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Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe

Baltic: a new ecosystem approach

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EFF: taking stock of the territorial approach

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Calendar

Shows and exhibitions

Fish International, Bremen (Germany), 12-14 February 2012
> For more information:
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E-mail: info@fishinternational.de
Tel: +49 421 350 52 60

Med Seafood, Rimini (Italy), 25-28 February 2012
> For more information:
Website: www.saporerimini.it/fiera/presentazione_medseafood.asp
E-mail: o.foschi@riminifiera.it
Tel: +39 0541 74 42 58

The Fishing Expo, Glasgow (United Kingdom), 22-24 March 2012
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Institutional agenda

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- 23-24 February 2012, Brussels (Belgium)
- 19-20 March 2012, Brussels (Belgium)

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E-mail: fisheries-magazine@ec.europa.eu

- Website of Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries > http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/damanaki/index_en.htm
- Application: the European Maritime Atlas > http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeatlas
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The ecosystem approach: an imperative

A multiannual plan is a tool that helps manage a stock while assuring sustainable exploitation. If this objective is maintained, over time the plan eventually will bring a stock in danger of depletion back up to a level where it can be fished at maximum sustainable yield.

Fortunately, multiannual plans are starting to produce results. Some have brought stocks to reasonable exploitation levels quite rapidly, particularly the plans for North Sea herring, North Sea haddock, Baltic Sea cod and Bay of Biscay anchovies.

There is no escaping the fact however, that in some cases efforts take time to bear fruit. There are certain stocks in our European seas that even strict plans have not managed to restore to an acceptable exploitation level. This is the case, for instance, for North Sea cod and Mediterranean bluefin tuna.

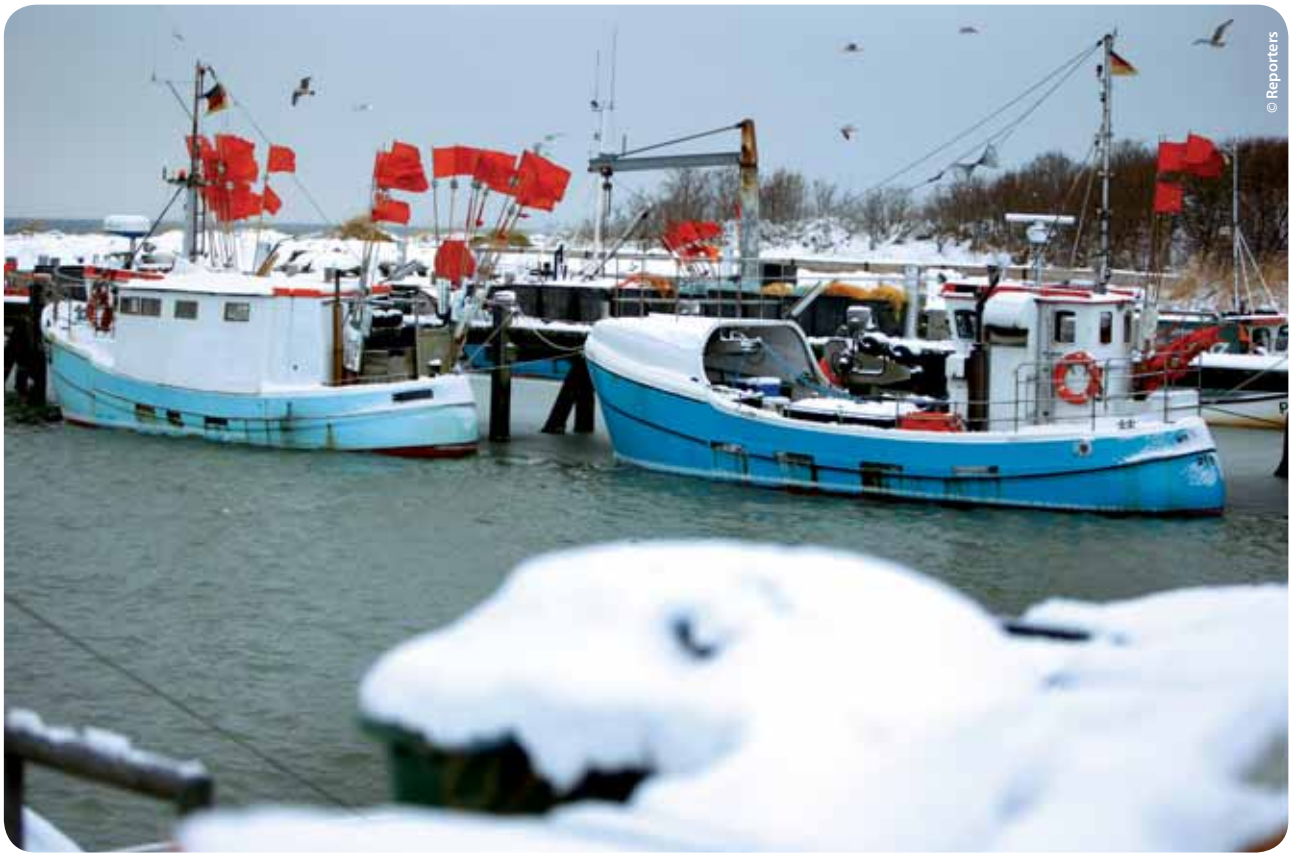
Similarly, efforts by authorities and fishing operators to restore balanced exploitation of fish resources do not always produce the hoped-for results. A good example is the evolution of the populations of three key Baltic Sea species. The success of the cod plan and efforts to reduce the exploitation level of herring and sprat are apparently not enough to restore balance to all the stocks concerned. Although cod is faring relatively well, the state of sprat and herring stocks is relatively poor.

