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FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN EUROPE

- 🐟 **Illegal fish? No, thanks**
- 🐟 The future of sustainable fishing
 - 🐟 Croatia joins the EU
 - 🐟 Antarctic marine ecosystems

Conferences and meetings

First Regional Symposium on Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, St. Julian's (Malta), 27-30 November 2013

Website: <http://www.ssfsymposium.org/>
E-mail: gfc-secretariat@fao.org
Tel.: +39 06 57055730

Fish international, Bremen (Germany), 9-11 February 2014

Website: <http://www.fishinternational.com/en/>
E-mail: info@fishinternational.de
Tel.: +49 421 3505 260

COFI Subcommittee on fish trade, Bergen (Norway), 24-28 February 2014

Website: <http://www.fao.org/cofi/ft/en/>
E-mail: audun.lem@fao.org

Institutional agenda

European Parliament Committee on Fisheries,

Website: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/compar/pech/calendar_2014.pdf
E-mail: ip-PECH@europarl.europa.eu
Tel.: + 32 2 284 49 09, Brussels (Belgium)
or + 33 3 88 17 67 69, Strasbourg (France)

- 22 January, 15h00-18h30
- 23 January, 9h00-18h30
- 10 February, 15h00-18h30
- 11 February, 9h00-18h30
- 17 March, 15h00-18h30
- 18 March, 9h00-18h30

Agriculture and Fisheries Council of the European Union,

Website: www.consilium.europa.eu
• 27 January, Brussels (Belgium)
• 17-18 February, Brussels (Belgium)
• 24-25 March, Brussels (Belgium)

2 CALENDAR

3 EDITORIAL

Hard times for sea robbers

4-7 IN THE NEWS

Illegal Fish? No, thanks.
Four years on, the new control system is yielding tangible results

8-9 IN THE NEWS

A sustainable fishing future at home and abroad

10-11 IN THE NEWS

CCAMLR and Antarctic marine ecosystems
Croatia joins the family

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

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- 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/maritimeaffairs/atlas/index_en.htm
 - Fisheries site > http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/index_en.htm
 - Maritime Affairs site > http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/index_en.htm
 - A new e-newsletter > http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/maritimeaffairs_fisheries/index_en.htm

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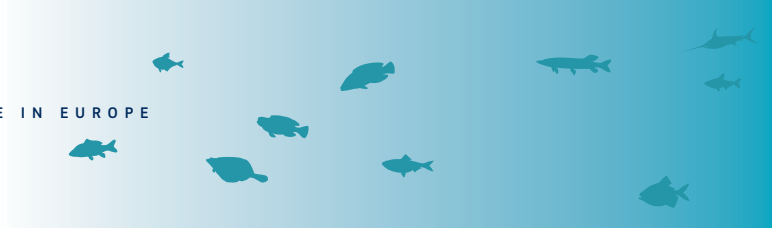
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Hard times for sea robbers

In early 2013 Interpol gave out its first 'Purple Notice' to the Snake, a vessel with a long history of disregard for international law. Already blacklisted by the European Union and banned from selling its illegal catch to Member States, the Snake is an example in a long line of vessels facing EU action against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU).

The UN, the FAO, and several NGOs are also engaged in the fight against illegal fishing, as are the United States, Japan and many regional fisheries organisations. As international cooperation becomes stronger and more effective, tangible results come from our own "zero tolerance" approach.

The EU is at the forefront of the global crackdown on IUU. At home, it improves enforcement with investments in infrastructure and personnel. EU countries join forces to patrol the seas and when a country exceeds its quota, it has to pay it back by fishing less the following year, as was the case with Spanish mackerel. Along with big-ticket fines, repeat offenders face penalty points for serious infringements and, ultimately, licence suspension.

Third countries are bound by international obligations against IUU. If they overlook these duties, they can expect to be labelled uncooperative in the fight against illegal fishing and eventually be banned from exporting fisheries products to the EU.

In its battle against IUU the EU now makes use of modern technology to trace in detail the fish's route from the net to the plate. Clear and accurate labels show where and how the fish were caught, the species' scientific name and whether they were frozen or not.

Traceability and labelling help to guide and educate consumers, who have shown with other foods that they wish to eat from stable, reliable and legitimate sources. If given the tools to make an informed decision, consumers will act collectively and effectively towards sustainability.

