



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General
for Fisheries

Summary of the structural measures
to assist the fishing industry in Belgium:
FIFG financing
and the Community initiative PESCA

European Union aid for the development of the fishing industry in Belgium (1994–99)

The fisheries sector in Belgium is going through a period of fundamental structural change. This is mainly due to scarcity of resources in Community waters and increased competition for markets.

In order to support actions undertaken at the national level, the European Union (EU) has made available approximately ECU 27 million (approximately BFR 1 000 million) to the industry, the organizations and public authorities for the period 1994–99.¹

These finances have been allocated through the FIFG (Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance) and cover the entire fisheries sector in Belgium: from fleet modernization to fishing port equipment, from aquaculture to the processing and marketing industries.

FIFG priorities and fields of action have been decided in partnership between the European Commission and the Belgian authorities by means of a single programming document. A limited intervention in the processing sector is also foreseen in the programming document for the province of Hainaut (covered by Objective 1 of the EU Structural Funds).

Another instrument is represented by the Community initiative PESCA, launched by the Commission with the aim of supporting the European coastal regions.

This publication summarizes:

- the content and the financial plans of the two FIFG programmes for Belgium (pages 3-6);
- the Belgian programme of the Community initiative PESCA (page 7);
- origin and goals of all the EU Structural Funds, particularly of the FIFG (page 8).

¹ How to apply for financial aid:
see pages 3 (FIFG) and 7 (PESCA).

The common fisheries policy of the European Union

The common fisheries policy (CFP) is at the core of the European Community's fishing industry. It covers all activities involved in the fishing and farming of living aquatic resources, as well as the processing and marketing sectors.

The policy has gone through a number of transformations since the first CFP decisions were adopted in 1970, and today it is centred on four major areas:

- (i) conservation of stocks
- (ii) organization of markets
- (iii) international agreements
- (iv) structural measures (subject of this publication).

Further information about the CFP can be found in:

- *The new common fisheries policy*, Luxembourg, EUR-OP, 1994 (in all EC languages; French version is ISBN 92-826-7571-8; Dutch version is ISBN 92-826-7573-4).
- *The common fisheries policy*, Information file, Brussels, EC Commission, DG XIV, 1994 (in English or French).

These publications may be ordered from:

European Commission
DG XIV—Fisheries
Rue de la Loi, 200
B-1049 Brussels
Fax (32-2) 299 48 17

The fisheries sector in Belgium: strengths and weaknesses

Belgium possesses a modest fleet of 156 vessels, the great majority of which specialize in beam trawling carried out in the flatfish fishing grounds in the North Sea and the English Channel.

The total engine power of the Belgian fishing fleet amounts to 66 000 kW as at 1 January 1996 and has declined by about 15% (expressed in engine power) since 1991.

There are three fishing ports along the Belgian coast: Zeebrugge, Oostende and Nieuwpoort.

The typical vessel, the 'Eurokotter', is of average size, between 15 and 24 metres long, with a power up to 221 kW).

A second group of beam trawlers comprises vessels between 25 and 40 metres long, with a maximum power of 882 kW.

A third group of otter trawlers fishes for demersal species (cod).

The yearly landings of the Belgian fishing fleet in the above three Belgian fishing ports are about 25 000 tonnes. In addition to that the Belgian fishing fleet lands about 8 000 tonnes in foreign harbours. More than 90% of the Belgian landings concern demersal species.

With regard to processing and marketing, the industry is largely dependent on imports. About 70% of the raw material used by the fish processing industry is imported. In recent years the processing of deep-frozen products has shown a particular increase.

As regards aquaculture, the most important species farmed are trout (about 800 tonnes), carp (about 600

tonnes), tilapia (about 200 tonnes) and clavia (about 150 tonnes). As for the processing of aquaculture products, the smoking of (imported) salmon and the processing of trout are of particular interest.

With respect to the fishing fleet, the main structural weaknesses can be summarized as:

- (a) a considerable part of the fleet consists of rather old vessels,
- (b) profitability of vessels less than 221 kW, beamtrawlers as well as other trawlers, is insufficient,
- (c) specialization and concentration on a very limited number of species (mainly plaice and sole) forms a particular risk.