This is where the other imperative comes into play. The European Union has decided to apply the ecosystem approach to stock management. Not everything can be explained solely by interactions between a stock and man. The stock shares an ecosystem with other protagonists and fishing has to take these other natural protagonists into account. These can include the seabed, which suffers from the physical impact of fishing, or the usual prey of the species concerned, whose numbers are declining or increasing for one reason or another. Other protagonists can be the natural environment or predators that feed on the stock, such as birds, marine mammals, sharks and other large carnivorous fish, the category of most successful commercial species: hake, haddock and, of course, cod.

Fishing is just one of a number of elements that impact on a stock's development. The role of responsible managers is to ensure that this factor causes the least disruption possible and helps maintain the natural balance.

The Editor

Baltic Sea: cod, herring and sprat



The constant interactions between populations of cod, herring and sprat incited fish experts to work on the first multispecies multiannual plan in the aim to maintain a balance among the needs of the four predators concerned, namely the three fish species and… man.

In the Baltic Sea, fishing primarily targets three species. Cod, herring and sprat accounted for over 94 % of Baltic catches in 2010. This is not necessarily the fishermen's choice, but a question of ecosystem. The Baltic Sea is a virtually closed body of water in which these three species are omnipresent and interact continuously. The European Commission is therefore considering a major innovation: the drafting of a multiannual plan covering the management of all three of these species.

The stage could be set briefly as follows: young cod eat sprats; adult cod eat sprats and herrings; sprats and herrings eat cod eggs and larvae. On top of that, cod tend to be cannibalistic: larger fish eat smaller ones. It is this predatory system that underpins management of resources in the Baltic Sea.

'Things are complex', explains Michael Andersen, of the Danish Fishermen's Federation, who is also a member of the Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council. *'For example: the increase in the eastern cod stock had led to the current decrease in the sprat population, which will lead to a quota reduction for this species. Yet allowing the cod population to increase in this context of shortage of sprat will accentuate cod cannibalism, with negative consequences on the stock.'*

Other factors external to this trio also influence the three populations, and other species as well. Water salinity is one example. Salinity varies every year in terms of the inflow of salt water from the North Sea and of fresh water from the catchment area. The lower the salinity level, the deeper cod eggs have to descend to find the salt density that enables them to remain in suspension. However, the deeper they drop, the less oxygen is available and the lower their survival rate. This has an impact on herring and sprat populations, which find less cod larvae on which to feed.

Even if all elements of this three-variable equation cannot be controlled, cod, sprat and herring definitely form part of a solidly interlinked system of predation. It is hard to manage one population without taking into account the consequences of such

management on the other two. This was the conclusion reached by many Baltic resource specialists as they worked on developing a multiannual plan for herring and sprat.

As a result, they decided to innovate by coming up with the first multispecies multiannual plan, which would aim to maintain balance among the needs of the four predators concerned, namely the three fish species and… man. We are in the framework here of an ecosystem approach, with the distinctive feature that the Baltic ecosystem encompasses several commercial species that have to be managed simultaneously. This is unquestionably a first.

Multiannual plans that cover two stocks already exist. This is the case for Southern hake and Norway lobster in the Cantabrian Sea and Western Iberian Peninsula (2005), and for sole and plaice in the North Sea (2007). In both cases, however, these are mixed fisheries where the same vessels land the two species indiscriminately. Technical measures and fishing effort restrictions contained in the plans affect both species at the same time.

