



European
Commission



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FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN EUROPE

- ✧ **2013: the Year of the Fisheries Reform**
- ✧ Maritime spatial planning: a law in the offing
- ✧ Regional strategy: the Adriatic tackles its future
- ✧ TACs 2013: focus on maximum sustainable yield
- ✧ Aquaculture: national plans on the horizon

Shows and exhibitions

European Seafood Exposition, Brussels (Belgium), 23-25 April 2013

Website: www.euroseafood.com
E-mail: customerservice@divcom.com
Tel.: +1 207 842 55 04

Slow Fish, Genova (Italy), 10-13 May 2013

Website: www.slowfish.it
E-mail: info@slowfood.it
Tel.: +39 0172 41 96 11

Conferences and meetings

IOTC, Annual Session, Maputo (Mozambique), 6-10 May 2013

Website: www.iotc.org
E-mail: secretariat@iotc.org
Tel.: +248 422 54 94

European Maritime Day, Stakeholders Conference, Valetta (Malta), 21-22 May 2013

Website: www.emd2013.gov.mt
E-mail: emd2013@gov.mt
Tel.: +356 2220 9999

Institutional agenda

European Parliament Committee on Fisheries

Website: www.europarl.europa.eu
E-mail: ip-PECH@europarl.europa.eu
Tel.: +32 2 284 49 09 (Brussels, Belgium)
or +33 3 88 17 67 69 (Strasbourg, France)
• 22-23 April 2013, Brussels (Belgium)
• 29-30 May 2013, Brussels (Belgium)
• 17-18 June 2013, Brussels (Belgium)

Agriculture and Fisheries Council of the European Union

Website: www.consilium.europa.eu
• 22-23 April 2013, Luxembourg (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg)
• 13-14 May 2013, Brussels (Belgium)
• 24-25 June 2013, Luxembourg (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg)

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We welcome your comments or suggestions at the following address:
European Commission – Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries –
Information, communication, inter-institutional relations, evaluation
and programming Unit – Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200 – B-1049 Brussels
or by fax to: (+32) 2 297 95 64 with reference to
Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe.
E-mail: fisheries-magazine@ec.europa.eu

- Website of Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
> http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/damanaki/index_en.htm
- Application: the European Maritime Atlas > http://ec.europa.eu/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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Illustrations (*Ostrea edulis/Crassostrea gigas* – *Ruditapes decussatus/Ruditapes philippinarum*): © Scandfish

The common fisheries policy is undergoing major surgery – and it is not just cosmetic

At the time of going to press, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament had each taken a stance on the proposed regulations for a new common fisheries policy (CFP). Though this is merely the first step in a lengthy negotiation process, it already points us towards the direction the future policy might take: EU Member States and MEPs alike backed many of the ideas and principles that the Commission had tabled and which make up the essence of this reform.

They endorsed the fundamental principles of conservation and sustainable management, so much so that fishing sustainably and banning discards are likely to be the major priorities over the next few years; everybody seems to want more and better long-term plans that respect the ecosystem and extend to whole fisheries rather than single stocks. This 'greener' approach to fishing would not be micro-managed at EU level: only general principles and targets would be defined centrally, while Member States would develop concrete ways to meet those targets on their own – and they would do so in a region-specific way, building on their own traditions and know-how, and in cooperation with industry and other interested parties. Advisory Councils, including a new one for aquaculture, will be pivotal to this policy-making process.

The only element of the Commission's proposal that did not get through was the one that advocated a system of transferable fishing concessions for quota and fleet management. This means that alternative fleet adjustment mechanisms will have to be negotiated if we are to redress the ever-important balance between the fleet and the available natural resources.

In the next few months, Council and Parliament will be negotiating with each other, with the Commission acting as mediator. Among the unknowns, the division of responsibilities on setting harvesting frameworks in long-term plans and the two institutions' respective stance on the proposal for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which is key to making the reform work.

But, generally speaking, we believe there are grounds for optimism. At the end of the process, and provided we find a cure for overfishing, our seas and stocks would be healthy again; the industry would look forward to steady growth; and consumers would be able to choose from an ample selection of fish that is sourced sustainably.

The Editor



© Biosphoto

The Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union aims at reaching a political agreement on the CFP reform package before 30 June 2013.

FACT FILE

The common fisheries policy reform

2013: the Year of the Fisheries Reform

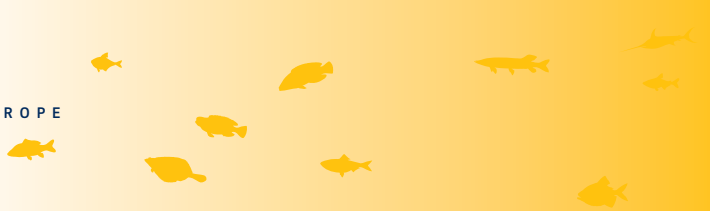
The 'reform package' for the common fisheries policy (CFP) has entered an important negotiation phase. On the basis of the European Commission's proposals, the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission will try to work out an agreement as early as possible in 2013, so that the new policy can come into force no later than 2014. The earlier the new rules apply, the earlier the EU will meet its sustainability objectives.

The European Commission had tabled three legislative proposals and an orientation paper in 2011. Now that the Council and the European Parliament have each developed their own negotiation position in a first reading of the proposals, they can start negotiating with each other. Read on to see how the new basic regulation reforming the CFP, the regulation on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and the new international approach were received by the major EU institutions.

Basic regulation: the stance of the European Parliament...