A general problem is the adjustment of fishing effort, to achieve a better balance between the resources and the fishing effort deployed.

As for the marketing and processing sector, the landing pattern of the Belgian fishing fleet provides the processing sector with certain difficulties as the processing sector needs a continuous supply of raw material, whereas the landings cannot always meet these requirements.

The implementation of EC standards for hygiene and public health requires particular efforts and investments.

With regard to the fishing ports, existing facilities can handle bigger quantities than landed at present. Furthermore, the landings in Belgian fishing ports show considerable seasonal fluctuations which not only create problems for the fishing ports but also for the processing sector.

With respect to aquaculture the main point of focus is the intensive rearing of trout and carps. The limited availability of water of a suitable quality is a particular problem.

Structural interventions

1994-99: nine fields of action

The overall objective of structural measures is to make the fishing and aquaculture sector economically viable during the period 1994-99.

The implementation of structural policy shall contribute to a sustainable and environmentally friendly exploitation of available resources.

Another important objective is to secure sound economic and social conditions for the enterprises and the persons employed in the sector and to create a reasonable and stable income level.

Structural policy shall contribute to improved conditions as regards safety, hygiene and product quality.

The need for modernization and technological improvements in order to enhance the competitiveness on international markets is also underlined.

In the light of this situation, the structural interventions laid down by the two programmes for the fisheries sector in Belgium identify nine fields of action:

1. Adjustment of fishing effort

The aim of this scheme is to facilitate compliance with the targets of the Multiannual Guidance Programme (MAGP) for the fishing fleet through the implementation of two measures to reduce fishing effort:

- (a) permanent withdrawal of fishing vessels;
- (b) setting-up of temporary joint ventures or joint enterprises with third countries vessels owners, to re-orientate fishing activities towards non-EU waters.

These measures aim at achieving a better balance between the resources available and the fishing effort deployed.

Beneficiaries: owners of Belgian fishing vessels.

2. Fleet renewal and modernization

These measures will concentrate on investments mainly aimed at improving the hygiene and public health standards and at renewing the fishing fleet without increasing fishing effort.

The renewal of the fleet will be pursued by investment aimed at both building new vessels (2/3 per year) and modernizing the old ones (about 10 per year).

The improvement of the quality of catches will be another objective, in order to improve the hygiene and public health standards of the fish.

Beneficiaries: owners of Belgian fishing vessels.

3. Aquaculture

It is proposed to continue to provide scientific and technical advice and an appropriate level of financing to increase the production of fish and shellfish through aquaculture in order to ensure a regular supply and high quality of these species on the market.

The following measures will be set up:

- (a) modernization of the units, to increase the production, both off-shore and inland waters (10 new units are foreseen);
- (b) diversification of the products, to supply the market with new species (salmon, molluscs, shellfish, etc.);
- (c) protection of the environment, by improving the quality of water utilized by aquaculture units;
- (d) improvement in the health condition of the farmed fish, to comply with EU rules on this subject;
- (e) development of the potential of the sector, by supporting production services, infrastructure, etc.

Beneficiaries: fish and shellfish producers and processors.

(see page 5)

Access to financing and programming documents

In order to take part in the actions financed by FIGG, potential beneficiaries, who are indicated at the end of each field of action, should contact the competent Ministry (see last page for the address).

Single projects proposed by beneficiaries are expected to be in line with the envisaged aims.

The detailed description of the fields of action, aims and contents, is included in the two FIGG programming documents for Belgium:

- (a) for the province of Belgian Hainaut (Objective 1 of the Structural Funds): single programming document for Hainaut, axis 1.1 (relaunch of the economic activities, priority 9 (aquaculture industry));
- (b) for the rest of the country: the single programming document for Belgium, Objective 5a-Fisheries of the Structural Funds (non-Objective 1 areas)

These documents may be ordered from the addresses indicated on the last page.

