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# FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN EUROPE

- 🐟 **Aquaculture: unleashing its potential**
  - 🐟 Bluefin tuna: cooperating with scientists
  - 🐟 International: measures to maintain cooperation
  - 🐟 Labelling: clearer, more complete and more accurate
  - 🐟 Supplement: fact sheets on aquaculture

## Conferences and meetings

**NASCO, annual meeting, Edinburg (United Kingdom), 5-8 June 2012**

Website: [www.nasco.int](http://www.nasco.int)  
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**IATTC, meeting of parties, La Jolla, California (United States), 18-29 June 2012**

Website: [www.iattc.org](http://www.iattc.org)  
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Tel.: +1 858 546 71 00

## Institutional agenda

**European Parliament Committee on Fisheries**

Website: [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu)  
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Tel.: +32 2 284 49 09 (Brussels)  
or +33 3 88 17 67 69 (Strasbourg)  
• 19-20 June 2012, Brussels (Belgium)  
• 10-11 July 2012, Brussels (Belgium)

**Agriculture and Fisheries Council of the European Union**

Website: [www.consilium.europa.eu](http://www.consilium.europa.eu)  
• 12 June 2012, Luxembourg (Luxembourg)  
• 16-17 July 2012, Brussels (Belgium)

2 CALENDAR

3 EDITORIAL

Aquaculture: potential to be unleashed

4 IN THE NEWS

Bluefin tuna: cooperating with scientists

5 FOCUS

Aquaculture: unleashing its potential

8-11 IN THE NEWS

Shared stocks: taking action to maintain cooperation

Labelling: improving information for consumers

12 IN BRIEF

### Note to readers

We welcome your comments or suggestions at the following address:  
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or by fax to: (+32) 2 297 95 64 with reference to  
*Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*.  
E-mail: [fisheries-magazine@ec.europa.eu](mailto: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](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/damanaki/index_en.htm)
- Application: the European Maritime Atlas > <http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeatlas>
- Fisheries site > <http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries>
- Maritime Affairs site > <http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs>

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Illustrations (*Acipenser baerii* – *Cyprinus carpio*): © Scanfish



# Aquaculture: potential to be unleashed

*'The European Union must promote sustainable, competitive and diverse aquaculture, supported by the most advanced research and technology, overcoming problems of access and administrative barriers.'*

This sentence is taken from the European Commission's July 2011 communication on reform of the common fisheries policy. It sums up the EU's aquaculture policy: respect for the environment, economic development, scientific research, technological innovation and administrative simplification. The reform aims to develop the full potential of EU aquaculture and to transform today's challenges into opportunities. Another ambition of the reform is to stimulate European production, which has stagnated in recent years. While there has been a boom in marine fish farming in Europe, essentially because new products like salmon, bass, sea bream and turbot are being placed on the mainstream market, traditional sectors like fresh water fish farming and mollusc farming, which account for half of European production, have either stagnated or declined.

A number of factors are behind this stagnation: administrative barriers, competition for space in coastal zones, lack of product diversity, absence of support from financial institutions, lack of information to consumers and so on.

Action therefore must be taken to help the sector develop its considerable potential. Europe has obvious aquaculture know-how. Its gastronomic tradition means a market that is receptive to quality production. There is also growing demand for wholesome products with high nutritional value.

The public authority consequently has a role to play in terms of supporting the sector and promoting this real development opportunity. The Commission will work closely with the Member States to give the aquaculture sector the support it needs.

The public authority must also mobilise stakeholders: the industry, large and small, every link in the supply chain, as well as consumers and civil society. At EU level, the Commission proposes to develop strategic guidelines identifying priorities and general objectives. The Member States will then be invited to adopt their own multiannual plans for aquaculture. In this new framework, Member States will have the opportunity to exchange best practice, learn from one another and work together.

In that perspective, the European Commission hosted with Austrian authorities a ministerial conference on the future of aquaculture, held on 11 May in Salzburg. The objective was to debate with all protagonists the European Union's role in promoting the development of aquaculture.

The Editor

# Bluefin tuna: cooperating with scientists

**The ICCAT has put out a call to all fishermen, both professional and recreational. The organisation needs their help to carry out an important research programme meant to improve knowledge of a flagship species: Atlantic bluefin tuna.**

Since 2009, the ICCAT<sup>(1)</sup> has coordinated an Atlantic-wide research programme for bluefin tuna. Code-named 'GBYP' by scientists, the programme aims to improve knowledge of this species so that it can be managed in a more rational and sustainable manner.

There are still quite a few grey areas in scientists' knowledge of bluefin tuna, including its migration routes, reproductive behaviour, nurseries, whether two Atlantic stocks (eastern and western) actually exist, etc.

The European Union is the lead sponsor of GBYP. However, this programme also has the financial support of many partners, both private (including the tuna, tunny and other industries) and public (scientific institutions, the United States and other ICCAT contracting parties). It includes aerial surveys, collection and analysis of catch data, biological and genetic research, development of new assessment methods and tagging of individual fish. It is this latter aspect of the programme that concerns us here.

At the end of the 2011 fishing season, the programme organised an initial series of conventional tagging operations in the Bay of Biscay, the Gibraltar Straits and the Mediterranean. Around 4 000 tunas were tagged. The purpose of this tagging is not simply to track the movements of the tagged specimens, but also to improve knowledge of certain parameters such as natural mortality rate.

Different types of tagging are used: conventional tags attached to the specimen's back, and electronic tags. There are two types of electronic tags: those that detach automatically and transmit their data by satellite, and those implanted in the specimen's gastro-intestinal cavity, which have to be retrieved because their data are stored in an internal memory.

Unfortunately, retrieving these tags is not always easy. In principle, when the fish is caught, the tags have to be sent to the promoter of the research programme, in this case the ICCAT, based in Madrid. Fishermen are usually cooperative for research of this type and willingly send in the tags they find. But that is not always the case for research on bluefin tuna.