In February, the European Parliament's plenary adopted a report, prepared by Ulrike Rodust MEP, that clearly supports the principles proposed by the Commission: managing stocks according to maximum sustainable yield (MSY) as from 2015, introducing a progressive ban on discards from 2014 onwards, bringing more fish stocks under multiannual plans, improving governance, decentralising decision making and strengthening stakeholder consultation with additional advisory councils. The idea of encouraging proper enforcement by Member States through financial incentives is also endorsed. Not so for the new system of fleet management, which is rejected in favour of improving the existing mechanisms.

Overall, the European Commission welcomes the report of the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee. *'This is unquestionably a major step forward toward an ambitious CFP reform,'* commented Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.



...and the Council's position

In June 2012, under the Danish Council Presidency⁽¹⁾, the Council of Ministers had worked out a 'general approach' that did not question the substance of the Commission's approach: they agreed on the discard ban with slightly different dates; they agreed on MSY, but with a more flexible timeframe that extends the transitional period to 2020 for particularly challenging cases; and they said yes to decentralised governance and to transferable fishing concessions for fleet management, but on a voluntary basis only.

Next steps

In the phase now opening up, the Council Presidency – acting on behalf of the Council – and a delegation from the Parliament's Fisheries Committee will have to find common ground, formulate compromises and eventually strike an overall deal through a number of meetings, with the European Commission acting as mediator. Negotiations may last for a few months and should result in a text that has the support of all three institutions.

Ireland, currently holding the Council Presidency, has declared the CFP reform a priority and hopes to wrap up a deal by the end of its six-month term in June.

The proposal for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

Much like the CFP proposal, the EMFF proposal is currently working its way through the legislative process so as to enter into force on 1 January 2014. The EMFF will replace the European Fisheries Fund, which expires on 31 December 2013.

At the Council meeting of October 2012, the Member States' Fisheries Ministers adopted a partial general approach on the actions that the new Fund should support. Discussions focussed among others on fleet subsidies.

According to the Commission's proposal, public funding for both vessel scrapping and the temporary cessation of fishing activities should be discontinued. Auditing studies have revealed that this type of aid has failed to achieve the objective of adapting the EU fleet's fishing capacity to the available fish resources.

Stopping these subsidies would free up sizeable amounts of money that could be redirected towards the new objectives of the CFP. Indeed, the move towards sustainable fishing, the reduction of unwanted catches and the landing obligation would warrant financial support for more selective gear and fishing techniques as well as innovative

Advisory Councils to advise on own future

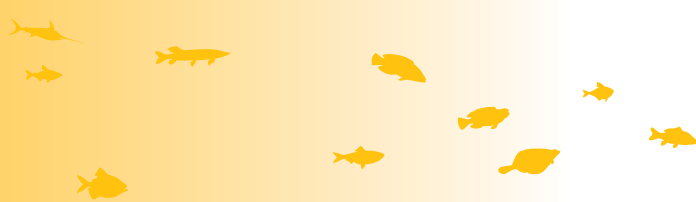
The European Commission recently consulted the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) on the role they should play in the context of the CFP reform. The results of the consultation are expected in spring 2013, but in the meantime the Commission has been exchanging views with RAC members in regular meetings. The preliminary outcome is that members wish to move forward towards the regionalisation of fisheries governance. They would also like to contribute optimally to the new decision-making framework, and request easier access to scientific data. Representatives of the aquaculture sector in particular are keen to kick-off the future Advisory Council on aquaculture.

RACs were created in 2002 to give fishermen, traders, processors, labour organisations, environmental and consumer groups, and other interested parties the right to be involved with EU decisions on fisheries management in a structured way and at regional or sea-basin level.

Seven RACs were created between 2004 and 2009 and they have usefully contributed to policy making ever since. The Commission has made it clear in its reform proposals that RACs are here to stay and that their role is to be enhanced.

The reform of the CFP tabled by the Commission breaks down the current centralised management system and delegates some of the practical implementation details to the Member States and regions. The European Union would fix overall objectives and the deadlines to achieve them, while Member States and their stakeholders would draw up implementation strategies and apply concrete measures to reach those targets, which would therefore be appropriately tailored to each region and each fishery. Clearly, Advisory Councils would be instrumental to such regional processes and their functioning rules should be revised in this sense.

(1) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 58, p. 8.



marketing and processing. Funding is also required to improve data collection, to foster cooperation between fishermen and scientists, and to monitor compliance. The Commission's proposal also foresees renewed support for aquaculture and for the sustainable development of coastal areas (2).

For the Member States, however, scrapping aid should only be phased out by 2017, while temporary cessation of fishing and engine replacement should still receive modest amounts under strict conditions.

'Of course, our proposal is more ambitious,' commented Maria Damanaki, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. *'It puts an end to the ineffective subsidies of the past, which did nothing against overfishing or the economic decline of the fishing sector.'* Commissioner Damanaki nevertheless expressed satisfaction that the Council's position supports the key objectives of the Commission, i.e. to make the fisheries sector become more sustainable and innovative, thus increasing its profitability and to boost aquaculture.

But before that can happen, Parliament has to adopt its own position on the EMFF proposal. French MEP Alain Cadec, the rapporteur on this proposal, will have to strike a balance between the 2000-plus amendments tabled by his colleagues in the Fisheries Committee and convince the majority of its 25 members. The Committee is scheduled to vote on the draft report by Mr Cadec in May, while the European Parliament's plenary vote is scheduled for July 2013.