Public education has already highlighted the discards issue and helped gain widespread support for stamping out avoidable by-catch. Spreading awareness on the appalling practice of illegal fishing is a vital step towards making the oceans a fairer place to fish.

The Editor



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IN THE NEWS

Illegal fish? No, thanks. Four years on, the new control system is yielding tangible results

Four years ago the EU resolved to wage war on illegal fishing both at home and abroad. At home, it harmonised rules, inspections and sanctions – and with a fairer system comes better compliance. For the rest of the world, it shut its own market to fish of dubious origin and warns of possible economic retaliation those nations who turn a blind eye to unlawful practices at sea.

“Illegal fishing harms us on many levels. It puts additional, unchecked, pressure on fish stocks; it undermines our conservation efforts; it disrupts markets with unfair competition; it works against law-abiding fishermen; and it harms all coastal communities, especially those in developing countries. It is a crime against the environment and a crime against us all.” Maria Damanaki, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

EU rules help control one of the most important common resources Europe has, its fisheries stock. As fish do not swim within national borders or Exclusive Economic Zones, regulation needs to be enforced by all Member States equally. Nor can we disregard what happens in the rest of the world. The fish we import (about 65% of total consumption) must have been caught in accordance to the modern principles of conservation.

The fight against overfishing: an exhaustive and integrated approach across Europe

“If we can’t enforce our own rules, this undermines the credibility of the whole policy, no matter how sound it may be”, Commissioner Damanaki said in 2010. *“We now have a comprehensive system of control and enforcement; we have ‘new teeth’, as it were, and*



this will make the rules of the upcoming reform of the Common Fisheries Policy all the more effective.”

The Commission’s reform of the control system ⁽¹⁾ came a few years before the wider reform of European fisheries, but is based on the same principle: the well-being of fish stocks equals the welfare of coastal communities. For that principle to apply, it was imperative to turn a fractured system into a level playing field governed by a sound and workable set of rules.

Today, the methodology for inspections, both in port and at sea, is clearly and uniformly defined. Modern data collection technologies like electronic logbooks, sales notes, or satellite-based monitoring systems have largely done away with possible errors or disparities in judging the amounts of fish caught.

If there is overfishing, corrective measures apply to all. For operators, a deterring point system can, not unlike the one for car drivers, lead to temporary or even permanent revocation of the

These irregularities were detected in the course of over 230 control missions conducted by the EU. Missions are costly and complex and national resources are limited. A specialised Agency ⁽²⁾ pools the national means and coordinates their deployment, maximising their effect and considerably reducing costs through commonly agreed control and inspection programmes ⁽³⁾. This not only facilitates better risk assessment and management but also increases trust among authorities and operators, creating a truly European approach to control.

In any case, as from next year, around EUR 150 million will be available for Member States to purchase new patrol vessels or aircraft and to train more personnel. With another EUR 480 million, the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund will continue to support current operations and also start funding innovative techniques such as DNA analysis to pinpoint a batch’s exact strand and point of origin. In parallel to all this, new rules against waste and overfishing will come into force on January 1st 2014 with the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. And thus the process guaranteeing a rational, responsible use of fish resources by all will be complete.

Control Technology Costs

EU investments dedicated to regulatory control in EU Member States

- **Developing Electronic Recording and Reporting Systems (ERS): EUR 21.3 million**
- **Equipping vessels with ERS: EUR 33 million**
- **Equipping vessels with Vessel Monitoring Systems: EUR 16 million**
- **New technology and IT networks (databases, validation of data, traceability, vessel research): EUR 108 million**
- **Pilot projects: EUR 1.5 million**
- **Training and initiatives to raise awareness of CFP rules: EUR 1.7 million**
- **Patrol vessels and aircraft: EUR 3.7 million**
- **Total investment in control technologies: EUR 185.2 million**
- **12 000 fishing vessels equipped with VMS and/or ERS, with one third already reimbursed.**

fishing licence. For countries, an extensive arsenal enables the Commission to react to overfishing. It can carry out audits and enquiries in the country in question. It can demand an action plan to rectify the situation, as occurred for Malta in 2011, Spain in 2012 and Latvia in 2013. In extreme cases of repeat offending, the Commission can even suspend financial aid. Before coming to that, it can deduct from the fishing quotas for the following years, as was the case when the Spanish fishing quota for mackerel was downsized by 65 000 tonnes in March 2013 due to overfishing – one of almost 300 instances since the rules came into force.