## A tag awareness campaign

For the research programme currently under way, *'the return rate is under 1% in the Mediterranean and less than 5% in the Atlantic zone'*, explains Antonio Di Natale, ICCAT's programme coordinator. *'This is way too low for drawing scientific conclusions.'*

The tense and supervised context of this fishery probably explains the below normal rate of return by both professional and recreational fishermen. The ICCAT therefore decided to take certain measures to improve the tag retrieval rate.

First, it launched an information campaign among professional and recreational fishermen to encourage them to cooperate. Second, it guarantees the confidentiality of the fishermen who send in the tags. Third, it increased the amount of compensation paid to fishermen for their effort: they are paid EUR 50 per conventional tag returned and EUR 1 000 per electronic tag.

The ICCAT campaign urges fishermen to cooperate with scientists. The aim of this programme is optimal exploitation of this commercially and ecologically valuable stock. In the long run, all fisheries stakeholders stand to gain.

**For more information:**  
<http://www.iccat.es/GBYP/en/index.htm>



*To encourage fishermen to return tags found on caught bluefin tuna, the ICCAT has launched an information campaign in nine languages, including Arabic and Japanese.*

(1) The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) is the regional fisheries management organisation with responsibility for Atlantic and Mediterranean fisheries for tuna, swordfish, spearfish, sharks and their by-catches.



# Aquaculture: unleashing its potential

Fish, molluscs and crustaceans fill our plates more and more often. This growing demand offers prospects for aquaculture. In this and the next four issues, *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe* presents the 10 leading aquaculture species bred in the European Union.

According to the most recent official statistics (2009), aquaculture accounts for around one fourth of the European Union's (EU) production of fish, molluscs and crustaceans, with the remainder provided by fisheries. This represents around 1.3 million tonnes of food. The leading EU producers are the United Kingdom (salmon) and Greece (sea bream and sea bass) for fish, and Spain (mussels), France (oysters) and Italy (clams) for shellfish.

On top of the 23 kg of aquatic products consumed yearly by each European (of which a tenth from EU aquaculture) come imported aquaculture products, primarily salmon (Norway), tropical shrimps (Thailand, Bangladesh and India) and striped catfish (Vietnam).

Globally, growth is even higher. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), of the 118 million tonnes of fish, molluscs and crustaceans consumed worldwide in 2009, 55 million, or nearly half, came from aquaculture. This production has risen by around 35% since 2000. European aquaculture, however, has been stagnating for years and is not part of this global trend.

One of the aims of the reform of the common fisheries policy now under way is to develop the potential of the EU aquaculture sector, to improve its competitiveness and sustainability and to promote the development of quality and environmentally friendly products.

## 10 species, 10 fact sheets

A set of 10 fact sheets on the aquaculture species with the highest production rates in the European Union will be published from this issue up to number 60, at the rate of two per issue.

Each fact sheet presents information on various aspects of the species: biology, different farming techniques, production and trade, and nutritional value. Each sheet also includes a recipe presenting a simple and tasty way to cook the particular fish or mollusc.

The first two fact sheets are on sturgeon and carp. The following fact sheets, in order of publication, will detail sea perch and trout (No 57), turbot and salmon (No 58), sea bream and mussels (No 59), and oysters and clams (No 60).



The EU has adopted standards on organic aquaculture, including for seaweed, since 2009. The green logo opposite indicates that particular attention is paid to the species' welfare and to biodiversity during the production process and that impact on the aquatic environment is kept to a minimum<sup>(1)</sup>.

## Quality

EU aquaculture is sustainable and provides healthy, safe and high quality products to European consumers. It also provides direct employment for 80 000 people in coastal and rural areas.

A large variety of species are produced in Europe. Starting with fish farming in the Middle Ages, the breeding of aquatic animals has evolved in many different directions and today presents a wide range of techniques, methods and even traditions, detailed in the following figure.

The evolution of farming methods draws on an extremely well developed base of scientific research which makes up Europe's outstanding know-how. This makes aquaculture an area of development that will play an increasingly important role in the EU in the future.

(1) See Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe, No 50, pp. 10-11.

### Extensive fresh water aquaculture

Ponds are maintained in such a way as to promote the development of aquatic fauna at a yield greater than that found in the natural ecosystem. Density is low and fish feed naturally. Certain producers provide additional feed. These ponds play an important and positive role in the landscape, water management and biodiversity.

