term, the Commission aims to reduce this structural overcapacity. Until such time as this capacity can be limited, its activity must be restricted. This is what is meant by 'restricting fishing effort'.

In parallel with its reduction of TACs, the Commission is therefore drawing up measures to restrict fishing effort. Management of fishing effort also holds the advantage of reducing the activity of vessels that do not target the species concerned yet take large quantities of it as by-catches. Trawlers that fish for Norway lobster and shrimp in the Skagerrak, for example, are subject to a limit on fishing effort (determined annually) if cod makes up 5% of their total catches.



With its reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2002, the European Union adopted the principle of multi-annual planning in EU waters. The first plans were adopted in 2004 for cod and hake stocks found from Skagerrak to the west of Ireland.

## Community multi-annual plans

- **Cod**  
**Adoption** – February 2004 (Regulation (EC) 423/2004).  
**Revision** – November 2008 (Regulation (EC) 1342/2008).  
**Zone** – North Sea, Kattegat, Skagerrak, eastern Channel, Irish Sea and west of Scotland.  
**Objective** – Originally, to increase quantities of adult fish to acceptable levels; today: to reduce fishing mortality to a level permitting maximum sustainable yield. The fishing mortality target rate was initially set at 0.4. The annual variation in TACs evolves in terms of stock levels.  
**Special conditions** – Incentive measures to encourage the Member States to reduce discards and organise programmes to prevent catches of cod.
- **Northern hake**  
**Adoption** – April 2004 (Regulation (EC) 811/2004).  
**Zone** – North Sea, Kattegat, Skagerrak, Channel, waters to the west of Scotland, around Ireland and in the Bay of Biscay.  
**Objective** – To increase quantities of adult fish in the Northern hake stock to values of at least 140 000 tonnes.
- **Southern hake and Norway lobster**  
**Adoption** – December 2005 (Regulation (EC) 2166/2005).  
**Zone** – Cantabrian Sea and western Iberian Peninsula.  
**Objective** – To increase spawning stock biomass of southern hake to 35 000 tonnes during two consecutive years. For Norway lobster, to restore stocks to safe biological limits.
- **Sole in the Bay of Biscay**  
**Adoption** – February 2006 (Regulation (EC) 388/2006).  
**Objective** – To bring spawning stock biomass above the precautionary level of 13 000 tonnes.  
**Special conditions** – Vessels catching more than 2 t of sole a year must obtain a special permit. The catch limit is set at 100 kg of sole per sea trip.
- **Sole in the western Channel**  
**Adoption** – May 2007 (Regulation (EC) 509/2007).  
**Objective** – To reduce fishing mortality by 20% compared to the average fishing mortality rate for 2003-2005 or to attain a fishing mortality rate of 0.27 for appropriate age groups, the higher rate applying.
- **Sole and plaice in the North Sea**  
**Adoption** – June 2007 (Regulation (EC) 676/2007).  
**Objective** – To guarantee a precautionary biomass level of 230 000 tonnes for plaice and 35 000 tonnes for sole by gradually reducing fishing mortality for sole from its present level of 0.35 to 0.2 and for plaice from 0.58 to 0.3.
- **Eel**  
**Adoption** – September 2007 (Regulation (EC) 1100/2007).  
**Zone** – All European waters, including inland waters.  
**Objective** – National eel management plans must create conditions that allow the escape to sea of at least 40% of adult eel biomass that would migrate and spawn in the absence of fishing or other human activity.





Fishing effort is no longer calculated on the basis of number of days at sea. Activity ceilings are expressed instead in kilowatts per day (kW/day). This unit measures the driving power deployed in a day of fishing. It is based on the power of the vessel's main engine and is calculated from the time the vessel leaves port. This change is meant to simplify the system: the old method of calculation was becoming extremely complex because reductions of fishing days had to be modulated in terms of gear selectivity, engine power, the local characteristics of fisheries, etc. The annexes to the 'TACs and quotas' regulation on fishing effort restriction grew longer each year with the addition of derogations that were hard to implement and enforce.

Indeed the process has been simplified, as seen in the example of measures to restrict fishing effort under the multi-annual plans for cod, Northern hake and sole and plaice in the North Sea. These measures took up 19 pages in the Official Journal in 2008 compared with only seven pages in 2009.