The Fight against Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing: Projecting Conservation Principles Worldwide

As with many other products today, people are interested in the quality and reliability of the food chain. To help both consumers trust the fish they buy and fishermen stay in business, a comprehensive system of catch certification ensures that the fish can be tracked from ‘net to plate’. This comes from the massive investments made in modern technology such as Vessel Monitoring Systems, Electronic Recording and Reporting Systems, and the databases and IT networks that come with them.

(1) Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Regulations (EC) No 847/96, (EC) No 2371/2002, (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 2115/2005, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007, (EC) No 676/2007, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1300/2008, (EC) No 1342/2008 and repealing Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1627/94 and (EC) No 1966/2006

(2) The European Fisheries Control Agency, based in Vigo, Spain

(3) Also known as SCIPs (Special Control and Inspection Programmes) and JDPs (Joint Deployment Plans)



A battle won in Sierra Leone

In a campaign against illegal and pirate fishing off the West African coast, one of the most affected areas in the world in terms of IUU, the UK-based Environmental Justice Foundation equipped a community in the Sherbro River area with a small surveillance boat. Local fishermen were able to film and identify international trawlers working

illegally in their protected waters. The information was then passed to the Commission and to African governments. The Commission launched investigations on those vessels and pressed for adequate sanctioning. This resulted in hefty fines, seized hauls, and the demise of vessels operating in the country's coastal inclusion zone.

Certification and modern technologies become particularly handy when the fish has been caught in distant waters, well outside the EU's jurisdiction. Wrongdoings can be detected at any point of the supply chain and if a batch's 'marine passport' is dubious in any way, it can be stopped before entering our market.

This is one of the many ground-breaking novelties of the 2010 Regulation on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (4), and Member States have immediately seized the possibility by refusing to import into the EU at least 100 dubious consignments of fish so far.

In parallel, both EU and third countries have promptly responded to Commission requests to investigate and penalise suspect ships. In less than four years, over 200 cases of presumed illegal fishing by vessels from 27 countries have been investigated, and some 50 of those ships ended up with fines totalling over EUR 7 million.

Another positive return of the new regime is that EU countries apply risk-based approaches and combine these with more efficient controls at ports. In the Canary Islands, Spain, close cooperation between the EU and local authorities has bolstered control procedures on all landings by third-country vessels at the port of Las Palmas. As a result, certain Asian vessels (already suspected of carrying out illegal activities) stopped landing their fish in Las Palmas or exporting their products to the EU.

But the IUU Regulation goes well beyond stricter controls at home, and seeks to ensure that other world nations comply with the obligations arising from international law (5), and join the offensive against IUU fishing.

To encourage Flag States to take action against unscrupulous fleets, the EU has drawn up a blacklist of vessels that cannot land or sell their products on the single market because of proven misconduct (6).

The EU also works closely with third countries, and conducts audits on the means and commitment they devote to stopping IUU. More than 30 of these missions have been carried out so far, and assistance has been given for many countries to adjust their legal structure and administrative capacity. With the backing of our know-how and expertise, Indonesia is currently overhauling its own fisheries management system. Other success stories include Fiji, Togo, Sri Lanka, Vanuatu and Panama, who have made laudable progress after being formally warned that they may end up blacklisted unless they take immediate action against IUU (7). Other countries, like Belize, Cambodia and Guinea still appear unresponsive and will therefore move a step closer to economic retaliation from the EU.

It is worth noting that whenever overfishing is perpetrated by a third country on stocks that are nonetheless shared with the EU, the Commission does not shy away from stopping all fish imports from that State too, as shown by the recent controversy with the Faroe Islands.

Meanwhile, many third countries, inspired by the EU's regime, are making changes in their systems. Ukraine, Morocco and Chile have each introduced certification schemes for fishing catches. And over the past three years more than 55 developing countries have received technical assistance from the EU for a total of EUR 32 million.