For more information: *The European Community and the fishing industry. Practical guide to structural aid*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the EC, 1994 (French version: ISBN 92-826-7763-X; Dutch version: ISBN 92-826-7762-1).

Belgium — Entire territory except Hainaut¹

(million ECU)²

Fields of action	FIFG (1)	National public contribution (2)	Private sector (3)	Total (1+2+3)
1. Adjustment of fishing effort	5.20	5.20	—	10.40
2. Renewal/modernization of the fleet	7.88	3.94	27.58	39.40
3. Aquaculture	1.89	0.63	3.78	6.30
4. Enclosed sea-water areas	0.70	1.00	—	1.70
5. Fishing port facilities	1.52	1.20	1.08	3.80
6. Processing and marketing	5.91	3.94	29.55	39.40
7. Product promotion	1.18	1.18	—	2.36
8. Socioeconomic measures ³	—	—	—	—
9. Other measures	0.22	0.15	—	0.37
Total	24.5	17.24	61.99	103.73

Belgium — Hainaut¹

(million ECU)²

Fields of action	FIFG (1)	National public funding (3)	Private sector (4)	Total (1+3+4)
1. Processing/marketing and promotion of products	0.37	0.37	0.48	1.22

¹ Hainaut is covered by Objective 1 of the EU Structural Funds (areas whose gross national product per capita is less than 75% of the EU average).

² For information, based on monthly exchange rate in December 1995, ECU 1 = BFR 38.9.

³ These measures may be introduced following the modification of Council Regulation (EC) 3699/93 in November 1995. The amount allocated to them is still to be decided, but remains within the total financing allowed.

(from page 3)

4. Enclosed sea-water areas

The measure provides for the creation of a protected coastal area by putting fixed or mobile elements in the water.

Beneficiaries: public bodies, private investors.

5. Fishing port facilities

The aim of this measure is to modernize Belgian harbours so as to provide efficient, safe and hygienic facilities for the landing and handling of fish.

The requirements resulting from the EC directives on hygiene and public health standards form the main focus of investment.

FIFG intervention will co-finance:

- (a) material investments;
- (b) construction and repair of existing harbour quays, markets, storage;
- (c) investments in mooring, processing and servicing facilities.

Beneficiaries: public harbour authorities, privately owned harbours.

6. Product processing and marketing

It is planned to provide advice and the necessary pump-priming funding to promote development and particularly to ensure upgrading of facilities in line with Community directives on health and hygiene.

Four measures will be undertaken:

- (a) modernization/automation of infrastructures, processing systems and markets;
- (b) material investments to the processing industry, including the creation of new units;
- (c) diversification of the product processing, in order to maintain or increase the demand of sea-fish on the market;
- (d) (for Hainaut): support/modernization of the local industry producing the typical *escavêche* speciality, through trout and eel farming.

Beneficiaries: businesses processing and marketing fish, shellfish and aquaculture products.

7. Product promotion

The objective of this measure is to find and promote new market outlets for fishery and aquaculture products and to promote increased consumption on the home market.

The following actions will be co-financed:

- (a) promotion and sponsoring of campaigns, including those highlighting quality issues;
- (b) consumer surveys and market studies;
- (c) projects to test consumer reactions;
- (d) organization of and participation in trade fairs and exhibitions.

Beneficiaries: public bodies, private contractors, producers' associations.

(see page 6)

Legal references

FIFG (Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance):

- Council Regulation (EC) No 3699/93 of 21.12.1993 laying down the criteria and arrangements regarding Community structural assistance in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and the processing and marketing of its products (OJ L 346, 31.12.1993);

Modifications:

- Change of capacity: Council Regulation (EC) No 1624/95 of 29.6.1995, (OJ L 155, 6.7.1995);
- Socioeconomic measures (early-retirement schemes, compensatory payments): Council Regulation (EC) No 2719/95 of 20.11.1995 (OJ L 283, 25.11.1995);
- Adjustment of compensation schemes: Council Regulation (EC) No 965/96 of 28.5.1996 (OJ L 131, 1.6.1996).