For the EMFF proposal time is of the essence even more than with the other CFP regulations. The Fund is part and parcel of the Common Strategic Framework, a comprehensive legal framework grouping all the major European Funds (3). It therefore has to be implemented simultaneously with other EU Structural Funds (4), starting on 1 January 2014.

Discard ban in the Skagerrak

Both the EU and Norway border the Skagerrak, a relatively small area, which means that the respective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) do not extend far from the coastlines. Many of the traditional fisheries in the Skagerrak regularly cross the boundary between EU and Norwegian waters, something that since the 1960s has been facilitated by the Skagerrak Agreement (5) between the EU and Norway, whereby Swedish and Danish vessels were allowed to fish to within four nautical miles of the Norwegian coast, while remaining under EU fisheries legislation. Similarly, Norwegian vessels were able to fish to within four nautical miles of the Swedish and Danish coasts, while remaining under Norwegian fisheries legislation.

Recently, Norway decided to revoke this Agreement, arguing that it is not compatible with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (6). That means that vessels from the EU and Norway will now have to comply with coastal state fisheries legislation in the Skagerrak.

To avoid disrupting the traditional fisheries in the Skagerrak, the EU and Norway have worked to harmonise their technical measures and control legislation.

One area where EU legislation is very different from Norwegian legislation concerns discards. Norway currently prohibits the discarding of many species, and stipulates that any fish of those species caught in its waters must be landed. This is incompatible with EU legislation, which requires that under-size or over-quota fish be discarded. This means that EU vessels operating in Norwegian waters would have to either contravene Norwegian legislation by discarding fish caught there when they return to EU waters, or contravene EU legislation by retaining on board under-size fish or fish in excess of quota.

For this reason, a discard ban is proposed in a specific Regulation for the Skagerrak, alongside all the other changes to technical measures and control measures that are needed to harmonise EU and Norwegian rules in the area. It will therefore be introduced in advance of a wider ban under the reform of the CFP. The ban does not simply adopt the Norwegian model; Norway too has had to change the rules of its own discard ban in order to arrive at a common set of rules in the Skagerrak.

The proposed Skagerrak Regulation began its legislative course last summer and is following the co-decision procedure. The obligation to land all catches will enter into force in two phases: From 1 January 2015 for 15 of the main species, with a further 22 species to be added to the list from 1 January 2016.

(2) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 55, pp. 4-7.

(3) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 57, p. 7.

(4) The European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

(5) Agreement on Reciprocal Access to Fishing in the Skagerrak and the Kattegat. Entry into force: 7 August 1967.

(6) http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm

Oyster

Ostrea edulis



Crassostrea gigas



Biology

Nowadays the culture of the native flat oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) is very limited in Europe. Over exploitation and disease have led to its depletion. The Pacific cupped oyster (*Crassostrea gigas*), native to Japan, was brought to Europe in the 1970s. Thanks to its rapid growth and adaptability to different surroundings, the Pacific cupped oyster is now the most widely reared oyster worldwide, including Europe. This species is now subject to significant mortality in several Member States. It has started to reproduce in the wild in northern EU Member States, where previously it did not, leading to fouling in a few coastal regions.

Oysters are hermaphrodites and change sex, maturing first as males and then as females. Reproduction depends on the temperature and salinity of the water. Before settlement the larvae spend some time at the pelagic stage and can be widely dispersed by water currents. Then they change shape, taking on the juvenile forms of the bivalve shellfish illustrated above. Oysters are filter feeders.

Farming

Production starts by the collection of spat (*oyster larvae*) in their natural setting. To gather the wild spat, oyster farmers use collectors placed at strategic locations. When the spat have grown to a few millimetres, they are removed from the collectors and are ready for rearing. However, a large share of spat now comes from hatcheries. In this case the broodstock is maintained in sea-based facilities. The oysters release their gametes in spring when the water temperature is high. The larvae are placed in closed-circuit tanks and fed cultured algae. When the larvae are about to settle on a support, they are 'collected' by placing a clean, solid settlement substrate in the tank.

The kind of oyster-rearing method used depends on both the environment (tidal range, water depth, etc.) and tradition. Along the Atlantic coastlines of France, oysters are mainly produced by 'off-bottom culture'; the oysters are placed in plastic mesh bags attached to low shore trestles. 'Bottom culture', where the oysters are placed directly on the shore or below low water, is less widespread today. 'Suspended culture', where oysters are reared on ropes like mussels, is found in Spain; this method is suitable for rearing in waters without tides, or offshore. Another method, 'deep-water culture' consists of placing the oysters in parks that can be located in depths of up to ten metres.

Oysters reach commercial size after 18 to 30 months. Harvesting methods vary, depending on the type of culture: oysters grown in off-bottom culture are harvested by removing the oyster bags from the trestles; oysters reared in bottom culture are collected at low tide using rakes or by dredging (if the water level allows); oysters reared in deep water are collected by dredges.

Production and trade

Worldwide, aquaculture accounts for 97% of total oyster production. China is by far the largest producer, with 80% of total world production, followed by Korea, Japan, the USA and the EU. The EU is self-sufficient as regards oysters and trade flows with third countries are insignificant. Intra-EU trade is also quite limited, and is concentrated on flows from France to Italy. The French market is the largest market for oysters in the EU.



Presentation on the market

More than half of oyster consumption takes place during the Christmas season. They are pre-graded by size into traditional wood-chip punnets (circular or rectangular), and they have to be opened prior to consumption. So far attempts to develop ways of selling pre-opened oysters or easy-opening oysters have failed. European consumers prefer to eat oysters uncooked.