## Closer dialogue

Another key element of multi-annual plans is the sector's involvement. The plans and their annual accompanying measures are subject to close consultation with the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs). There is true interaction among the sector, scientists and policy-makers.

For example, when the new multi-annual plan was being drafted for Northern hake, the North Sea and North Western Waters RACs expressed their opposition to the increase in mesh size and the closing of additional fishing grounds. The Commission took their opinions into account.

The sector's interest is such that the RACs are beginning to take initiatives on their own. The multi-annual plan for Western horse mackerel was drawn up and proposed by the Pelagic RAC. It was approved by scientific bodies, and the European Commission

### • Cod in the Baltic Sea

**Adoption** – September 2007 (Regulation (EC) 1098/2007).

**Objective** – To ensure sustainable exploitation of stocks by gradually reducing and maintaining fishing mortality rates at levels no lower than 0.6 for fish aged 3 to 6 years for cod stock in the western Baltic and 0.3 for fish aged 4 to 7 years for cod stock in the eastern Baltic.

**Special conditions** – Exclusion of small vessels with an overall length of less than 8 metres. Flexibility on management of fishing effort for small vessels with an overall length of between 8 and 12 metres.

### • Herring in waters west of Scotland

**Adoption** – December 2008 (Regulation (EC) 1300/2008).

**Objective** – To reduce fishing mortality to a level permitting sustainable long-term yield. The target fishing mortality rate is set at 0.25 when the stock is greater than 75 000 t and at 0.2 when the stock is between 50 000 and 75 000 t. Fishing grounds are closed when stocks drop below 50 000 t. Annual variations in TACs are determined on the basis of stock levels.

### Plans on the drawing board

- Salmon in the Baltic Sea
- Herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea
- Anchovy in the Bay of Biscay
- Horse mackerel (western stock)
- Haddock in western waters (west of British Isles)
- Cod in the Celtic Sea

### At the level of RFMOs

The European Union's fishing fleet also applies multi-annual plans agreed by regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs). The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation drew up a plan for Greenland halibut in 2005; the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas developed a plan for Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna in 2007. Other multi-annual plans are being developed, particularly in tuna organisations.

### At bilateral and multilateral level

The European Union has agreed long-term plans with Norway for most North Sea stocks. In addition to plaice and cod, stocks of saithe, herring and haddock are covered by such plans, which aim to establish maximum sustainable yield. Plans have also been agreed with northwest Atlantic neighbouring countries for mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandinavian herring.



decided to support the project. The Pelagic RAC also worked closely with scientific advisers to develop a range of options for managing mackerel. The North Sea RAC is preparing a plan for Norway lobster. Other projects are also on the drawing board.

### Results: signs of success

Although they have not been in place long, the multi-annual plans are already showing encouraging results. The most striking example is obviously Northern hake. This stock, in danger of depletion in 2004, was restored to safe levels in just four years. The experts of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (the scientific body that advises the Commission) attribute this improvement to a successful combination of two elements. The first is the high rate of juvenile recruitment during two consecutive years. The second is a relatively low catch rate. Catches have remained stable, which in the context of exceptional recruitment is positive for the future of the stock.

The hake stock's quick recovery nevertheless had a lot to do with the fact that the plan came along at the right time, i.e. before the stock was too far down the road to collapse. The same can be said of plaice in the North Sea. There has also been real success with North Sea herring and Atlanto-Scandian herring, as well as mackerel: biomass is stabilising or increasing and catches are improving. Most stocks whose TACs rose in 2009 are covered by a multi-annual plan.

Yet the plans do not always produce such rapid results. North Sea cod, for example, whose biomass has risen slightly since its historically low level of 2006, is still well below the threshold limit. That does not mean that the plans are not effective however: ten years is not enough to assess the effectiveness of multi-annual plans, as seen with earlier experiences and those in non-EU countries. In the United States, the California sardine stock collapsed at the end of the 1930s and was not declared fully recovered until 1999. In Norway, spring-spawning herring collapsed in the 1960s and was not returned to exploitation level until the mid-1980s. In Canada, the moratorium on cod fishing dates back to 1995 and the stock is only now starting to show limited signs of recovery.