**Examples** – Carp, in mixed farming with other species (whitefish, zander, pike, catfish, etc.).

### Aquaculture of marine species in shore-based installations

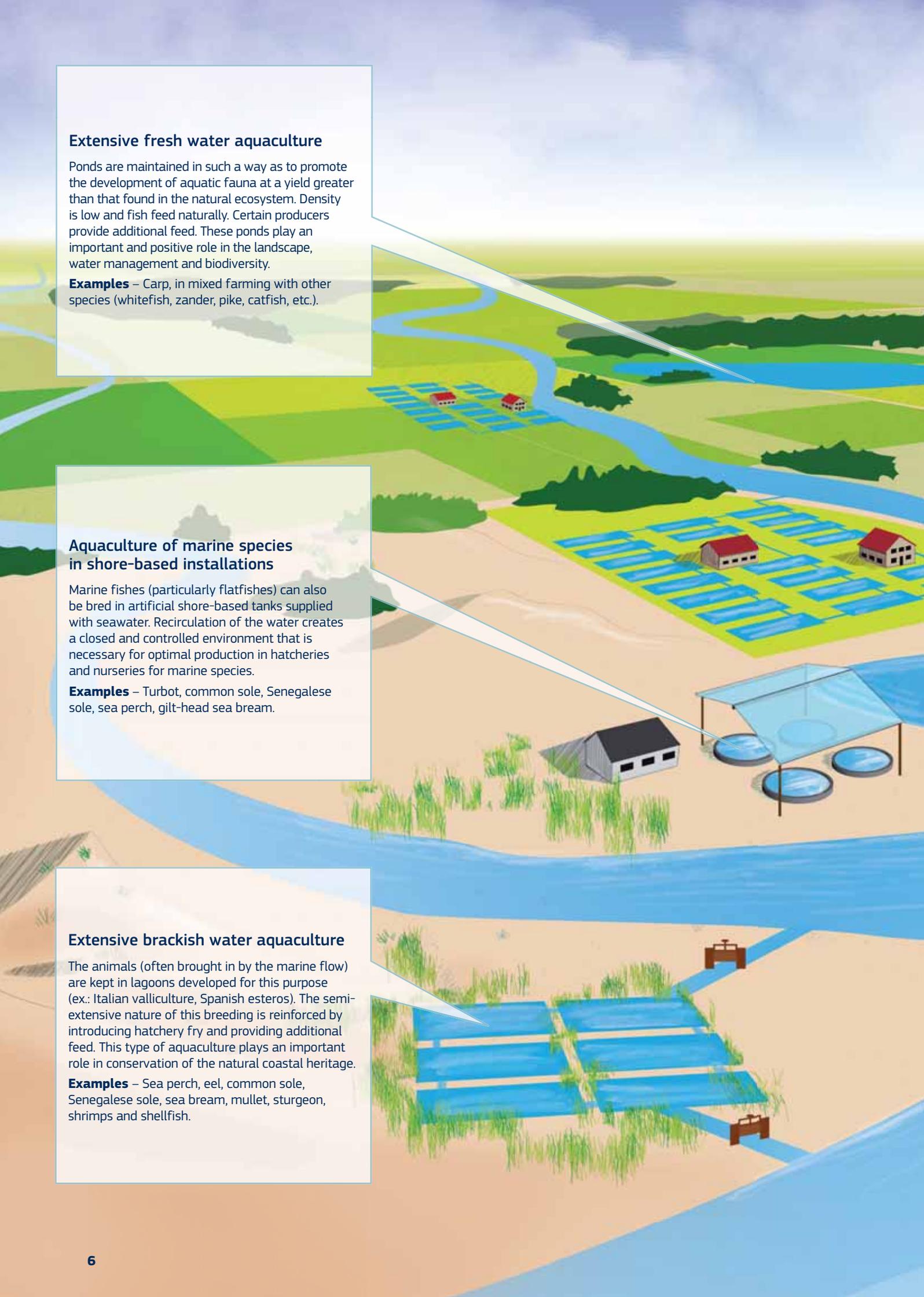
Marine fishes (particularly flatfishes) can also be bred in artificial shore-based tanks supplied with seawater. Recirculation of the water creates a closed and controlled environment that is necessary for optimal production in hatcheries and nurseries for marine species.

**Examples** – Turbot, common sole, Senegalese sole, sea perch, gilt-head sea bream.

### Extensive brackish water aquaculture

The animals (often brought in by the marine flow) are kept in lagoons developed for this purpose (ex.: Italian valliculture, Spanish esteros). The semi-extensive nature of this breeding is reinforced by introducing hatchery fry and providing additional feed. This type of aquaculture plays an important role in conservation of the natural coastal heritage.

**Examples** – Sea perch, eel, common sole, Senegalese sole, sea bream, mullet, sturgeon, shrimps and shellfish.



# Sturgeon

*Acipenser baerii*



## Biology

Several species from the *Acipenseridae* family are farmed in Europe, including the Siberian sturgeon, Danube sturgeon, Sterlet sturgeon, Common sturgeon and Adriatic sturgeon. Many of the sturgeon species are considered endangered or even critically endangered. Their population has drastically decreased because of the construction of dams cutting migration routes, overfishing and pollution. The farming of sturgeon is important, therefore, not only for producing flesh and caviar but also for restocking these species to the extent that it has a beneficial impact on wild stock conservation.

One of the sturgeons most commonly farmed in the EU is the Siberian sturgeon (*Acipenser baerii*). Rearing systems for Siberian sturgeon were developed in the 1970s in the former Soviet Union. The first specimens were introduced into France at more or less the same time, as part of a scientific cooperation programme.

## Farming

The reproduction of Siberian sturgeon is complicated in that the females do not ovulate every year and not all at the same time. By controlling water temperature, however, it is possible to obtain eggs over a relatively long period, from December to May.

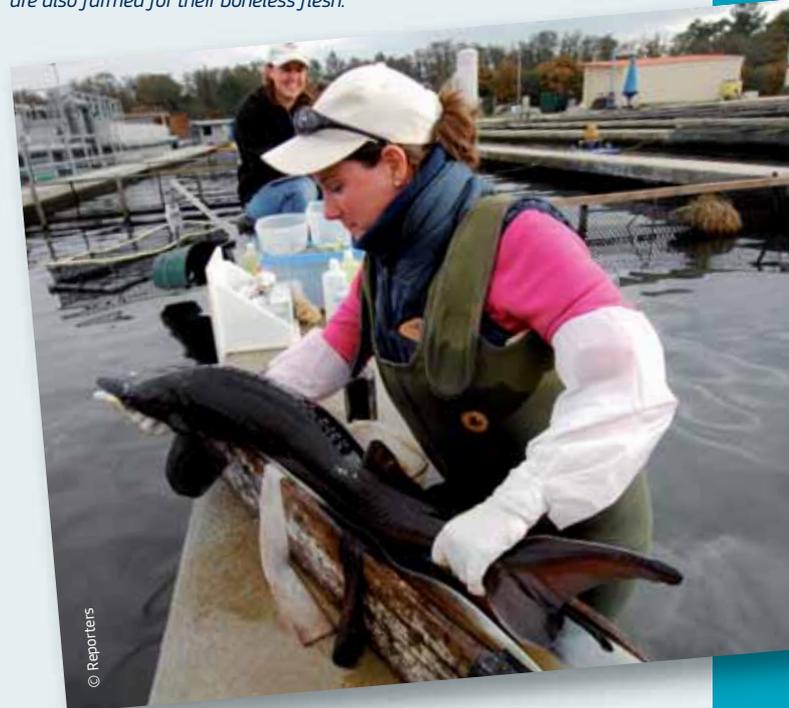
Siberian sturgeon can be reared in raceways, circular tanks, ponds or cages. They are carnivorous and are fed pellets with fishmeal and fish oil as well as vegetable extracts. The average rearing time for sturgeon cultured for their meat is 14 months, obtaining a fish weighing 700 g. At harvesting time they are caught in nets.