An important part of the EU's war is fought on the political front, to win over the other major fishing players as necessary allies, as with joint statements against IUU now signed with the USA and

(4) Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 of 29 September 2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing, amending Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1936/2001 and (EC) No 601/2004 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 1093/94 and (EC) No 1447/1999

(5) Such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea or the United Nations Fish Stock Agreement

(6) Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 672/2013 of 15 July 2013

(7) Commission Decision of 15 November 2012



Japan. To ensure transparency wherever the fish is caught, the EU is actively promoting the introduction of a 'global catch certificate'. The EU continues to work in all regional management organisations to eradicate illegal fishing and destructive practices — and with international organisations such as the FAO, the UN and Interpol — whilst supporting all actions aimed at the criminalisation of IUU activities at international level.

In the EU, we import 65% of the fish we eat. It is only natural that the strict rules we apply at home should also be upheld in all those areas that we fish in or import from. This applies to decent living and working conditions too: the crews employed by pirate outfits are often subject to abuse and human rights violations.

If the reformed Common Fisheries Policy heralds a new era of good maritime governance by phasing out discards, by bringing fishing down to sustainable levels and by decentralising management, zero tolerance towards overfishing or destructive and illegal practices remains more pivotal than ever, as any alternative would impair progress in each of those areas.

"Now that the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy is on track", said Commissioner Damanaki, "my priority goes back to fisheries control and enforcement."



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A sustainable fishing future at home and abroad

A new generation of Sustainable Fishing Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) come into force from 2013-2017, and with a new policy comes a new name. The key principle and keyword for these agreements, sustainability, now appears in the title to better reflect their ultimate objective.

It is no coincidence that the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy has brought significant changes in how SFPAs are established and implemented. For the EU the same principles and standards that apply to fleets in European waters should also apply abroad. And when fishing in third-country waters, adequate support must be provided to the local fisheries sector for its sustainable development.

The new agreements are therefore:

- science-based
- fair and sustainable
- governed by enforceable regulations
- strengthened in their monitoring and control framework
- fully transparent.

Improved administration is an important aspect of FPA reform. The EU is committed to a deeper analysis of the scientific basis of SFPAs, better evaluation of their progress, and transparency of information.

Strategies for more effective governance are a priority with the new

Catch fees are also being updated to reflect current market values which, given the escalating tuna prices over recent years, is a crucial move. The policies on access rights and catch fees are consistent with equity principles, such as removing hidden subsidies to private companies, and paying a fair price to third countries for their natural resources. Moreover, fisheries products harvested under SFPAs can be traced through the whole supply chain, for accountability and transparency purposes, and for the benefit of the consumer.

The new SFPAs also separate the EU's payment for access rights from its financial contributions to the partner country's fisheries. EU support to local fishing sectors will help to build the scientific, administrative and technical capacity of local partners for the sustainable development of their fisheries. There has been a strengthening in the governance of the agreements, in particular when it comes to human rights. The human rights clause in the new SFPAs is indicative of the EU's commitment to protect the same principles at home and abroad.

Beyond the focus on sustainability, SFPAs bring significant opportunities and benefits for both parties, which can evolve as the agreements progress.

The EU signed a new six-year Protocol to their FPA with the Seychelles on 10 May 2013 that guarantees the long-term continuity of the most significant tuna agreement for the EU in the Indian Ocean, both in

Sustainable Fishing Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) are bilateral agreements with coastal nations outside the EU, which allow European vessels to fish for surplus stocks in a partner country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In exchange for financial compensation, access rights are given whilst funding is put in place to promote sustainable fisheries development and general improvement of fishery governance.

SFPAs complement multilateral agreements, which cover commercial fishing in international waters. These are regulated by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs), and fall into two categories: tuna agreements, which allow EU vessels to fish for highly migratory species in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Ocean, and mixed agreements that provide the EU with access to a wide range of fish stocks (demersal, shrimps, pelagic, etc.) in partner countries.

agreements. Better monitoring of EU vessel activities is ensured through the Electronic Recording and Reporting System (ERS), an effective data-gathering tool that records what fishing fleets are catching. The ERS also strengthens the transparency of EU fishing operations in non-EU waters, and facilitates the sharing of information with partner countries, benefitting both parties.

The costs of accessing fishing rights in partner countries' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) are being re-balanced. Formerly, the EU financed around two-thirds of the costs, but under the new SFPAs ship owners will cover up to 70% of access fees for tuna agreements.

terms of the fishing opportunities it provides the EU fleet, and, in turn, the financial benefits derived by the Seychelles as a result of the EU's fleet activity in the region.