Multi-annual plans are more than just tools to restore vulnerable stocks. They are first and foremost management tools capable of putting most European fisheries back on track to maximum sustainable yield. This long-term strategy is expected to play a major role in reversing the vicious circle of overfishing that has led the sector towards decline.

#### For more information:

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/management\\_resources/conservation\\_measures\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/management_resources/conservation_measures_en.htm)



**Multi-annual plans are not just for vulnerable stocks. At the Sustainable Development Summit in Johannesburg in 2002, the European Union agreed to exploit all its stocks at their maximum sustainable yield. Long-term planning is therefore a generalised need.**



## Reform of the common organisation of the market: enlightening studies and consultations

**The common organisation of the market (COM) has not been revised for over 10 years. Like other elements of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), it needs to be adapted to today's new challenges. This explains why the Commission has sought external evaluations and organised meetings with stakeholders concerned by the COM. These efforts will help identify different options for modernising the rules within the framework of reform of the CFP.**

The common organisation of the market (COM) was set up in the 1970s. Its initial objectives were to encourage stability on markets and guarantee a fair income for fish producers. It subsequently evolved in step with the changes taking place in the exploitation and marketing of marine products: a sharp decline in Community catches, higher consumption, increasing dependence on imports, development of a processing industry, changing consumer habits and the development of aquaculture and global trade in aquaculture products.

Today the COM is part and parcel of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and consequently aims to guarantee sustainable fisheries and secure the future of the sector, a fundamental objective of the CFP. The main aims of the COM are therefore price stability, optimal balance between supply and demand and preference for EU production without undermining the growing demands of the processing sector. The main instruments deployed to achieve its aims include the setting of common marketing standards, creation and promotion of the role of producers' organisations, introduction of a price support system based on intervention mechanisms and the introduction of rules for trade with non-EU countries.

The latest COM dates back to 2000. Since then, new challenges have emerged: the energy and economic crises, the need for a stronger response to threats to resources, the expansion of aquaculture production and consumers' increasing demands in terms of quality, information and traceability. All these reasons justify a complete overhaul of the COM today.

This revision nonetheless must be preceded by a precise evaluation of the policies implemented so far and an all-embracing dialogue with the sector as a whole. Two assessments of the COM have been commissioned to external experts: one on COM intervention mechanisms and the other analysing the European fisheries and aquaculture market. Based on these assessments, the Commission sought input from nearly 400 representatives of the sector – producers, wholesale traders, processors, distributors and consumers – in eight Member States representing more than 80% of landings.

This work identified expectations and needs of the sector and consumers in relation to the general organisation of fisheries markets. Various options for the future evolution of the COM were identified, of which the following are the most important.



**Assessment of the common organisation of the market zeroed in on the expectations and needs of the sector and consumers in relation to the general organisation of fisheries markets. Different options for the evolution of the COM were identified.**

### Simplification

Although the COM is considered to be an essential pillar of the CFP, stakeholders all concur that its functioning is too complicated, hard to understand and sometimes even incomprehensible. The need for simplification particularly concerns price management, intervention mechanisms and support for the sector.

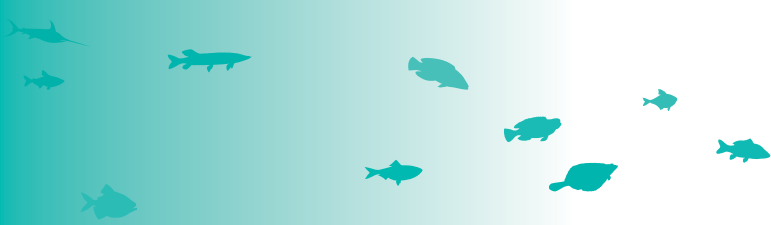
### Sustainability

The COM could play a greater role in improving the sustainability of European fisheries. More coherence is needed between marketing and conservation policies, for instance in marketing size standards. Withdrawal aid is also challenged by many stakeholders. Aid is still granted at present for withdrawing certain quantities from the market in case of non-sale or an excessive drop in prices. Considering the state of resources and the challenge of sustainability, many consider it unimaginable to maintain this mechanism in its present form since it offers no incentive for responsible fishing. On the other hand, those consulted support the continued use of interventions that help compensate for costs incurred to keep fishery products in the human food chain, by storing, freezing or processing them. Fish farmers are also interested in a minimum price, to trigger storage aid if their production fails to find a buyer.