Nutritional value per 100 g (Pacific cupped oyster – average)

Calories: 66 kcal

Protein: 8.6 g

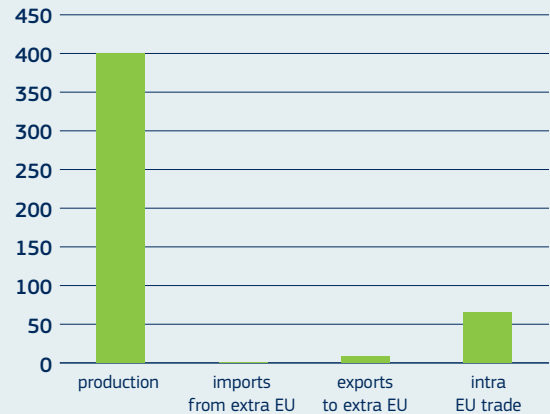
Selenium: 29 µg

Vitamin D: < 0.5 µg

EPA: 146 mg

DHA: 71 mg

EU oyster supply and trade* (2009) (million EUR)



* from fishery and aquaculture.

Source: Eurostat.

Oysters au gratin

Ingredients (serves 4)

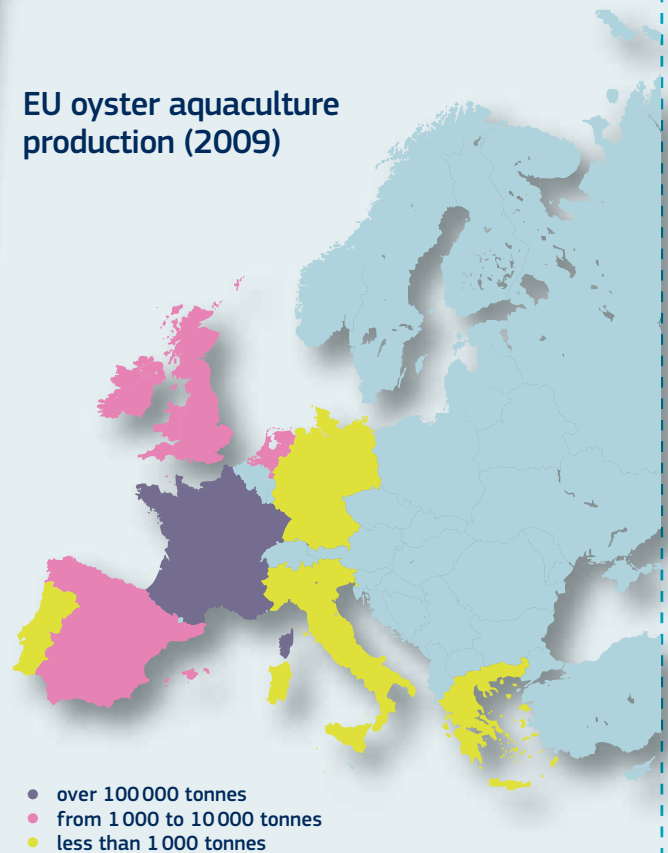
- 24 cupped oysters of around 70-80 g
- 30 g butter
- 1 shallot
- 25 g plain flour
- 10 cl dry white wine
- 1 lemon
- 1 egg
- A little crushed black pepper
- 5 cl crème fraîche 40% fat content

Instructions

1. Open the oysters and remove them carefully from their shells, keeping the liquid.
2. Cook the oysters in a pan, in their liquid, taking the pan off the heat when it comes to the boil.
3. Lightly fry the chopped shallot in butter.
4. Add the flour and mix together well.
5. Add some of the oyster liquid, white wine, lemon juice and some of the crushed pepper. Do not add salt.
6. When the sauce boils, strain it and make sure it has the right consistency.
7. Blend the egg yolk and the crème fraîche and add this mixture to the sauce.
8. Place the oysters back into their shells and cover them with the sauce.
9. Grill until they are golden brown. Serve.

Recipe courtesy of chef Philippe Votquenne (Euro-Toques Belgium)

EU oyster aquaculture production (2009)



Source: Eurostat.

Clam

Ruditapes decussatus



Ruditapes philippinarum



Biology

Ruditapes decussatus, the common European species of clam is reared on the Atlantic coast of France, Spain, Portugal and Ireland, and in the Mediterranean basin.

Ruditapes philippinarum, the Japanese clam, is distributed widely in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Over the last 30 years, it has been introduced along large parts of the European coastline, from the United Kingdom to the Mediterranean basin. It has become the main clam reared in Europe, where in certain areas it has an established wild population.

Unlike some other bivalve shellfish, clams are of either sex (male or female). In spring, reproduction can be artificially conditioned by higher temperatures and abundant food.

Clams feed by filtering organic matter and plankton from the seawater through two siphons.

Farming

In Europe, most of the seed of both European and Japanese clams is collected from the wild. Nevertheless, it can also be produced in hatcheries, where spawning is stimulated by thermal shock, adding sperm or stripping. The fertilised eggs are filtered through mesh and then kept in different types of container until they reach the larvae stage. Clams are fed with microalgae until metamorphosis takes place.

European clams can be reared in nurseries with a controlled feeding system using unicellular algae. Alternatively they can be farmed in meshed containers over culture tables. In Italy Japanese clams are mainly pre-grown on wooden frames covered by plastic netting located below water. In Ireland the nurseries consist of mesh bags on trestles around areas of low spring tide. Clams should be graded to ensure that all the shellfish are of similar size. The aim is to avoid competition for food, which would lead to slower growth of the smaller clams.