There are few mixed fisheries in the Baltic. *'Fisheries that target these species are "clean" or almost',* continues Michael Andersen. *'The vessels that target cod take by-catches of flat fish. Pelagic fisheries that target sprat or herring take few by-catches. Depending on the location, season and gears used, herring and sprat can be found in the same net. In principle, though, the three fisheries are targeted.'*

In these circumstances, the multispecies nature of the plan would concern only work downstream from catches, the work of scientists charged with assessing stocks and modelling predatory interactions between populations. Once this foundation has been laid, the measures would be different and applied fishery by fishery.

In practical terms, this multispecies multiannual plan should apply to all of the Baltic east of the island of Bornholm. It would therefore concern the eastern cod stock and the stocks of the other two species in this geographical zone. For herring, the central stock – around half of herring landings – is primarily concerned. Nothing is certain at this stage, however. This plan is in the development stage and is expected to be presented towards mid-2012. So far, the only certitude is that the fisheries stakeholders have reacted positively, in particular members of the Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council. They consider the approach relevant.

The cod plan

Meanwhile, until this large-scale plan is rolled out, the current resource management situation will be extended. The multiannual plans for the two cod stocks therefore continue to be implemented and the multiannual plan for salmon, proposed by the Commission last summer, will be put in place as soon as the Parliament and the Member States have approved it.

The situation for cod is looking up. Last year the eastern stock reached a level that allows exploitation at maximum sustainable yield (MSY). As a result, the TAC for 2012 was increased substantially. The western stock has had a slight improvement this year for the first time, although it has not reached levels of adult biomass and fishing mortality compatible with MSY. The TAC was consequently decreased appreciably for the entire stock that straddles the western Baltic and the Kattegat-Skagerrak.

This proves the relevance of the long-term approach to stock management. Both multiannual cod plans were put in place in 2007, following on from the plan initiated in 1999 by the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission.

The thrust of these plans is to reduce fishing mortality and lead to exploitation of each stock at MSY. This necessarily requires limiting TACs, but also entails important measures to reduce fishing effort (summer closure, no-fishing days), a six-month ban on access to spawning grounds and specific inspection measures aimed at combating mainly under-declarations of catches and quota overruns. Results have emerged relatively quickly.

This outcome is due to the combined effects of the plan's measures and several years of high recruitment. The plan's measures have been effective in particular because of the close monitoring put in place to guarantee its success. In 2008 the Commission adopted a specific control and inspection programme on the basis of which the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) set up a joint deployment plan to combat illegal fishing effectively both at sea and ashore. From its coordination centre in Vigo, the EFCA coordinates Member States' inspection teams over a period of several weeks, staggered throughout the fishing season. Its inspection strategy is based on prior risk assessment and targeting of the vessels to be inspected.

This strategy has helped put an end to cases of large-scale fraud in the processing sector. More generally, the intensity of controls has made the entire sector more aware of the need to play by the rules. This dissuasive nature of controls, admittedly less visible, nevertheless constitutes an important element for the success of measures adopted in the framework of plans. Infringements are of course still detected, but their number is shrinking year by year. Close surveillance of these fisheries has assuredly helped speed up the recovery of the two cod stocks.

The new ecosystem and regional approach will also affect control: the current specific control plan for cod will be replaced by a control plan for all Baltic species, work on which has already begun.

Pelagic species under pressure

Herring is also under strong pressure. This species is still widely consumed in Central Europe and Scandinavia. The central stock gives the greatest cause for concern. It is also the most intensely fished, essentially by Swedish, Polish, Finnish and Estonian fleets. Landings totalled 136 700 tonnes (for the EU and Russia) in 2010, or half their level of 30 years ago. With biomass estimated by the ICES (1) at 535 000 tonnes, the stock now stands at about one third of its level of the 1980s, and the slight improvement observed over the last five years is not enough to change the situation. Despite quota reductions, fishing mortality remains well above the precautionary level. Accordingly, the Commission has proposed substantial cuts in quotas for this stock pending finalisation of the multiannual plan.

(1) International Council for Exploration of the Sea, the scientific body charged with assessing and monitoring North-East Atlantic fish stocks.