- Council Regulation (EC) No 2080/93 of 20.7.1993, laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 as regards the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (OJ L 193, 31.7.1993);

Structural Funds:

Framework Regulation:

- Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/93 of 20.7.1993, amending Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 on the tasks of the Structural Funds and their effectiveness and on coordination of their activities between themselves and with the operations of the EIB and the other existing financial instruments (OJ L 193, 31.7.1993).

Coordination Regulation:

- Council Regulation (EEC) No 2082/93 of 20.7.1993 amending Regulation (EEC) No 4253/88 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 as regards coordination of the activities of the different Structural Funds between themselves and with operations of the EIB and the other existing financial instruments (OJ L 193, 31.7.1993).

(from page 5)

8. Socioeconomic accompanying measures

In order to minimize the negative effects of the reduction of the fleet, the Belgian authorities may decide to adopt two additional optional measures:

- (a) part-financing of national early-retirement schemes for fishermen, under certain conditions;
- (b) granting individual compensatory payments to fishermen leaving the profession.

Beneficiaries: fishermen.

9. Other measures

- (a) technical assistance.

In order to improve the decision-making basis and to ensure that FIFG funds are spent to best effect, the following actions will be undertaken: studies, pilot projects, technical monitoring of the implementation of the Belgian programme, etc.

- (b) temporary cessation of fishing activities.

According to Article 14 of the FIFG Regulation, income losses due to unforeseeable events reducing fishing activities may be partially re-funded.

Beneficiaries: (a) public and semi-public bodies, private companies;
(b) owners of Belgian fishing vessels.

1989-93: Success story

Council Regulation (EEC) No 4028/86 of 18 December 1986 on Community measures to improve and adapt structures in the fisheries and aquaculture sector provides in its Title VIII the possibility for the Commission to grant Community financial aid for material investment in the provision of facilities at fishing ports.

One of the projects for which the Commission has granted aid in Belgium during the previous programming period concerns the installation of facilities for the transport of ice for the supply of the fish auction and of the fishing vessels in Zeebrugge.

The project provides for material investment into a closed transport network from the ice factory to the vessels as well as to the fish auction.

The ice delivered from the factory to the vessel/fish auction does not come into contact with the open air and is therefore supplied under perfect hygiene conditions.

Another instrument: the Community initiative PESCA

The Community initiative PESCA is complementary to the structural aid described above. Its objectives are: to put the fishing industry into a condition where it can succeed in its own transformation; to help it cope with the social and economic consequences by providing aid for the redeployment of the workforce and diversification of the enterprises; to contribute to maintenance and creation of employment in the coastal areas.

The importance of PESCA lies less in the actual content of the possible schemes than in the way integrated, innovative projects can be devised and set in train by the participants in the local economy. PESCA may call on the combined possibilities of the FIG, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund.

The eligible measures under PESCA in Belgium are the following:

- setting-up of a coordination and information centre on PESCA: it will ensure the dissemination of

information on this Community Initiative as well as the efficient partnership between private enterprises, local bodies and EU authorities;

- specific actions undertaken by this centre: coordination and information system between different harbours and markets, activities in the field of labelling and quality of the products, reconversion schemes towards other activities (i.e. tourism), publications, pilot projects, etc.

The area covered is the coastal fishing zone of West Flanders, corresponding to the zone 'Westhoek, Middenkust, Zeevisserijgebied' (Objective 5b of the EU Structural Funds), enlarged to other littoral towns. The following towns are concerned: Nieuwport, Middelkerke, Ostende, Bredene, Oostduinkerke, De Haan, Blankenberge, Zeebrugge, Knokke-Heist.

The final beneficiaries of these measures may be: either collective, public or private bodies (regional or local authorities, Chambers of Commerce, fishermen's cooperatives, profit or non-profit-making organizations); or individual economic operators (craft enterprises, small and medium-sized businesses, fishermen and other workers in the fishing industry).