Growing techniques for the European clam require regular maintenance of the substrate. Algae and predators (such as crabs or starfish) must be removed and the substrate must receive adequate oxygen. It is important to maintain an appropriate density of clams.

Japanese clams are preferably grown on tidal sites protected from extreme winds, waves and tides. However, certain oyster ponds may be used to grow clams. Before seeding, the area must be prepared and cleaned so as not to attract predators. The clams are covered by mesh, which helps protect them from predators. A planting machine has been developed in Europe which ploughs in the netting and sows the seed simultaneously. Nets must be cleaned regularly in order to avoid fouling organisms, siltation and the infiltration of predators.

Depending on the carrying capacity of the environment, clams grow to 40 mm in about two to three years.



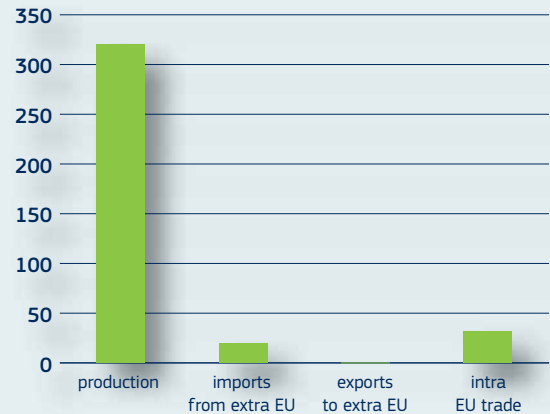
Production and trade

Clams production is dominated by China, which accounts for 98% of the worldwide supply. Other significant producers are the EU and Korea. Within the EU, Italy is by far the main clam producer before Portugal, France and Spain. In Italy, practically all clam farming takes place in the lagoons of the north-east Adriatic and in the Po river delta. Part of the production from these areas of Italy comes from a more or less controlled stock management regime. Extra-EU trade is quite limited, with a few imports from South Korea to Spain and Portugal. Intra-EU trade is also limited, with minor flows from France and Italy to Spain.

Presentation on the market

Clams are sold live, in the form of graded, whole-shelled products, either loose or in mesh bags. They are either eaten raw as a starter or, more usually, as an ingredient in cooked dishes, particularly in Italian cuisine.

EU clam supply and trade* (2009) (million EUR)



* from fishery and aquaculture.

Source: Eurostat.

Clams in a herb sabayon sauce

Ingredients (serves 4)

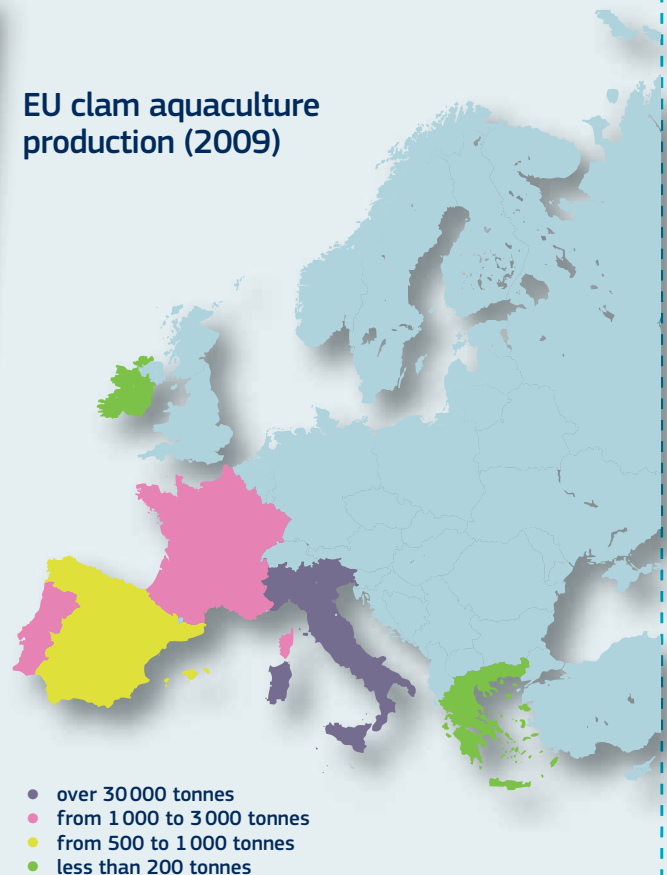
- 36 large clams
- 20 cl dry white wine
- 3 egg yolks
- 100 g butter
- 2 tablespoons of chopped chervil
- 2 tablespoons of chopped coriander
- Pepper

Instructions

1. Wash and drain the clams well.
 2. Put a saucepan onto a high heat, add the clams and cover.
 3. Allow the clams to open, shaking them around from time to time.
 4. Add the white wine and boil for 3 minutes.
 5. When the clams are open, take them out of the pan using a skimmer.
 6. Discard the empty half-shells and place the full ones on a baking tray.
- Preparation of the sabayon sauce**
7. Strain the clam liquid.
 8. Whisk the egg yolks in a saucepan on a bain-marie. Very carefully add the strained liquid and whisk the mixture for 2 minutes. Do not add salt.
 9. Add the melted butter, at a temperature of about 36°C, whisking all the time.
 10. Add the pepper and the herbs and take the pan off the heat.
 11. Pour the sabayon sauce into the clam shells.
 12. Grill for 1 minute and serve immediately.

Recipe courtesy of chef Philippe Votquenne (Euro-Toques Belgium)

EU clam aquaculture production (2009)



Source: Eurostat.



