

El Anzuelo

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GREENING 'BLUE EUROPE'



Franz Fischler
Member of the
Commission responsible
for fisheries

In some Member States, the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is known as Blue Europe, the colour of the sea. But now it is time to green our fisheries policy. The current CFP reform will allow us to better integrate the environmental dimension into the CFP. Attention is generally focused on the parlous state of an increasing number of fish stocks in EU waters. Fish stocks are part of the marine ecosystems whose balance is also affected by fishing activities. If one is damaged, the other also suffers. This is why it is time to integrate fully the concept of ecosystems into the CFP.

Technological progress has substantially increased the fishing capabilities of the fishing fleets. As in many other sectors, regulatory measures have not followed the pace of technological change. We must move away from a number of ideas: that fishing is fishermen's and no one else's business, for example. Or that being concerned about the environmental impact of fishing activities is being anti-fishermen. Far from it. What I want is sustainable fisheries and they depend essentially on healthy ecosystems.

Today, several stocks are on the verge of collapse from overfishing, principally because the EU fleet is much too large for the available fish. Moreover, some populations of non-commercial fish species are also endangered, important habitats seriously damaged and food webs disrupted.

We must urgently reduce fishing pressure and improve our fishing techniques. With this in mind we have proposed a framework regulation providing the legal basis and the main regulatory instruments to achieve both and an Action Plan to guide the various steps towards environmental protection.

One aspect that will be beneficial to the marine environment is the move from short-term decision-making to long-term planning through the application of a multi-annual, multi-species and ecosystem-based approach. In this respect, we need to acquire better

knowledge of the structure and the functioning of the marine environment. We also need to collect data on the interactions between fisheries and aquaculture activities and the environment.

Public aid should no longer be used to help finance the building of new fishing vessels to add to a fleet that is already far too large. Instead, aid must be used to encourage the decommissioning of vessels and to help the fishermen who will have to leave the fishing sector to retire or to retrain to other activities. There is no doubt that the fleet will need to be smaller in the future, but it will be able to fish in a sustainable manner in biological, economic and social terms.

We need to strengthen the enforcement of measures. This can be done by encouraging greater compliance with rules and by improving coordination among Member States. We must move towards harmonised standards of inspection, detection of infringements and sanctions and the creation of a single inspection structure at the EU level.

We also want to improve compliance by involving stakeholders more in the decision making process through the creation of Regional Advisory Councils. Participation brings responsibility and fishermen will be more inclined to comply with measures if they have had a say in their framing.

We will give priority to measures aimed at reducing fishing pressure and incidental catches of certain endangered marine mammals. Also high on the agenda, is the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan adopted at the beginning of the year. Cooperation with Member States will be strengthened with a view to improving the implementation of the 'Habitats' and 'Birds' directives.

The success of aquaculture depends on the quality of the marine environment where it takes place. Therefore, a strategy for sustainable aquaculture will be launched shortly.

Cooperation among all interested parties is crucial to the success of all these measures. I have already mentioned closer cooperation with Member States. The two Commission's Directorates-General for fisheries and environment are working more closely together. We also need the support of the stakeholders who, in the future, will be able to be more involved in the CFP. I would like to thank El Anzuelo for its work in highlighting the problems associated with fisheries but also for its constructive suggestions and ideas. Let's green blue Europe together.

INSIDE

2-3
Update on 2002

4-6
*Focus on the
Mediterranean*

7-12
European Scene

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CFP: on the road to reform



Chris Grieve

Will the Commission succeed in its ambitions to balance fishing capacity with available resources?

Niki Sporrang
IEEP London

A number of proposals and other documents for the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) were due at the beginning of April, but have now been delayed until the end of May. The European Commission has announced that this is to be the first of three packages that can be expected during the year. Among the documents is a 'Roadmap' outlining the reform process, Commission ambitions and the timeline for different proposals. The package is also thought to include proposals for a new CFP Framework Regulation (replacing 3760/92), an amendment to the current structural measures (Regulation 2792/99) and a Regulation establishing a new fund for scrapping vessels.