The new Protocol to the EU-Seychelles FPA, the largest tuna agreement currently in place, allows forty EU purse seiners and longline vessels to fish for tuna and other highly migratory species in the Seychelles EEZ. In return, the EU is paying over EUR 5 million annually for two years, half of which will support the Seychelles fisheries policy. The EU will then pay EUR 5 million annually for the remaining four years, half of which will again be allocated to the local fisheries sector.



Sectoral support funds specialised testing equipment to ensure that Seychelles fisheries products comply with EU food safety regulations and qualify for import. With this agreement, the Seychelles receives a fair income from their own resources, as well as EU assistance for the sustainable and long-term management of their fisheries. For instance, the EU has funded a new quay in Victoria, which allows for large purse seine vessels to land directly at the port. EU funding has also enabled the development of small-scale fish processing units for the use of the semi-industrial longline fleet, and has funded fleet capacity development.

Financial contributions within FPAs are targeted to the specific needs of partner countries. For instance, as part of the renewed EU-Ivory Coast FPA, a number of diverse initiatives have been funded, ranging from the provision of new aquaculture equipment in two operational stations, data collection of catch statistics in the EEZ, training for fishermen, and to the redevelopment of the fisheries ministry after the civil war.

Through these SFPAs the EU will continue the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU) and has already provided sectoral support to the Ivory Coast to improve its control infrastructure. EU funding is also earmarked for scientific research in the open seas, the installation of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) equipment and the training of new inspectors.

The next steps involve consolidating the new generation of FPAs and enlarging the network of active partnerships.

Built on a solid foundation of equity, sustainability, transparency and good governance, and evolving alongside European fisheries reform, the new generation of FPAs make better use of public money and focus on the real benefits for citizens in Europe and in partner countries. The focus will now be on expanding the number of active partnerships so as to promote internationally the EU's pro-active stance toward the conservation of marine resources.

State of play – EU Fishing Partnership Agreements

- 20 fisheries agreements
- 7 dormant agreements (no protocol in place)
- 12 active FPAs (ongoing protocols)
- 9 tuna FPAs
- 2 multi-species FPAs
- Recently completed negotiations with Morocco (multi-species agreement)
- New FPAs in the future

Full list of Fishing Partnership Agreements

Multi-species agreements	Tuna agreements West Africa	Tuna agreements Indian Ocean	Dormant agreements	Tuna agreements Pacific Ocean	Recently completed negotiations (multi-species agreement)
Greenland Mauritania	Ivory Coast Cape Verde São Tomé and Príncipe Gabon	Comoros Madagascar Mauritius Mozambique Seychelles	Gambia Guinea Guinea Bissau Equatorial Guinea Micronesia Senegal Solomon Islands	Kiribati	Morocco



IN THE NEWS

CCAMLR and Antarctic marine ecosystems

Antarctica's numerous air and ocean currents, and its vast ice shelves and waters, are home to rich and biodiverse ecosystems that give the region a global significance.

Whilst European discovery and subsequent exploration since the 19th century has opened Antarctica up to scientific study, it has also led to unregulated seal and whale hunting, excessive Antarctic krill fishing, military activity, and various national claims over the territory.

The Antarctic Treaty was the basis for unprecedented international cooperation in 1959, when twelve nations agreed to designate the area south of the 60th parallel as a scientific preserve for the conservation and study of its near-pristine marine ecosystems. Since then, military activities and exploitation, excluding marine resources, have been banned.

The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), a twenty-five member inter-governmental organisation that includes the EU and eight of its Member States, was established in 1982. It is responsible for the conservation and rational use of Antarctic marine living resources.

Guided by the cutting-edge research of its Scientific Committee, CCAMLR implements comprehensive conservation measures for marine ecosystem protection and sustainable fisheries management. These measures form part of a convention that evolved in response to scientists observing the effects of overfishing in the 60s and 70s, and the growing commercial interest in Antarctic krill, a key fish species in the Antarctic ecosystem.

In line with the ecosystem approach to fisheries management, Antarctic fisheries are managed by focusing on sustainability, and are supported by a regulatory framework, which helps to maintain existing ecological relationships. This approach protects stocks through harvesting targeted fish species, such as Antarctic and Patagonian toothfish, krill and mackerel icefish, as well as associated species in the same ecosystem.