Halting public subsidies for vessel scrapping would free up sizeable amounts of funding that could be redirected towards the new objectives of the CFP, for example the development of more sustainable fishing techniques.

Bold action in the international arena

Part of the reform package was a new approach⁽⁷⁾ on the international aspects of the common fisheries policy contained in a Communication⁽⁸⁾.

As one of the world's major players in the catch and trading of seafood, the EU carries a strong responsibility and has a duty to project the standards and principles of the CFP into the rest of the world. To do so, it has to act at various levels: globally, in the framework of the major international organisations (UN⁽⁹⁾, FAO and OECD⁽¹⁰⁾); regionally, in the context of regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs); and bilaterally, through closer dialogue with key partners and partnership agreements with third countries.

The Council of Fisheries Ministers endorsed this approach in March 2012, with conclusions that echo the Commission's orientations on the fight against illegal fishing, on improving the effectiveness of RFMOs and on global governance. The Council sees Fisheries Partnership Agreements as a way to promote long-term resource conservation, good governance and the sustainable development of other countries' fisheries sectors.

In the European Parliament, the report drawn by Swedish MEP Isabella Lövin was adopted with a near majority in the fisheries committee in September 2012; two months later, the plenary session confirmed the

vote. MEPs share the key elements of the Commission's approach and even suggest broadening the scope to Europe's development and trade policies. They also advocate a global catch and traceability documentation scheme to combat illegal fishing, enhanced capabilities for RFMOs and higher shares to be paid by vessel owners under Fisheries Partnership Agreements.

Both the Parliament and Council called for more coherence between the external dimension of the CFP and other EU external policies. With this strong backing from both institutions, the Commission started immediate action to implement the new approach.

In all RFMOs of which the Commission is a member⁽¹¹⁾, it is working very hard to make fisheries management more sustainable, control more effective, and to improve the scientific data that underpin management decisions. It has stepped up dialogue with key partners such as the USA and Japan, with which it signed joint statements to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU). The Ocean's chapter of the Rio+20 document⁽¹²⁾ – 'The future we want' – reflects many of the Commission's basic objectives for sustainable fisheries management, such as the need to address discards. Similarly, recent Fisheries Partnership Agreements and protocols are increasingly based on a rigorous identification of surplus resources, on the pre-requisite of the respect of human rights, and on a higher financial contribution by vessel owners to the cost of access to third-country waters.

(7) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 58, pp. 3-7.

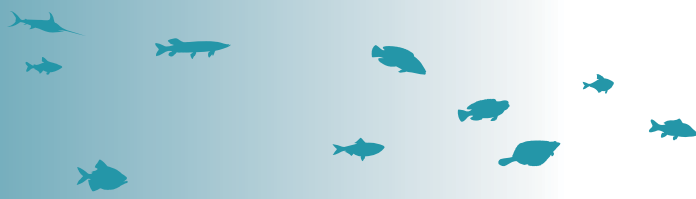
(8) COM (2011)424.

(9) United Nations, www.un.org

(10) Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, www.oecd.org

(11) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 58, pp. 4-7.

(12) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 58, p. 9.



TACs 2013: progressing towards MSY

Following marathon negotiations, the Fisheries Council of 18 and 19 December 2012 set total allowable catches for Atlantic and Black Sea stocks. The commitment to achieving maximum sustainable yield (MSY) dominated discussions, which focused on the pace at which this target should be achieved. Due to socio-economic constraints, the Council opted in some cases for delaying the achievement of MSY objectives beyond 2015.

Since 2011, the need to ensure MSY by 2015 has set the tone for the annual fixing of total allowable catches (TACs). Achieving MSY is not only a means of maintaining stocks at their most productive fishing levels on a permanent basis, but also an international commitment agreed at the 2002 United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa. It is also one of the key aims of the reform of the common fisheries policy (CFP).

In keeping with its spring 2012 Communication on fishing opportunities, the European Commission drew up its TAC proposals based on the MSY target⁽¹⁾. The Commission sought to speed up the shift towards MSY to guarantee that unexpected circumstances do not prevent the EU achieving the target by 2015. It therefore proposed to implement fishing levels that would bring exploitation to MSY rates already from 2013. Specifically, it proposed a large reduction in TACs for over-exploited stocks while maintaining the 2012 fishing levels for stocks already fished at MSY rates.

2013 or 2015?

The choice between 2013 and 2015 as target dates to achieve MSY was debated at length at December 2012's Council of Fisheries Ministers. The Council did not dispute the need to progress towards MSY, but preferred to maintain a pace that would result in reaching MSY for most stocks in 2015 and no later than 2020 for a limited number of stocks. This position is in line with the general approach adopted by the Council in June 2012 as part of the CFP reform. A slower pace for the MSY target is a trade-off for large cuts in quotas that could have worsened the problem of discards.

The Commission expressed its satisfaction with the Council's support for maintaining the MSY target and following scientific advice: *'The Commission proposal was more ambitious,'* commented Maria Damanaki, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, *'but I think the outcome is satisfactory. Only for four stocks will Maximum Sustainable Yield be reached in 2017: this is to avoid discards. This is a good message for our fishermen and for our citizens. We can have healthy stocks, more jobs and more income for our coastal communities. It can be done.'*

The debates concerned only those stocks not regulated by fisheries management plans. Stocks for which multiannual plans exist follow the plan's requirements and evolve according to scientific advice. The ministers nevertheless debated the cod plan for the North Sea and West of Scotland. The Council unanimously agreed to amend the plan and use the amended provisions to maintain for 2013 the same limits in fishing days as for 2012.