### Setting prices

The COM price mechanisms do not have a direct effect on prices, determined primarily by market forces, nor on fishermen's income. However, the 'guide price' set annually by the Council of Ministers for many species has something of a 'psychological





effect' according to those consulted. It represents a threshold price below which it is hard to descend in a transaction. On the other hand, the initiatives of certain producers' organisations that try to produce a species when demand is high tend to push up prices. Influence on prices should derive from commercial strategies and reasonable exploitation rather than administrative regulation mechanisms alone. Knowledge of market needs is therefore vital.

### Restoring balance to margins

Studies point out that the price-setting mechanism for fishery and aquaculture products is similar to practices used in the food industry. The final price for consumers is not abnormally high compared with the price paid to the producer, considering the high added value of filleting and processing, the high costs of transport and distribution logistics, and conservation difficulties. Stakeholders nevertheless mention a problem of margin distribution among intermediaries, with some benefiting more than others. After a closer review, there seems to be a need to restore balance to the sector's organisation to improve its effectiveness.

### Imports and stability

In a context of insufficient landings of EU origin, trade agreements and certain trade regulation instruments with third countries have helped maintain competitiveness in the sector by ensuring a stable supply at competitive prices. The processing industry has increased its production and created jobs as a result. The high level of imports in the EU market is accepted by actors, including fishermen themselves. Yet fishermen and fish farmers stress one point: they want to work on a level playing field with their non-EU competitors. Imported products must have been caught, reared, preserved and shipped with the same sustainability and hygiene requirements as European products.

### Information for consumers

All fish products sold in the retail sector must be identifiable by species, production mode (fishing or farming) and place of origin (FAO fishing zone or country of breeding). This rule is applied unevenly. Even if it were well applied, however, many distributors and consumers do not think this minimum legal requirement is sufficient. They would like to see more details on origin (FAO fishing zones are too large and not always comprehensible). They also seek other information, for example, the fishing technique, the conservation process (fresh or frozen), nutritive value, etc. On the other hand, sustainability labelling is not a priority for consumers. It is a priority for non-governmental organisations and some distributors, however. So stakeholders see a need for improved labelling. They would also like to see common first-sale marketing standards in order to facilitate remote electronic trading.

### Incomplete knowledge

Study of the European fisheries and aquaculture market shows that new consumption practices are emerging and spreading. More and more fish are consumed at restaurants and more than 80% of households buy fish at supermarkets. Consumers also express the need for clearer and more relevant information on product preparation and conservation. The sector as a whole, however, is convinced that it has a poor image, in particular due to problems of overfishing or mistrust of aquaculture. Actions to enhance this image will probably be needed and communication means will have to be adapted.

Other topics were addressed, including use of an ecolabel, the sale of once-frozen goods as 'fresh' products, the specific nature of aquaculture and the dynamics of first-sale prices. These studies and consultations enabled the Commission and all its partners to learn more about the evolution of this complex market. They will therefore help substantiate the future regulation on fishery and aquaculture markets. Since the COM is a powerful lever for building sustainable fisheries, its inclusion in the overall reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (1) is essential.

### For more information:

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/market\\_policy\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/market_policy_en.htm)

(1) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 44, August 2009.

## European Maritime Day 2009: strong attendance in Rome



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The event in Rome featured workshops where participants discussed the progress of the EU's integrated maritime policy in general and in the Mediterranean in particular. Another subject was the importance of maritime clusters.

**May 20 is European Maritime Day, an opportunity to draw attention to the crucial role of the sea and the maritime economy in the daily life of European citizens. It is also about putting a spotlight on the challenges and changes faced by those involved in sea-related activities, whether tourism, fisheries, the environment, transport or climate change.**

European Maritime Day was initiated on 20 May 2008 in Strasbourg in a joint declaration by Hans-Gert Pöttering, Janez Jansa and José Manuel Barroso, the presidents of the European Parliament, Council of the European Union and European Commission. For its first anniversary, a major conference of maritime stakeholders was organised in Rome by the Italian government and the Commission. Some 40 decentralised events also took place in the member states.