The other problematic herring stock is in the Gulf of Riga. It is fished by Latvian and Estonian operators. High recruitment levels have kept the stock's adult biomass (around 75 000 tonnes) above the level permitting exploitation at maximum sustainable yield, yet catches are still higher than what the stock can provide on a sustainable basis. Landings of 30 174 tonnes in 2010 were below the quota (36 400 tonnes), evidence of the poor state of the stock. The Commission therefore has proposed to reduce quotas in order to return to sustainable exploitation.

The other herring stocks are fairly sound. In the Gulf of Bothnia, Finnish and Swedish fishermen exploit the two stocks in a stable and sustainable manner. For the western stock, which also extends into the Kattegat and Skagerrak, restriction measures have begun to produce effects. Landings – 42 214 tonnes in 2010 – have been cut in half over the last five years. The reduction of quotas has helped bring down catch levels. As a result, both fishing mortality rate and adult biomass are starting to approach levels allowing MSY-based exploitation. This justifies the Commission's proposal to increase quotas significantly.

The situation for sprat is worrying. Quota reductions for sprat fisheries in recent years have admittedly brought down the fishing mortality rate, which has now reached acceptable levels. However, there has been no effect on biomass, which continues to shrink. This is probably an effect of the increase in cod predation. The Commission has no choice but to propose a substantial reduction in quotas for this stock and to work on joint management of the three stocks in order to control interactions more effectively.

The Baltic Sea is fairly symbolic of Europe's fisheries management work. The combined efforts of European and national authorities, together with fishing operators, has helped bring the situation today closer to compliance, where limits established by management authorities after consulting stakeholders are respected. Improvement of the situation now means that management choices can move forward by developing a true ecosystem approach.

The reduction of fishing opportunities implies a decline in earnings over the short term. However, it is important to keep in mind that without such reductions, the fishing and processing industries would have lost even more over the short and medium terms. The decreases are calculated as precisely as possible in the light of scientific advice. If larger quotas had been allocated, the stocks concerned would have been fished beyond precautionary levels, thus adding to the risk of collapse. The success of the October 2011 Council of Fisheries Ministers resides in the fact that it refused to give in to short-term pressure, which would have compromised the long-term sustainability of stocks and of fishing activity itself.

The Baltic Sea in figures

Total EU catches	670 714 tonnes
Sprat	333 731 tonnes
Herring	236 392 tonnes
Cod	59 657 tonnes

Source: Eurostat 2010

Genetics at the service of sustainable fishing

New technologies in the field of genetics can be used to identify species, making it possible to detect fraud and help guarantee sustainable fishing.

What looks more like a cod fillet than the real thing? A panga fillet… especially if it is fried and served as fish & chips, with a strong sauce. Diners at a restaurant run by an unscrupulous owner pay the price of cod while the fraudster makes a much higher profit since panga costs only half as much as cod.

This is not the only example of fish being sold under false identities. Checks carried out by control authorities, fraud squads, consumer associations or NGOs bring to light relatively high levels of labelling errors. Ten to 40 % of products tested (whether fresh, preserved, frozen or processed) present incorrect information either on the species, the place of catch, or whether they were caught or farmed.

This is not a problem of consumer protection alone since this type of fraud also circumvents fisheries regulations. There have already been cases where fishermen who have used up their sole quotas continue to land sole, which they then fillet and declare as flounder. Along the same lines, fishermen have been known to take liberties with the declaration of geographical origin for fish caught in a closed fishing zone.

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) examined this problem when drafting its report on *Deterring Illegal Activities in the Fisheries Sector* (1). Commissioner Maria Damanaki commented: *'Genetics testing presents great potential, well beyond the consumer protection aspect. It is my hope that it will come into increasing use to detect non-compliance with conservation measures. We must guarantee that these methods are profitable and recognised in legal proceedings. The Commission is prepared to assist the different protagonists with development of this important tool.'*

DNA reveals illegal practices

The JRC report explains how molecular techniques based on genetics, genomics, chemistry and forensics can help combat illegal practices and improve traceability. The DNA test holds the advantage of referring to the product itself and not related documentation. It also allows checks of processed products, such as tinned fish or even highly processed products such as convenience foods or products sold in restaurants. The DNA sequence found in the sample is compared with a reference library, so that the process can identify not only the species, but also in some cases the catch zone.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Molecular techniques can be used to help curb illegal practices and improve traceability. The DNA sequence found in a sample can be analysed to identify not only the species, but in some cases even the catch zone.