Most of the TACs proposed by the Commission were consequently increased, while remaining within the margins of manoeuvre stemming from the scientific advice and the requirements of progressing towards MSY except for one case: Norway lobster in the Irish Sea. The ban on cod fishing off western Scotland – but with a rule permitting the landing of by-catches – will be maintained in 2013. Furthermore, there are significant reductions in TACs for herring in the West of Scotland and West of Ireland (-65%), cod in the Kattegat and the Irish Sea (-25%), haddock in the West of Scotland (-30%) and common sole in the Irish Sea (-53%). However, an increase in fishing opportunities was agreed for certain stocks. Among the largest are Norway lobster in the West of Scotland (+18%), plaice in the Eastern Channel (+26%) and sole in the Western Channel (+15%).

Black Sea

Turbot and sprat are the two species subject to TACs in the Black Sea. For these species, ministers decided to roll over last year's fishing opportunities, i.e. 11 475 tonnes for sprat and 86.4 tonnes for turbot. For the latter species, the Council did not endorse the Commission's proposed 15% reduction. The Council also pointed out the need to establish regional cooperation among all Black Sea rim states to ensure common and sustainable management of resources.

(1) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 57, p. 11.



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The strategy proposed by the European Commission presents the Adriatic-Ionian region with a four-fold challenge: boosting the blue economy, improving the marine environment, ensuring the safety and security of the marine space and putting in place sustainable and responsible fisheries.

IN THE NEWS

A strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas

The European Commission has adopted a new strategy tailored to a specific sea basin, this time a sub-basin. Discussions between the Commission, coastal countries and regional maritime stakeholders focused on the Adriatic Sea and its southern extension, the Ionian Sea. This compact, coherent area harbours maritime assets that could be optimised to boost Blue Growth and jobs in the region.

Member States with borders along this basin are Italy, Slovenia and Greece, and will soon include Croatia which is currently in the process of acceding to the European Union (EU). The strategy proposed by the Commission is based on the four-fold challenge facing these countries which must be overcome to ensure their maritime economies contribute to Blue Growth: creating the right conditions for the blue economy to flourish, improving the quality of the marine environment, guaranteeing the safety of the maritime area and implementing sustainable and responsible fishing.

The Commission's approach is similar to those already undertaken in previous strategies tailored to specific maritime basins (such as the Baltic and Atlantic). Since the goal is to set maritime activities on the path towards sustainable growth, the starting point was to identify existing problems and assets that can be harnessed to address this goal. This important work was the fruit of four regional workshops held over the past year. These workshops saw constructive discussions take place between public authorities, economic players and social partners.

The Adriatic and Ionian Seas constitute an important maritime area. Coastal tourism has long been a key activity and has led to increased urbanisation. Due to their proximity to landlocked countries in Central Europe, maritime traffic is growing. This development is not without serious threats to a rich but fragile marine environment. These threats need to be tackled rapidly by introducing and effectively implementing legal obligations, such as those imposed by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

The strategy also focuses on other conditions which need to be established in order to foster Blue Growth. Maritime surveillance should be enhanced, particularly in the area of maritime traffic monitoring, cooperation between bordering states, effective emergency procedures and mapping of maritime routes. Finally, fisheries must move towards sustainability, for example by improving cooperation between fishermen and scientists, strengthening the involvement of stakeholders in fishery management and promoting a culture of compliance.

Investing in promising sectors

The Communication identifies three main activities with strong potential for blue growth. The first is maritime transport, which needs to be developed in a sustainable way through improvements to infrastructure, as well as inter-modality and environmental impact analysis. The second is tourism which is booming in this attractive, sunny region, and can produce increasing benefits for the local population, but which can further minimise its own footprint on the environment. The third is aquaculture, which is already well established, for instance in Greece, but which could benefit from joint research for innovative solutions or better marketing of local production. This list of promising sectors is not exhaustive and further activities needing specific support or with strong growth potential may be identified at a later stage.

This Adriatic and Ionian strategy paves the way for further work leading to the adoption of an action plan during 2013, before the start of the next structural fund programming period. This strategic approach to maritime affairs will guide the best possible use of EU funding possibilities.

The European Commission proposes to adopt a legal framework, which Member States will have to respect while designing their maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management.

IN THE NEWS

A framework for maritime spatial planning and coastal management

The European Commission plans to put forward a legislative proposal establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning and coastal management in early 2013. The proposal aims to promote both the growth of maritime activities and the sustainable use of marine resources in European Union waters and coastal areas.

As coastal and maritime sectors have a significant potential for sustainable growth, it is important to ensure the coordination and efficient management of their development. The forthcoming legislative proposal will contribute to the maritime implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Maritime activities are in full expansion. Renewable energy installations, maritime shipping and fishing activities, ecosystem conservation as well as tourism and aquaculture installations compete for space at sea and exert pressure on coastal resources.

It is a key priority for the EU to enhance both the optimal distribution of maritime space among relevant sectors and the coordination of coastal management in order to enable the maritime and coastal economy to grow under optimal conditions. Furthermore, to ensure the sustainability of these various maritime activities, the proposal sets out that maritime spatial planning and coastal management should be ecosystem-based.

Several Member States, particularly in the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, have already been developing their spatial plans. The Commission's proposal will build on the Roadmap Communication adopted in 2008 which encouraged Member States to observe a number of key principles when developing their plans. These principles include taking local activities into consideration, working in a transparent manner, and cooperating with neighbouring Member States⁽¹⁾.