These decentralised events are a sign of success. It shows that local stakeholders are taking up European Maritime Day as a way to create awareness in their communities of their activities and of certain aspects of their relations with the sea. National, regional or local authorities, entrepreneurs, trade unions, scientific institutions, ports, environmental associations, etc. succeeded in bringing this event to life at their level. The European Union is the number-one player in the global maritime economy and it is important for all who participate in the process to make this known, first of all to Europeans themselves.

The Commission and the Italian government organised a major conference, held in Rome on 18, 19 and 20 May, that brought together important players in the sector from all the Member States and from the southern Mediterranean rim countries. Apart from the opening and closing plenary sessions and ministerial meetings, the event included workshops in which stakeholders and all interested persons discussed the progress of the EU integrated maritime policy in general and in the Mediterranean in particular. Another subject was the importance of maritime clusters as a means of giving fresh impetus to the economy of maritime regions.

### Promoting commitment among all maritime policy stakeholders

On top of the 15 thematic workshops organised by the European Commission's different services, another 30 or so workshops were led by maritime policy stakeholders such as regions, professional organisations and NGOs. The themes covered the whole range of European Union maritime activities. The Association of Italian Ports, for example, conducted a workshop on dredging, the *Surfrider Foundation Europe* led a session on water quality problems faced by water sports practitioners, the Italian maritime cluster organised a debate on 'Maritime culture and development in the Mediterranean', the port of Civitavecchia focused its workshop on the motorways of the sea and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions explored regional maritime clusters.

The conference had two objectives. The first was to provide input for the next steps in the development of the European Union's integrated maritime policy by bringing together professionals from all European maritime sub-sectors. The second was to foster networking. European maritime policy will not move forward if its different actors work in isolation, without allowing others to benefit from their experience. Such a meeting was an opportunity to launch exchange and networking initiatives among stakeholders. An initiative to set up a platform of organisations representing different maritime players (science, industry, environmental NGOs, regions and users of the sea) was also launched.

*'I am particularly pleased that we were able to discuss the future,' declared Joe Borg, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, at the conclusion of the three days of talks. 'Not just to take stock of what we have accomplished in recent years, but also, and this may even be more important, to give thought to how we can consolidate the integrated maritime policy and take it forward in the coming years.'* All the professionals on hand were convinced that the future of their sector is at stake.

# In brief

## □ Joe Borg: track record for 2004-2009

Joe Borg, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, is reaching the end of his term of office. The track record for these five years in office stands on two strong points.

The first is the launch of the integrated maritime policy. The publication in June 2006 of the Green Paper, 'Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union', marked the start of a wide public consultation on the usefulness of developing an ambitious maritime policy. This exercise grew out of the realisation that different maritime sub-sectors were compartmentalized and lacked an overview of the future. To allow the European Union to develop the full potential of its maritime economy, the Commission proposed to develop a broadly integrated and sustainable policy, an idea backed widely by input received during the consultation. With its adoption of the Blue Book on 10 October 2007, the European Union officially took on an integrated policy and announced the action plan for its implementation. Since then, the different issues related to this objective have made great strides, e.g. planning of the marine space, the development of maritime clusters, the European Atlas of the Seas and so on.

The second strong point is the drive to ensure the sustainability of European Union fisheries. The Commissioner's ultimate objective was to ensure a viable and sustainable future for European fishermen and a balanced environment in the seas and oceans. Achieving that goal meant working to organise a sustainable management of fisheries, both in EU waters and in the rest of the world. Multi-annual plans were developed more frequently and strategies were initiated to reduce discards, safeguard sharks, protect seabeds and breathe new life into European aquaculture. Beyond its own waters, the European Union became more closely involved in regional fisheries management organisations and developed closer fishing partnerships with third countries. For this sustainable strategy to be successful, however, actors in the sector must respect its provisions. Monitoring systems and the fight against illegal fishing were therefore strengthened. Underpinning this major evolution is the determination to maintain a close dialogue with the sector, particularly through the Regional Advisory Councils, which fully developed their competences during the Borg years. There is still work ahead to bring European fisheries to their ideal of sustainability. That is the reason for the forthcoming reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, whose foundations were laid with the adoption of the Green Paper in April 2009.

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