This approach is further supported by Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), which seek to protect areas with exceptional marine biodiversity by establishing specific rules aimed at managing human activities.

MPAs have a two-fold purpose of nature conservation and fisheries management. CCAMLR, on the basis of an EU proposal, succeeded in

creating the first MPA in the area, on the South Orkney Islands' southern shelf, in 2009.

MPAs are also important for understanding the wider ecological picture such as the impacts of fishing and the effects of climate change.

East Antarctica contains some of the most diverse ecosystems on earth, with regions of open ocean and seabed diversity that provide habitat for marine mammals, penguins and seabirds, as well as spawning and nursery grounds for key fish species.

In line with its international commitments, and in recognition of Antarctica's global significance, the EU, with France and Australia, put forward a proposal for an East Antarctic Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (EARSMPA) at a CCAMLR Special Meeting on 15-16 July 2013 in Bremerhaven, Germany.

The EARSMPA proposal sought to designate seven conservation zones in significant ocean regions of East Antarctica. Its supporters are seeking to establish a representative system for all biogeographic areas in CCAMLR, working on the basis of the best available science. However, CCAMLR members failed to reach full agreement on this, and the EARSMPA proposal was blocked by Russia and Ukraine.

European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Maria Damanaki, said: *"It is disappointing that the support of the many for the protection of these areas was blocked by the few."* Commissioner Damanaki described the outcome as a missed opportunity, which she hopes can be rectified soon.

However, work is still to be done to reach a political consensus. Agreement from all members is needed to ratify the Antarctic MPA proposals, and the Bremerhaven meeting only served to highlight the difficulties in obtaining this.

The next opportunity for dialogue will be at CCAMLR's annual meeting in Hobart, Australia. The EU will continue to reaffirm its scientific and political commitment to the Antarctica region, and believes that the creation of East Antarctic MPAs can be secured through open and cooperative discussions.

The approach of officially recognising and protecting vulnerable, globally significant areas would usher in a new era in conservation and governance. It would also serve as a template for the use of best available science as the guiding force behind marine stewardship and international cooperation in Antarctica.

Croatia joins the family

Since 1 July, the Republic of Croatia has been a Member of the European Union. Coming just in time for the implementation of the new Common Fisheries Policy, this accession is an excellent opportunity for the country to make its fisheries sector more sustainable and its industry more robust and internationally competitive. The accession will facilitate commerce and mobility within the EU and unlock funding and technical assistance.

Located in the northernmost arm of the Mediterranean Sea, Croatia has one of the longest and most diverse coastlines in Europe, stretching from the Istrian Peninsula in the north to the Gulf of Kotor in the south. It is not surprising that maritime traditions and practices should be woven into the fabric of Croatia's culture.

Fishing is no exception. The country's sector is diverse, largely made up of small-scale fisheries, and economically important: capture fisheries, farming and processing employ approximately 14 000 people, while another 10 000 are indirectly involved in the wider sector (1).

The fisheries sector also contributes to a positive foreign trade balance to the economy (2). Croatia imports inexpensive species, such as herring, and exports high-value species, such as bluefin tuna, shipped directly to Japan.

The majority of Croatia's commercial fishing fleet are traditional vessels less than 12 metres long, using small-scale gear to fish close to shore. In 2011, purse seiners represented around 90% of the fleet while trawlers represented 6% of total catches, amounting to 70 535 tons (3).

Overfishing is an issue also in Croatia, and adaptations will be necessary to comply with the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and fall in line with the EU's overarching commitment to sustainability. To do so, Croatia will benefit from transitional regime. And the gradual phase-out of unsustainable fishing practices will be particularly aided by the new funding scheme starting January 2014.

Thanks to the accession, both current and future funds can also be directed towards aquaculture — a necessary and integral part of today's sustainable seafood supply.

Croatia's climate and exceptionally clean coastal and inland waters provide, in fact, excellent conditions for both freshwater and seawater aquaculture. And so both sectors have a lot to gain from embracing new technologies, developing new products and taking up marketing



tools like adequate labelling and branding for high-value niche products. EU funding will help increase production in key farming segments, such as European sea bass and gilthead sea bream, for which Croatia has long-standing tradition and know-how.