Exploiting sturgeon for caviar production is costly, because the females cannot reproduce until they are at least seven years old. During this period they are reared in tanks of running fresh water. In the past, the females were slaughtered and their eggs removed. However, in recent years, fish farmers have developed techniques to remove the caviar without killing the fish, which reduces production costs by improving the yield per mother fish.

## Production and trade

At worldwide level, sturgeon fisheries have almost disappeared as a result of stock depletion. Farming has taken over fisheries, and Chinese aquaculture now accounts for 85% of the total sturgeon output worldwide. After China, the main producers of sturgeon are Russia and the EU. More Siberian sturgeon are being reared in Western Europe now that there is a ban on exporting caviar from wild specimens in order to protect stocks. Statistics for caviar production are not entirely accurate, but it appears that caviar accounts for over 80% of the value of sturgeon aquaculture. Italy and France are the main caviar producers in the EU. Thanks to the development of aquaculture in Europe, the value of exports of caviar to third countries has now overtaken the value of imports. Intra-EU trade of caviar amounts to half the value of EU production, with main flows from Italy to France, Germany and United Kingdom.

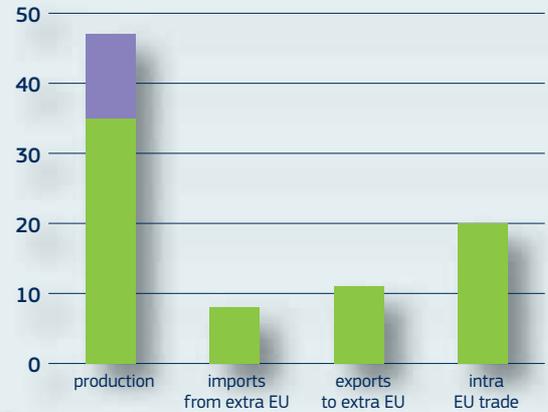
*Most commonly associated with caviar, sturgeon are also farmed for their boneless flesh.*



## Presentation on the market

Caviar, which comes from sturgeon eggs preserved with salt, is a well-known luxury product. The term 'caviar' is reserved exclusively for the roe of sturgeon of the family *Acipenseridae*. Roe from other species of fish may only be called 'caviar substitute'. Siberian sturgeon meat has no bones, which makes it appealing to consumers. European consumers, however, are not yet familiar with this fish, which can be sold filleted or smoked.

## EU sturgeon supply and trade\* (2009) (million EUR)



- Meat
- Caviar

\* from fishery and aquaculture.

Source: Eurostat for meat, estimation from different sources by EC Directorate-general for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries for caviar.

## Sturgeon steaks in tarragon

### Ingredients for 4 people

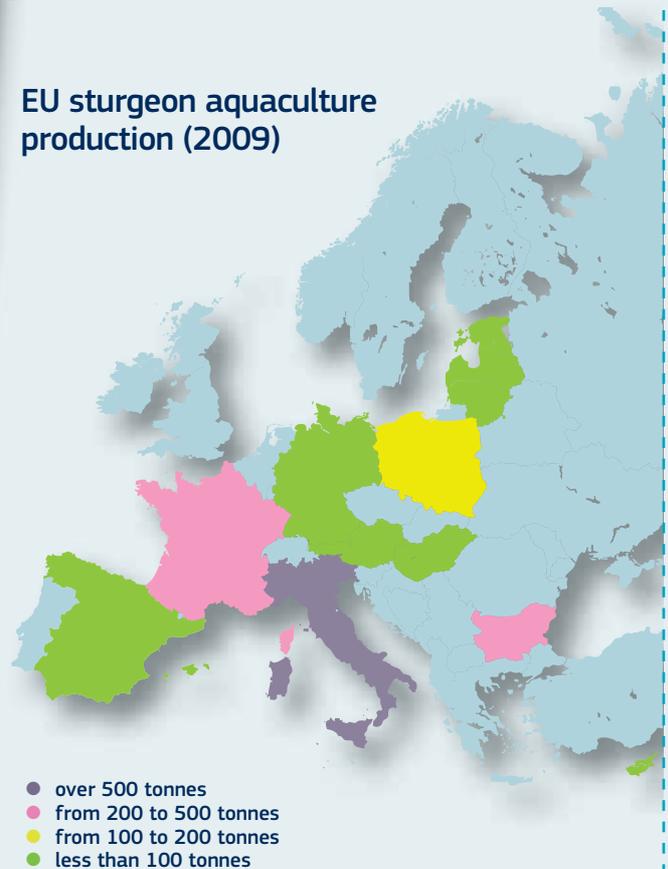
- 4 sturgeon steaks
- 30 g butter
- 1 shallot
- 3 sprigs of fresh tarragon
- 10 cl dry white wine
- 10 cl cream
- 1 fresh tomato
- 20 cl fish stock
- Edible flowers
- Salt and pepper

### Instructions

1. Bake the seasoned steaks in the fish stock at 175° for 15 minutes.
2. Remove the steaks and keep them warm.
3. Simmer the cooking liquid on the hob until it has reduced by 2/3.
4. In a saucepan, soften the shallots in the butter and add the diced tomato.
5. Add the finely chopped tarragon and the reduced cooking liquid.
6. Add the cream and reduce until the sauce thickens. Check the seasoning.
7. Pour the sauce over the fish steaks and dress with edible untreated flowers in season (violets, roses, nasturtiums, geraniums, primroses, cornflowers, borage, pansies, etc.).