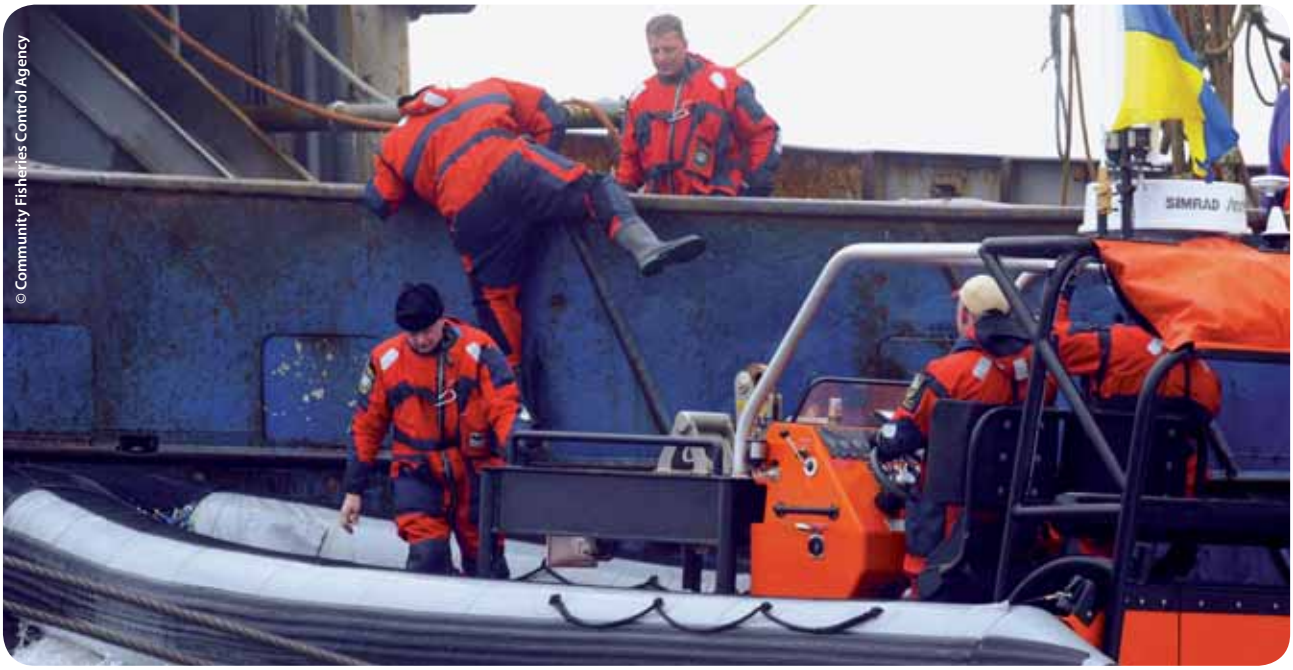
Although the use of genetics is not new in the fisheries sector it has expanded appreciably in recent years. It is gradually supplementing the old methods of identification based on protein profiles and adds to existing verification procedures.

Traceability tests have become less costly today and DNA sequencing is being carried out on a growing number of species. More than 200 commercial fish species are already registered in a genetic catalogue. The challenge now is to give analytical laboratories in Member States access to common registers. The existing online database, 'Fishtrace' (**www.fishtrace.org**), financed under the European Union's fifth research framework programme, is a first stone in this edifice. The JRC report notes that further development of this type of database would be a valuable tool for fisheries managers, control authorities and the industry.

The Working Group on the Application of Genetics in Fisheries and Mariculture has proposed measures to create a meta-database that would host all fish and shellfish genetic data. Genetics technologies are becoming a crucial element in the fight against illegal fishing.

(1) http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/111111111/16295
http://ipsc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/index.php/IUU-fishing-and-traceability/309/0/
http://fishreg.jrc.ec.europa.eu/projects/iuu

EU fisheries inspectors: multinational fraud busters



EU inspectors must have the aptitudes required to carry out 'multinational' missions in European and international waters.

European Union fisheries inspectors have been designated to check compliance with common fisheries policy rules, particularly in the framework of the EU's international control obligations and specific control and inspection programmes adopted by the Commission for certain fisheries. When fisheries are shared between fleets from different Member States, it is of the utmost importance for inspectors to be able to intervene on any type of fishing vessel, regardless of its nationality.

Imagine that you're the master of a British trawler. You fish for cod and haddock in the North Sea, in waters under British jurisdiction. You've just organised the sorting and storage of your latest catch. Suddenly, a Dutch control vessel requests authorisation for inspectors to come aboard. An inflatable dinghy draws alongside and two inspectors board your vessel: a Dane and a German. They ask to see your licences, log books, declarations and so on. This situation would have been unthinkable just 10 years ago. Today it is not only possible but perfectly commonplace, thanks to the appointment of European Union (EU) fisheries inspectors.