Regulatory framework

For maximum effectiveness the planned proposal leaves room for local and regional specificity and ensures that planning decisions are taken at the most appropriate level: Member States and their relevant competent authorities will remain responsible for designing the content of plans and strategies within their maritime waters and coastal zones. This includes the apportionment of maritime space to the different sector activities.

The proposal was developed through close coordination with Member States and industry stakeholders. As part of this all-inclusive approach, a major conference was held in Brussels in 2012 to foster discussion and exchange ideas.

(1) See *Fisheries and aquaculture in Europe*, No 42, March 2009, pp. 10-11.



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The European Commission will issue 'Strategic guidelines for sustainable development of European Union aquaculture'. Their role is to coordinate a common effort of the EU and Member States.

IN THE NEWS

Aquaculture guidelines under discussion

European aquaculture was the focus of discussion during a conference organised in November 2012 by the European Commission, the Spanish Government and the Galician authorities in La Coruña. As part of the reform of the common fisheries policy (CFP), the European Union wants to give new impetus to sustainable European aquaculture production.

The aim of the conference was to gather suggestions and engage the Member States, producers and stakeholders of the sector on the future 'Strategic guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture'.

While aquaculture production continues to experience phenomenal growth in the rest of the world, in Europe it has been stagnating for over 10 years. In 2008, the Commission identified several causes of this problem: lack of spatial planning, a heavy administrative burden (such as very long procedures to obtain licences and permits for new sites), competitiveness issues and the lack of a level playing field with imported products.

Aquaculture in the EU provides 10% of the fish, molluscs and crustaceans consumed in Europe, while imported fish and aquaculture products account for 65% of European consumption. The Commission estimates that each percentage point gained by European production could represent 2 000 jobs or more. European aquaculture must therefore be given full support to play its part in promoting growth and jobs in Europe.

Multiannual national plans

As part of the reform of the CFP, the Commission is asking each Member State to develop a national plan to promote the sustainable growth of aquaculture. The plan invites Member States to implement measures that tackle obstacles to the growth of aquaculture.

To help Member States to develop their own action plan, the European Commission is producing its 'Strategic guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture'. A first set of ideas to include in the guidelines was discussed in La Coruña on 23 November, during the high-level conference.

Four key areas were brought forward and will feed into the key objectives of the Strategic guidelines:

1. Simplify administrative procedures, in particular for licencing.
2. Secure allocation of water and space for freshwater and marine aquaculture in coordinated spatial planning.
3. Promote business diversification to provide additional sources of income and sustainable aquaculture growth.
4. Exploit all competitive factors, such as the European Union's high standards.

There was broad consensus on the need to address the challenge of filling the growing food security gap between the level of consumption of seafood in the EU, the declining volume of captures from fisheries and the role that European Union aquaculture can play in filling it, at least partially. The Commission's guidelines are expected to be published in Spring 2013.

An action plan to protect sea birds

The European Commission has adopted an action plan to reduce incidental catches of sea birds in fishing gear. The plan is aligned with the objectives of the common fisheries policy (CFP) of moving towards ecosystem management. It puts forward a 'bottom-up', regionalised approach advocated by the Commission in the reform of the CFP whereby more responsibility is given to Member States and stakeholders to implement appropriate measures to tackle the problem. The aim is to set up a management framework that, over time, can reduce incidental catches of sea birds to the lowest possible levels. The plan particularly targets long-line and gillnet fisheries, which record the highest incidental catches of sea birds (albatross, petrels, shearwaters, auks, sea ducks and divers), but it also covers other gear such as trawls and purse seines. It consists of a set of binding and non-binding measures covering the activities of European fishing vessels operating within or outside European Union (EU) waters, and also non-European vessels operating in EU waters. These measures are underpinned by 30 separate operational actions, for example, encouraging the use of weighting long-lines to keep them further below the water's surface or setting nets and lines at night to reduce interactions with seabirds. Actions re-affirming Member States obligations to protect seabirds from fisheries within Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Birds Directive are also included. Member States are requested to report bi-annually to the Commission on the level of by-catch observed and the implementation and effectiveness of any mitigation measures introduced.

ICCAT: East Atlantic bluefin tuna plan strengthened

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) adopted important management measures at its annual meeting held last November in Agadir, Morocco. It strengthened the recovery plan for Eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna and set total allowable catches (TACs) for this species at 13 400 tonnes in 2013, in line with scientific advice. This TAC is slightly higher than that of 2012 due to a marked improvement in the state of the stock. Monitoring measures for bluefin tuna fishery will also be enhanced, notably through the adoption of the electronic bluefin tuna catch documentation scheme, which was based on a proposal made by the European Union and Japan. This scheme will be implemented from 16 May 2013. The organisation also adopted two further, more general, monitoring measures: the establishment of minimum standards for inspection in port, based on a proposal made by the European Union; and the launch of a process to introduce document traceability for catches of other tuna species. The aim is to boost ICCAT's capacity to combat illegal fishing. ICCAT also decided to review the recovery plan for Western Atlantic bluefin tuna and set TACs for blue marlin (1 985 tonnes) and white marlin (355 tonnes), based on scientific advice. The European Commission nevertheless regrets that its proposals to limit catches of shortfin mako shark and to prohibit landings of porbeagle shark were not adopted. Last but not least, the organisation agreed to amend the ICCAT Convention to meet the several needs and challenges which have emerged since its establishment in the late 1960s. The first meeting of the Working Group which will develop such amendments will take place in July 2013 in Japan.



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