Recipe provided by Chef Philippe Votquenne (Euro-Toques Belgium)

## EU sturgeon aquaculture production (2009)



- over 500 tonnes
- from 200 to 500 tonnes
- from 100 to 200 tonnes
- less than 100 tonnes

Source: Eurostat.

# Carp

*Cyprinus carpio*



## Biology

The common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) is native to Asia and Eastern Europe. Although there is evidence of Romans consuming and keeping carp, it was not until the Middle Ages that carp began to be raised in bodies of water in Europe. They were often associated with monasteries, as fish rather than meat was consumed on fast days.

Carp is a domesticated species that has adapted to husbandry systems. Tolerant of water quality and temperature, its ecological spectrum is broad. It lives in all types of slow flowing or still waters. Carp are omnivorous, mainly consuming zooplankton and zoobenthos, detritus and parts of aquatic plants. The original form of carp is called 'scaly carp', with its big and regularly spaced scales. The domesticated strains include fish with few and irregularly distributed scales ('mirror carp').

## Farming

Carp are most often reproduced in hatcheries. As soon as they hatch, the larvae are transferred to small shallow tanks or nursing ponds, which are filled with plankton-rich water. At first, the pond's natural production of plankton, vegetation and benthic invertebrates is enough to feed the young carp. Later, however, the fish often receive supplementary feed, such as cereal coarse meal or various feed mixtures. In autumn, either the pond is cleaned and the carp are transferred to a deeper wintering pond or they stay in the original pond until spring. During the coldest months they enter a period of reduced activity when they feed little or not at all.

The following spring, the carp are transferred to summering ponds, which are used to raise two year old fish. In the spring of their third year, the carp are moved to large fattening (marketing) ponds. They feed on the food provided by the ecosystem, although their diet is usually supplemented with cereals.

The fish are usually collected in autumn (before the water freezes). Depending on their size, they are either selected as broodstock or they are marketed. As most carp are sold just before Christmas, they are usually left for several weeks in clean fresh water, which also helps to improve the taste before they are marketed. However, more and more carp are being harvested at other times of the year, either for direct consumption or for restocking waters for angling purposes.

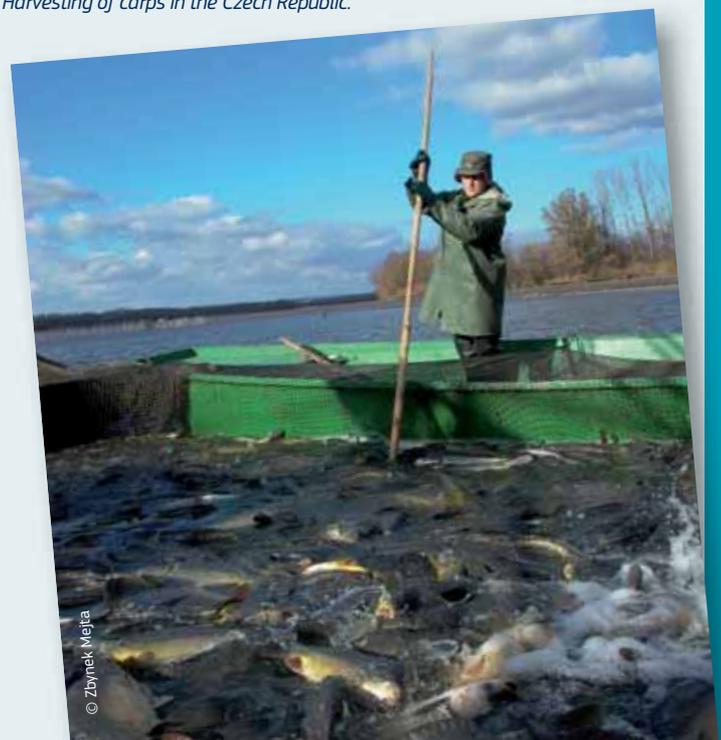
A fully mature carp can weigh up to 30 kg and measure a metre or more. Marketing size, however, is usually 30 to 50 cm in length weighing more or less 1.5 kg-3 kg (depending on the region) – which usually takes three to four years to produce in European weather conditions.

Normally, carp farming is semi-intensive. Carp can be farmed in monoculture, polyculture (together with other freshwater species, such as pike, catfish or silver carp) or in an integrated culture with other agricultural activities. Carp ponds often play an important role in enhancing biodiversity, retaining water in the landscape and flood protection.

## Production and trade

The vast majority of carp production comes from aquaculture. World carp production is dominated by China, which accounts for 80% of the total output. Far behind China, the major producers are Indonesia, Vietnam, the EU, Russia, Bangladesh and Brazil. Within the EU, the two biggest producers are Poland and the Czech Republic. There is almost no trade in carp with third countries. As regards intra-EU trade, there are only limited flows from the Czech Republic to Germany. The species remains unknown in several Member States.

*Harvesting of carps in the Czech Republic.*



## Presentation on the market

Nowadays carp is mainly produced in central Europe, where it is served at traditional Christmas and Easter holiday meals. In the traditional Jewish speciality, '*gefilte fish*', carp flesh is minced with onion and then poached and stuffed under the fish skin.