Outside their exclusive economic zone (EEZ, i.e. a zone of up to 200 nautical miles from shore), national fisheries inspectors can in theory only carry out checks on vessels flying the flag of their Member State. To improve this situation, the European Union decided, as part of the 2002 reform, to set up 'Community' inspectors, known as EU inspectors following adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon. The idea was to have experts of all nationalities available to carry out shared fisheries surveillance missions and inspect vessels operating in the zone concerned, regardless of the flag they fly.

The recent adoption of the new 'control' regulation and its detailed rules has helped strengthen this system with the aim of developing a stronger culture of compliance among operators, harmonising inspection procedures and methods, and ensuring the admissibility of inspection reports drawn up by one Member State in another Member State.

EU inspectors can be Member State national inspectors, agents of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) in Vigo or Commission agents. To be eligible for the list of EU inspectors, these inspectors and agents must fulfil a number of conditions. They must have certain professional experience, be physically fit, master at least one EU official language other than their mother tongue, and above all have in-depth knowledge of European fisheries regulations.

The Member States, the EFCA or the Commission nominate the agents among their staff to be assigned to this function. The Commission then draws up a list and publishes it on the EFCA website. Several lists have already been published since 2002. The latest was being drafted as this article was being written.

Being named an EU inspector does not confer any special grade or distinction; it simply means that the individual is included in a list of agents having the skills necessary to carry out 'multinational' missions in European and international waters. In particular, these missions can be carried out as part of joint deployment plans and international control operations coordinated by the EFCA on the basis of a specific control and inspection programme adopted by the Commission. The benefit of this type of programme is that it establishes a common legal framework for the Member States in terms of objectives, priorities, procedures and reference levels.

Among its missions, the Vigo-based agency encourages cooperation between Member States by organising the coordination of their fisheries control and inspection activities. One particular task consists in pooling the control resources that several Member States decide to make available for a stock or a fishery in a given zone and coordinating them in the framework of a joint deployment plan. The aim is to make sure that all vessels concerned are inspected in the same way and on the same criteria, whatever flag they are flying.

Since 2008, the EFCA has developed and implemented several joint deployment plans, ensuring for example proper enforcement of multiannual plans for the management of North Sea and Western cod stocks, Baltic cod and Mediterranean bluefin tuna stocks, and regulations in force in NAFO and NEAFC high seas areas. The latest to date (adopted in 2011) concerns pelagic species (herring, mackerel, anchovies, etc.) in western waters. Over the longer term, specific control and inspection programmes and joint deployment plans will cover several species in a given control zone.

Standardising and sharing good practices

The vocation of EU inspectors is therefore basically to participate in these joint deployment plans in an effort to put into practice the objectives, priorities, procedures and reference levels established by the specific control and inspection programmes. The EFCA is also developing a training manual, a core curriculum, to harmonise at European level the training of fisheries inspectors. This is another important task of the Vigo-based agency: to assist in harmonising control and inspections in European Union waters on the basis of the new 'control' regulation and its detailed rules. Inspection procedures are now prescribed at European level.

In the area of training, EU inspectors are regularly invited to participate in seminars organised by the agency, whether to prepare the launch of or assess a joint deployment plan, but also to review new regulations or learn about a new procedure. These seminars are also an opportunity to share good practices and strengthen the culture of cooperation between the different national fisheries control authorities.

The role of EU inspectors therefore goes beyond the limits of the strictly operational framework defined by the joint deployment plans. Their experience working in joint teams, their knowledge of inspection procedures and good practices in other Member States, and their ability to deal with fishermen of different nationalities encourages the harmonisation of control in European Union waters. The EFCA considers that the experience is successful and represents a key element of the development of fisheries control in Europe.

Some 100 joint teams have been created. Cooperation is strong and the control agents seem to appreciate this opportunity to work together in a transnational framework. The development of this cooperation has enabled the different national fisheries control corps to get to know each other better and to coordinate their actions more effectively.

In addition to being successful in terms of cooperation, this experience is also a plus for effectiveness. Fraudsters operating in a fishery covered by a joint deployment plan will no longer be able to escape controls by 'playing' with the EEZ boundary. It is pointless to move from one side of the boundary to the other to try to dodge a patrol boat of national inspectors. EU inspectors can inspect any vessel flying a Member State flag outside its territorial waters, wherever it may be located. Furthermore, their inspection and infringement reports have conclusive force not only in their own Member State but also in the Member State whose flag the vessel flies. It is nevertheless important to note that they have no police or enforcement powers (to order a vessel to change course, for example).