PESCA: practical guide

Both potential beneficiaries and other interested people may enquire at competent authorities for additional information on this Community Initiative from:

Ministry of the Flemish Community, Department EWBL-ALT Structures and Investments Unit, Av. du Boulevard 21, 10th floor, B-1210 Brussels. Tel. (32-2) 211 74 24 or 211 74 28 Fax (32-2) 211 72 09.

The complete text of the PESCA programme for Belgium may be ordered from the competent authorities (see above) or from the European Commission, DG XIV (see address on the last page).

The Commission communication on the whole Community initiative PESCA (94/C 180/01) was published in OJ C 180, 1.7.1994.

PESCA — Belgium

(million ECU)

Area	EU Structural Funds	National public funding	Private sector	Total
Coordination/ information centre	1	1	—	2
Specific activities	1	2	0.25	2.25
Total ¹	2 ¹	2	0.25	4.25 ¹

¹ ECU 0.45 million of EU contribution have been added to the total at the end of 1995, under the heading of the Community initiatives reserve.

The FIFG

Tasks of the FIFG

To help the fisheries sector solve the problem of overcapacity of the Community fleet.

To improve the structures of the European fishing and aquaculture industry and enhance its international competitiveness.

Areas for action

adjustment of fishing effort
modernization of the fleet
development of aquaculture
protection of marine coastal areas
provision of fishing port facilities
processing and marketing
product promotion
grants for fishermen leaving the sector
other measures (technical assistance, etc.).

Community financing

Depending on the category of investment, the Community contribution may be up to 75 or 50% of eligible expenditure in the Structural Funds Objective 1 regions, and up to 50 or 30% in other regions.

How to apply

It is up to project sponsors to apply to their national or regional authorities to integrate their projects into Community programmes, so that FIFG financing will be available.

Useful addresses:

**Ministerie van Landbouw
Bestuur der economische diensten**
Manhattan Centre – Office Tower
Bolwerklaan 21
B-1049 Brussels
Tel. (32-2) 211 72 11
Fax (32-2) 211 72 16

**European Commission
Directorate-General XIV–Fisheries**
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels
Fax (32-2) 296 30 33



European Commission
Directorate-General for Fisheries

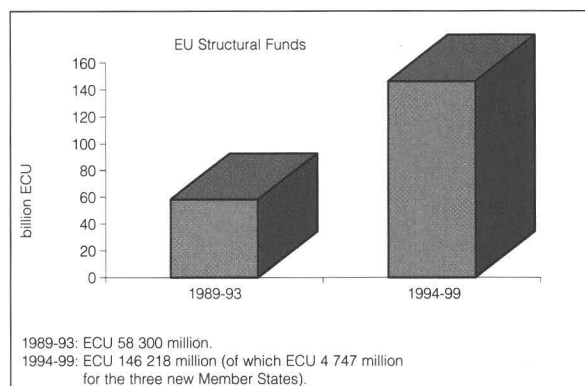
Editor: EC, DG XIV

This publication does not necessarily express the official views of the Commission.

For further information, please send a fax to (32-2) 296 73 60.

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

Printed on recycled paper.



The EU Structural Funds

To promote harmonious development throughout the European Union, the Single Act of 1987 and the Treaty of Maastricht of 1993 introduced the goal of economic and social cohesion, to be achieved by a concentration of financial aid on six priority objectives:

- Objective 1: structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind;
- Objective 2: converting regions seriously affected by industrial decline;
- Objective 3: combating long-term unemployment, contributing to the occupational integration of young people and of those threatened with exclusion from the labour market;
- Objective 4: facilitating workers' adaptation to industrial changes;
- Objective 5a: speeding up the adjustment of agricultural and fisheries structures;
- Objective 5b: development of rural areas;
- Objective 6: development of areas with low population density.

To achieve these objectives, assistance is available from the EU Structural Funds:

- (a) the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF);
- (b) the European Social Fund (ESF);
- (c) the Guidance Section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF);
- (d) the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG).

Other possible Community sources of financing include Cohesion Fund grants, and European Investment Bank loans.