In the eastern EU Member States people are accustomed to buying carp live. Producers are trying to diversify their offer by setting up small processing units to supply semi-prepared products (cutlets, fresh or smoked, filleted or sliced) and prepared products based on traditional recipes. A large part of the production goes to anglers for restocking purposes and supplying recreational fishing ponds.

## Nutritional value per 100 g (average)

Calories: 100 kcal

Protein: 17.7 g

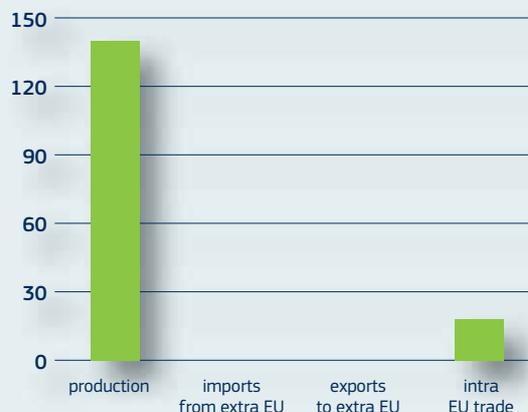
Selenium: 20 µg

Vitamin D: 3.8 µg

EPA: 66 mg

DHA: 60 mg

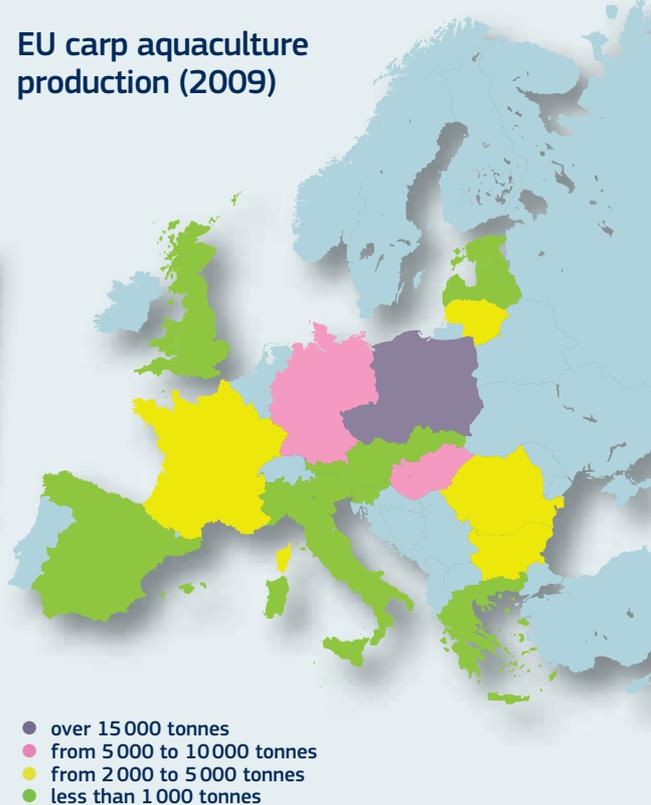
## EU carp supply and trade\* (2009) (million EUR)



\* from fishery and aquaculture.

Source: Eurostat.

## EU carp aquaculture production (2009)



Source: Eurostat.

## Carp fillets in beer

### Ingredients for 4 people

- 500 g carp fillets
- 30 g butter
- 150 g onions
- 30 g *pain d'épices* – a type of gingerbread (or brioche/white bread and 1 soup spoon of honey)
- 50 g celery
- Thyme, bay leaves, parsley
- 33 cl mild white beer
- 10 cl cream
- Salt and pepper

### Instructions

1. Chop the onions and celery finely.
2. Soften the onions and celery in the butter, then add the *pain d'épices* (or the diced brioche/white bread and honey).
3. Place the seasoned carp fillets on the vegetables and pour the beer over them. Add the thyme and bay leaves.
4. Increase the heat to a simmer, then remove the fillets and keep them warm.
5. Blend the cooking juices using a mixer and then strain to remove the bread crumbs.
6. Return to the heat and reduce until the sauce thickens.
7. Add the cream and check the seasoning.
8. To serve, pour the sauce over the fillets and garnish with chopped parsley.

Recipe provided by Chef Philippe Votquenne (Euro-Toques Belgium)

### Intensive fresh water aquaculture

In intensive systems, fish are bred in tanks until they reach marketable size. There are two techniques: continuous flow (river water enters tanks upstream and leaves downstream) and recirculation (the water remains in a closed circuit and is recycled and 'recirculated' in the tanks). Recirculation systems are more costly (energy), but offer better control of breeding conditions (temperature and oxygen) and water quality.

**Examples** – Rainbow trout, eel, catfish, sturgeon, tilapia, etc.

### Marine cage aquaculture

The fish are kept in cages anchored to the seabed and maintained on the surface by means of a floating plastic framework. This form of breeding is practiced mainly in sheltered zones near shore, but more sophisticated techniques (submersible cages, remote monitoring, automatic feeding, etc.) may make it possible to move further from shore.

**Examples** – Atlantic salmon, sea perch, sea bream, meagre, etc.

### Shellfish farming

Shellfish farming is based on the collection of wild or hatchery spat, which feed on natural nutrients found in the environment (filter-feeding animals). Oyster and mussel farming account for 90% of European production and use a wide range of techniques: bottom-farming, on tables, wooden posts, ropes, etc.

**Examples** – Oysters (oyster farming), mussels (mussel farming), clams and abalones.

# Shared stocks: taking action to maintain cooperation

**With imports worth EUR 32 billion, the European Union ranks first in the global fish trade. It is a major market that attracts exporters from every continent. This position gives it responsibilities – which it assumes – in fighting illegal fishing and more generally all forms of overexploitation of resources. Nonetheless, missing among the EU's range of measures, are means to act against parties who refuse to cooperate or break off cooperation in managing international stocks. The European Commission proposes to remedy this shortcoming.**

On 14 December 2011, the European Commission presented a draft regulation on certain measures in relation to countries allowing non-sustainable fishing for the purpose of the conservation of fish stocks<sup>(1)</sup>. The proposal aims to enable the European Union (EU) to refuse entry of fish imports from countries that are unwilling to accept responsibility for the joint management of stocks.