Over a thousand islands and summer sea temperatures often reaching 25 degrees make Croatia's coast a favourite destination for tourists. The sector is economically quite significant, amounting to 26.5% of the country's GDP (a figure that according to the World Travel and Tourism Council is bound to rise by 4.9% annually). Coastal and cruise tourism are the most significant segments, with the majority of visitors staying in seaside resorts. But passenger ferry services, short-sea shipping, yachting and marinas go hand in hand with that and are equally promising, with proper planning and investment. And this is precisely what the Blue Growth strategy — and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund as its financial arm — set out to do.

In sum, support from the EU will not only help modernise the fisheries sector but also, and especially, boost the wider maritime economy. Croatian tradition and expertise, coupled with the benefits of EU membership, will allow the nation to focus on sustainability and to gain the best competitive edge a country can have in the 21st century: steady, long-lasting growth.

(1) Source: Draft National Strategic Plan for Development of Fisheries in the Republic of Croatia, 2013, <http://www.mps.hr/ribarstvo/default.aspx?id=464>

(2) In 2011 alone, Croatia exported 38 493 tons of fish worth around EUR 130 million, including salted and fresh anchovies, sardines and fresh sea bass. Source: Draft Operational Programme for Fisheries of the Republic of Croatia for Programming Period 2007-2013, Zagreb 2013, <http://www.mps.hr/ribarstvo/default.aspx?id=464>

(3) Source: Draft Operational Programme for Fisheries of the Republic of Croatia for Programming Period 2007-2013, Zagreb 2013 + Croatian fleet register, snapshot of 5 July 2013

On the State of Fish Stocks

If the overriding objective of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy is the achievement of fishing at the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015, the situation in northern waters is already on track, and an evolving success story. The Mediterranean is a different story, as discussed in this year's seminar on the State of Fish Stocks in European Waters.

Since 2002, fishing mortality and fishing effort in the North-East Atlantic have decreased, Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) has been increasing, and a large number of stocks are consistent with MSY. Currently, 61% of assessed stocks are fished consistently with MSY, up from only 2% in 2005, 12% in 2008 and 53% in 2012. The European Union's approach to fisheries management, built on a scientific foundation with core principles of transparency, cooperation and good governance, has clearly paid off.

Furthermore, economic analysis shows improved profit in the North-East Atlantic despite higher fuel costs and lower catches, showing that higher-quality fish fetch higher prices.

European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Maria Damanaki, noted that *"Hard choices have been made in the northern seas, but stocks have improved and the industry has grown more profitable as a result. This is a vindication of the hard work put in by scientists and the fishing industry to protect and recover stocks."*

In contrast with the progress in the North-East Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic Sea, the situation in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea is worsening. In the Mediterranean, as much as 95% of fish stocks are being overexploited.

Admittedly, the Mediterranean is a more complex story, due to fishing vessels from North-African and Eastern Mediterranean countries also exploiting the stocks, meaning management measures have to be agreed for all.

However, even when the political and territorial complexities are factored in, progress in the Mediterranean is still far too slow. The EU believes that Member States and the Regional Advisory Council for the Mediterranean need to be more proactive and apply a more localised approach to overfishing. Effective action is needed, and there is no time to spare.

Scientists recommend that a number of measures be taken immediately: curbing fishing effort and catches to reduce fish mortality for all demersal fisheries; implementing a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) system for small pelagics; and modifying gear selectivity.

The Commission will continue to provide leadership incentives to get the Mediterranean fisheries on track to sustainability, but deeply regrets delays in the sustainable management of areas such as the Gulf of Lion, the Ligurian and Balearic Seas, and most of the Ionian and Tyrrhenian Basins.

The EU bases the management of fisheries on sound science. Data and findings gathered through scientific research are made publicly available so that the processes and decisions are fully transparent. The EU also facilitates the participation of the fishing sector and other stakeholders by presenting and discussing management plans and data in open forums, such as the Commission's annual seminar on the State of Fish Stocks in European Waters, where all interested parties and citizens are free to attend and contribute to discussions.

This year's seminar was held in Brussels on 17 September, and was attended by fishing industry representatives, environmental organisations, citizens and journalists. Scientists from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries presented the latest biological and economic information on the state of fish stocks in European waters, as well as the economic state of European fishing fleets.



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