Once an inspector, always an inspector

EU inspectors do not exercise their duties solely in the context of a joint deployment plan. When the inspector is on the European Union list and has an EU inspector's card, he conserves his prerogatives even when acting in the framework of a purely national assignment (for example, checking compliance with certain strictly national fisheries rules).

In practice, EU inspectors' tasks are evolving in the wake of adoption of the 'control' regulation and its detailed rules. As part of joint deployment plans, EU inspectors also have the opportunity to work ashore outside their Member State of origin, for example to monitor landings or inspect processing plants. They must of course work in tandem with a national inspector, but they can thus assure the continuity of control throughout the sector, from net to plate.

Axis 4 spawns its first offspring

Projects subsidised by Axis 4 of the EFF implement two main strategies. The first consists in adding value to fisheries products and the second in building links between fisheries and other sectors of the local economy by encouraging diversification into new activities.

Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund, aimed at promoting diversification and economic conversion in fishing zones facing socio-economic difficulties, is resulting in local development strategies. Fisheries and Aquaculture in Europe presents a state of play after four years, and options for the future.

Friday is fish day. Birgit is fond of this tradition. She lives with her husband and two daughters in Schönberg, a small town on the Baltic coast in Germany. Surprisingly, instead of going to the supermarket to buy her kilo of flounder, Birgit sits down in front of her computer. She connects to **www.fischvomkutter.de** ('Fish fresh off the boat') and in just a few clicks, checks whether there is a landing today at Schönberger Strand. The answer is yes.

'For our needs, I always choose fresh fish caught by local fishermen,' explains Birgit. *'And I'm not the only one. Many of my friends also prefer to buy direct from the fisherman. What's more, Hans Kruse lands his fish and sells it on the beach, like in my grandparents' time. The only change is that I have the information in real time thanks to internet. I know what fish will be available, where and when. For instance, I'm sure that I'll be able to buy flounder today.'*

In fact, the fishermen send out their catch information by SMS when they are still at sea. Buyers can then consult it on the website or on their smartphone and even download the GPS coordinates of landing sites. The website **www.fischvomkutter.de** was created on the initiative of the fisheries local action group 'AktivRegion Ostseeküste'. Like many other coastal regions in Europe, this region is forced to adapt following restructuring of the fisheries sector. The local group's conclusion leaves no room for doubt: for over 30 years now, flounder and cod prices have fluctuated tremendously. This creates problems of lower earnings, lost jobs or even activities closing.

To help cope with the situation, the local group came up with the idea of fishermen selling part of their catch directly to end consumers. *'By developing this innovative website,'* explains fisherman Jan Meyer, *'my son and I now have the direct connection with consumers that was missing before. Since 10 vessels are involved in this project, you can see how important that is.'* By cutting out a number of middlemen, the fishermen now earn more when selling the same quantities of fish.

Key feature

'Fisch vom Kutter' is a typical example of the work supported by axis four of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). This financing provides support for implementing local development strategies focused on sustainable development and improvement of the quality of life in these coastal areas. Prior to its introduction in 2007, the common fisheries policy gave precedence to a sector-based approach. With Axis 4, it added a territorial dimension.

The local group is the key feature of Axis 4. It brings together local actors from every sector – public, private and associations. Together, they develop multisectoral strategies based on local potential. The implementation of these strategies is supported by European financing awarded through a call for proposals issued by the regional and national authorities.

The European Union presently has 215 local groups in 16 Member States. This number is expected to rise to 250 groups in 21 Member States during the first quarter of 2012. It took a little time for these groups to form and to develop projects because a major capacity-building effort had to be made at local level and among EFF management administrations. For the programme's implementing phase, the European Fisheries Areas Network (FARNET (1)) provided support and technical assistance to local players and management authorities. Today, FARNET intervenes more as a platform for networking between fisheries areas, helping them share ideas and experiences.

Creating added value

The majority of local groups are now operational and more and more local projects are being put into practice (2). Local fishermen's communities are following two key strategies to generate additional earnings and create new jobs.

The first consists of adding value to fisheries products by putting a premium on existing products, developing new products and activities, or creating new links in the local fisheries distribution chain. New products are thus created from low-value species or by-products, and shorter commercial circuits are put in place.