The analysis that led to the drafting of this regulation was triggered by the Atlantic mackerel dispute. In a nutshell, exploitation of the North-East Atlantic mackerel stock is shared by the States bordering the catch zone, namely the EU, Norway, the Faroe Islands and Iceland. Up until 2009, fishing opportunities for this stock were agreed and divided up on the basis of cooperation among these four parties. But in 2010, the Faroe Islands and Iceland unilaterally set (and disproportionately increased) their own mackerel quotas, outside the usual framework of cooperation. If the parties stop setting limits for catches of this stock, its sustainability may be seriously jeopardised.

There have already been similar conflicts in the past. For a number of years, there was no cooperation on management of North-East Atlantic blue whiting, a situation that led to depletion of the stock in 2010 and required drastic quota reductions.

## Closing a legal loophole

As things stand now, there is nothing to prevent a Faroese pelagic trawler from continuing to land its mackerel catches in a Scottish port to supply a local cannery. As long as it abides by its national regulations, this vessel is operating legally and cannot be penalised for illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Yet this activity is going on in a context that creates a real problem for stock conservation and it is illogical for the EU, which is co-responsible for sound management of this stock, to encourage such activity by opening up its market to its catches.

If a state does not comply with decisions taken in cooperation with other countries, it enters into the realm of illegality and the EU has legal means to take measures against it, under the IUU regulation. But in a case of breakdown of cooperation, there are no more regulatory decisions and therefore no illegality in the strict sense. The EU could take measures under the general regulatory framework of codecision, but this is a cumbersome and slow process. The adoption of a regulation adapted to this type of situation is therefore necessary.

It is important to give the EU effective means to keep its market from offering an incentive to breaches in cooperation. These means thus help it to promote sustainable fishing.

The aim of the new regulation proposed by the Commission is therefore to close a loophole in the existing arsenal of measures to combat IUU fishing. It targets all cases where a stock exploited partially by the EU must be managed in collaboration with third countries, whether under bilateral or multilateral cooperation or in the framework of a regional fisheries management organisation.

The proposal does not concern stocks under the sole responsibility of a non-EU country. Fisheries partnership agreements are consequently not included in its scope: responsibility for the management of coastal resources lies solely with the coastal state with which the agreement has been signed.

## Strictly targeted measures

The measures proposed by the Commission range from closing the market to the products concerned to setting restrictions on access to port facilities and services for vessels participating in this problematic fishing activity.

It is important to keep in mind that the European Union is intent on upon complying with international trade rules, particularly those laid down in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, better known as the GATT. While the general rule is that the GATT prohibits barriers to international trade, it does authorise the use of restrictive measures, especially in cases where a resource may be threatened or the environment damaged. It nevertheless requires that such restrictions target directly the object of the conflict.

(1) COM(2011) 888.



Therefore, if country X breaks off its cooperation with the EU on management of a cod stock, for example, the EU is entitled to close its borders to trade in cod caught by country X (even if the fish are cut up or frozen in country Y). The EU can also limit imports of other species taken as by-catches.

It is clear that such a ban could have major economic consequences on certain fisheries markets. We cannot forget that the EU is 60% dependent on imports of fish and that certain processing companies work mainly with external suppliers. The regulation provides that market measures

must be taken knowledgeably, based on the results of an impact study. The aim is not to endanger European industries but there may be a question of giving them time to turn to other non-problematic suppliers.

The issue being addressed here is definitely the overexploitation of resources. A breakdown of cooperation and unilateral actions always do damage, and the stock is the main victim. In its policy to promote sustainable fishing, the Commission has no choice but to use its commercial clout to give States incentive to maintain all forms of multilateral cooperation and to conclude responsible and sustainable agreements.

*The Commission proposes a new regulation under which it could close the European market to fish imports from countries that refuse to cooperate in managing international stocks.*



# Labelling: improving information for consumers

The labelling of fishery and aquaculture products is an important, even essential subject, both for consumers, who need to be well informed when selecting products, and producers, who can use labels to promote the quality of their products to the final customer. New labelling measures will be introduced shortly. As part of the reform of the common fisheries policy, the Commission has presented a proposal to the European Parliament and the Member States that contains advances designed to meet this dual challenge.

Consumer information legislation is a field that evolves very quickly to take account of advances in technology and science, but also in response to consumers' expectations and demands. To encourage the development of the best possible behaviour, regulations in this area are updated regularly.

In October 2011, the European Union adopted a new regulation<sup>(1)</sup> on the labelling of all food products. Its provisions cover a broad range of subjects: information on nutritional content and allergens, the format of information, product origin, defrosted products, bulk products, etc.

These general provisions are not always best suited to the characteristics of fishery and aquaculture products, however. Indeed, no other food production sector draws such a large part of its resources from the natural environment, with products whose geographical origin may span an area extending over fully half the planet.

*The Commission proposes that in addition to the existing obligations (species name, fishing/aquaculture and geographical origin), labels for fresh products must mention the date of catch/harvest and indicate whether the product was defrosted before being placed on stalls.*

The European Commission therefore wished to take advantage of the reform of the common fisheries policy (CFP) to include these characteristics in new labelling standards. The reform has sparked a lot of debate due to the changes it will cause in fisheries management. Yet the Commission has also proposed new measures on the common market organisation (CMO). It is in this context that it has drawn up new standards on information to consumers on fishery and aquaculture products, concerning both labelling and voluntary claims.

## Mandatory labelling: more accurate and comprehensible

To date, labelling obligations for fish, molluscs and crustaceans concern only fresh and defrosted products and impose the following information: the commercial designation, production method (aquaculture or fishing) and geographical origin.

These obligations are maintained, but in future they would concern all fishery and aquaculture products regardless of their presentation, thus including preserved and processed products. The Commission is determined to establish a common mandatory set of rules for all foods containing fishery and aquaculture products.





Labelling requirements on geographical information would not change from those already in force: the country of production for aquaculture products and the FAO zone for fishery products, i.e. for the latter, identification of large geographical areas such as the North-East Atlantic or the Mediterranean.

However, if they wish, operators or distributors may be more precise on the origin of their products, while using indications of provenance that are generally more familiar to consumers. This could also present commercial advantages related to proximity. To prevent abuse, the Commission proposes that this more precise geographical information use the nomenclature established by the FAO, for example: English Channel, North Sea, Baltic, Mediterranean, Irish Sea or Bay of Biscay.

So much for the common set of rules.

Other mandatory provisions will concern only fresh products or frozen or smoked products, for example. The Commission proposes that labels for these products also include the date of catch for wild species or the date of harvest for aquaculture products, thus identifying very fresh products.

Today, a product can be sold as fresh even if it has already been frozen. The Commission would like to ensure that consumers are properly informed, thus making their choices easier and giving them the opportunity to give priority to fresh, locally caught fish on market stalls.

### Additional claims: optional but strict

In terms of voluntary information, the Commission highlights the principle that underpins labelling for all food products: any information provided to consumers must be proven, verifiable and controllable. Such claims are being used more and more often for fishery products, primarily for 'sustainable fisheries' certification but also for production techniques, practices or social conditions.

The Commission is aware of the need to avoid 'over-regulation', but is intent on being able to take necessary measures within a reasonable period of time. It recommends that, as necessary, it should be able to set minimum criteria. This approach aims to ensure that claims are accurate, transparent and non-discriminatory, and that they help consumers make more informed choices.

### E-labelling developments

E-labelling is a growing trend and one that is all the more likely to be used for fishery products in Europe since recent control decisions impose traceability from vessel (or farm) to plate. This voluntary technique for providing information to consumers is also closely tied to developments in the area of information technology. It is based on the principle that every fish, mollusc or crustacean has an interesting story to tell on its origin, biology, catch, conservation, journey, etc., but that this story is too long to tell on a label. It can, however, be told on internet, where there are no limits on space or details. A producer can therefore invite the consumer who has bought the fish to type in a code or scan the bar code with a smartphone to learn where it was caught, how, by whom, when, in what circumstances, and so on. E-labelling is an original and interesting way to make traceability data available to consumers. Such transparency is also in line with new consumer trends, which are not limited to fishery and aquaculture products, namely knowing what one is buying and what happened before the product reached the shop.

For the 'sustainable fisheries' label, for example, the European Union would not create a labelling system per se, but if necessary and bearing in mind that FAO guidelines serve as a reference for eco-labelling, it could draw up rules that operators would have to comply with to claim that their fish have been caught sustainably. This system would have the advantage of ensuring greater legal certainty and of being operational. The goal is to prevent merchandise fraud. Products certified 'sustainable fisheries' appeal to consumers and thus are sure to be successful on the market, but this success must be deserved and verifiable.

*This article is an update of a Fact File from an earlier issue: Fisheries & aquaculture in Europe, No 48, August 2010.*

(1) Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers.

### EU/Greenland partnership: prolongation

The EU has concluded a new protocol to the fisheries partnership agreement concluded with Greenland in 2007, to cover the period 2013-2015. The agreement authorises European Union vessels to fish in Greenland's exclusive economic zone in return for payment of financial compensation and support to the fisheries sector. For 2013, 2014 and 2015, the European Union's annual financial contribution to Greenland will be EUR 17.8 million for the following fishing opportunities: cod (2 200 tonnes), redfish (3 000 tonnes in pelagic fishing, 2 000 tonnes in demersal fishing), Greenland halibut (6 815 tonnes), northern prawn (10 900 tonnes), Atlantic halibut (400 tonnes), queen crab (250 tonnes), capelin (60 000 tonnes) and black-spot grenadier (200 tonnes). The opportunities are more limited than in the previous protocol, but the compensation includes a provision of EUR 1.5 million related to a possible increase in these fishing opportunities based on scientific advice, because the protocol aims to safeguard stock sustainability. Vessels will be licensed once their owners have paid their contribution to Greenland's authorities. The fleets from the following EU Member States are concerned: Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Germany, United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal. In addition to a human rights clause, the new protocol contains an exclusivity requirement: European vessels fishing in Greenland's waters may only do so within the framework of the partnership agreement.

### EU/Guinea-Bissau partnership: reinforcement

The European Union (EU) and Guinea-Bissau have concluded a new protocol that prolongs their fisheries partnership until 2015. This partnership, concluded in 2007, authorises EU fishing vessels (mainly from France, Spain and Portugal) to fish in Guinea-Bissau's exclusive economic zone in exchange for a financial contribution, support to the country's fisheries policy and scientific cooperation. Vessels operating in these waters fish for tuna, tropical shrimps and cephalopods. Under the new protocol, the EU will pay annual compensation of EUR 9.2 million, of which 3 million will be earmarked to strengthen the national fisheries policy (control and management). This compensation comes on top of the license fee that vessel owners will have to pay directly to Guinea-Bissau. The protocol also imposes satellite-based monitoring of EU vessels (VMS) and the use of electronic logbooks. It reinforces the scientific committee's management role and commits the EU to facilitate cooperation between local and European economic operators. The protocol also contains a human rights clause. It will enter into force upon ratification by the Council following endorsement by the European Parliament.

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