In Spain, in Ria de Vigo, Axis 4 has played a vital role in providing support to a group of 27 shellfish gatherers. A company, Mar de Silleiro, has been set up and now sells tinned goose barnacles and goose barnacle pâté. Small goose barnacles, which sell at a much lower price than large ones, are the basis for its production. The project has thus added value to a product with a low sale price and also generated extra income for gatherers.

New outlets

The second strategy observed in projects supported by Axis 4 is the links created between the fisheries sector and other sectors of the local economy, by encouraging diversification to new replacement activities such as tourism, fisheries tourism, food production, social and environmental services and the knowledge economy.

In France, local players in the Var have turned to fisheries tourism. With support from Axis 4, the local group brought together fishermen, local and regional authorities, environmental groups and the Var department of tourism to develop a fisheries tourism project. Working together they set up appropriate safety rules, made the necessary adaptations to 12 fishing vessels and developed a coordinated range of tourism services. The fishermen involved in the project report a 30 to 70 % increase in earnings on the days they take tourists to sea. The experience is already being transferred to other regions of France and discussions are under way to harmonise fisheries tourism standards throughout the country.

What does the future hold?

For 2007-2013, the total public budget available to Axis 4 in the EU is EUR 826.6 million (of which 567 million from the EFF). Initiatives are promising in terms of job creation and local innovation, but Axis 4 is also strengthening the human dimension. People are talking to each other, getting organised and creating new links between their different sectors of activity.

The European Commission would like to strengthen Axis 4 for the next programming period starting in 2014. This would mean a budget allocation for Axis 4 that is more in line with the size of the fisheries sector in each Member State. The Commission would also like to see the different European funds work together more to support local development. The idea is to make sure that local development strategies can tap into financing from different European funds, not just those for fisheries and agriculture, but also the European Regional Development Fund or the European Social Fund. Multi-fund strategies could bring new possibilities to light.

For more information:
www.farnet.eu

FARNET conference:
'A sustainable future for fisheries areas'

Local, national and European players gathered for a conference in Brussels, on 3 and 4 November 2011. The objective of the conference was to present concrete examples of projects supported by Axis 4 and to learn lessons for the future. It also gave all the groups their first opportunity to meet each other, which strengthened networking and allowed them to discuss tangible cooperation projects.

(1) Fisheries Areas NETwork.
(2) See the FARNET website, where numerous good practices are presented in detail: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/tools/good-practices

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In brief

Baltic Sea: TACs & quotas 2012

The European Union Council of Fisheries Ministers has set fishing opportunities for the Baltic Sea for 2012. The general context of Baltic Sea resources is described in this issue (pp. 4 to 6). Total allowable catches (TACs) were set on the basis of the Commission's proposal, drafted with reference to scientific estimates of the stocks concerned:

- for cod, in line with the multiannual plan, the strong state of the eastern stock and improvement in the state of the western stock allowed an increase in TACs of 15 % for the eastern stock (67 850 tonnes) and 13 % for the western stock (21 300 tonnes);
- for herring, the situation is variable. For the western and Gulf of Bothnia stocks, which are sound, TACs were increased by 32 % (20 900 tonnes) and 2 % (106 000 tonnes) respectively. The other two stocks are in a poorer state and TACs were consequently reduced by 16 % in the Gulf of Riga (30 576 tonnes) and 27 % for the central stock (78 417 tonnes);
- given the poor state of sprat, TACs were reduced by 22 % (225 237 tonnes);
- fishing opportunities for salmon were also reduced (137 972 individuals) and this stock will soon be covered by a multiannual plan;
- TACs for plaice were also reduced by 5 % (2 889 tonnes).

Brainstorming on the Black Sea

The Black Sea's maritime and fisheries future was the focus of brainstorming last October, at a high level meeting organised on the initiative of Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. This meeting brought together Romanian and Bulgarian ministers, deputy ministers and members of the European Parliament, as well as representatives of the European Commission, the World Bank, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank and other national institutions from the two Black Sea rim Member States. The meeting aimed to lay the foundations of an integrated approach to fisheries and maritime affairs in this sea: fisheries, maritime safety, coastal and marine environment, border surveillance, maritime traffic, etc.
On fisheries, participants concluded that cooperation needs to be developed with all rim states to improve resource management, starting with the development of scientific monitoring at regional level. A first step in this direction will be to establish a Black Sea advisory council. Similar cooperation should also be put in place in other areas of the maritime economy and the environment, together with more joint projects between Romanian and Bulgarian authorities, on maritime surveillance for example.

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