Together, the documents will contain important new commitments on fisheries management, in many respects reflecting the broad approach of the Green Paper. It is clear that the Commission's reform priorities are the conservation of commercial fish stocks and fleet reduction, notably in EU waters. Improved control, enforcement and governance also appear to be important issues. Progress in these areas should make a major contribution to securing the environmentally sustainable development of the sector by reducing pressure on commercial fish stocks and, at the same time, the wider environment.

Novel measures to reduce capacity

Overall, the expected provisions concerning the conservation of commercial stocks, fleet capacity reduction, aid to the sector and control and enforcement appear to be constructive and should lead to substantial improvements to the current fisheries policy. The emphasis on multi-annual management plans is a major step forward. However, there may be a danger that other measures (eg fleet restructuring) depend too heavily on the existence of such plans.

The Commission has flagged up the importance of substantial fleet capacity reductions several times over the last year and this ambition should be followed through in the proposals. But will the proposals be effective enough? The responsibility for reduction of fleet capacity will, if the proposals are adopted, rest with the Member States. The role of the Community fleet policy will instead be to create an environment which encourages capacity reduction. To this end, the Commission is likely to suggest that the possibility to grant public aid for the introduction of new capacity, modernisation measures that increase capacity and export of excess capacity be removed. Instead, special measures for vessels affected by the multi-annual management plans will be suggested, including a new emergency facility for

'It is clear that the Commission's reform priorities are the conservation of commercial fish stocks and fleet reduction'

scrapping. Whenever capacity is withdrawn with public aid it will not be allowed to be replaced, and new capacity can only be introduced when at least an equivalent amount is withdrawn without public aid. A review process will be set up to control the effectiveness of the measures and the performance of different Member States.

orm?

Good suggestions but some gaps

Several welcome and less controversial changes are likely to appear in the proposal for the new Framework Regulation. There is more emphasis on the protection of non-target species and the wider marine environment than before. Restricted access to the 12 nautical mile zone is proposed to be made permanent and Member States could be given the possibility of adopting stricter management measures applying to all vessels fishing there. To improve governance and stakeholder participation, Regional Advisory Councils will be established. At the same time, the proposals on other important issues, such as aquaculture, the management of fisheries in the Mediterranean and the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the reformed CFP are likely to be less comprehensive.

The situation in the Mediterranean is of particular concern (see pages 4-6,9). Currently, the region is suffering from a lack of data, not only on stocks but also on catches. There is insufficient implementation of Community fisheries legislation and inappropriate use of financial and market-based incentives. There are also particular problems related to the absence of EEZs and the combination of a predominantly small-scale fleet targeting multi-species fisheries and an economically important fleet targeting pelagic fisheries on migratory stocks. The existing management body, the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), has been unable to secure proper management of fisheries in the region. A coherent vision for the Mediterranean fisheries sector would be desirable and CFP proposals need to ensure that the EU takes a leading role in addressing these weaknesses, securing sustainable, ecosystem-based management.

Proposals need support in Council

The question remains whether these first measures together with other proposals to come will provide the much-needed reform that will turn the situation around and create a more sustainable fishing sector. But more importantly, will the Commission receive the support that it needs in the Fisheries Council? Prospects are not looking entirely good, with the 'Friends of fishing', a coalition of the five Mediterranean Member States and Ireland, resisting increased regulation, particularly of fleets and aid. When the proposals are finally released, only a seven month period will remain for Member States to settle their differences if they want to meet the initial December deadline. Hopefully, the growing public awareness of the severity of the situation will strengthen the political process.

For a more detailed analysis of the proposals as they emerge, see the IEEP website: www.ieep.org.uk

● WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY?

Last year, the Fisheries Council finally started to prepare its contribution to the so-called Cardiff process. The process started in Cardiff in June 1998, when European Heads of State required different Councils of Ministers to begin the task of integrating environment and sustainable development into their sectors or spheres of interest. Originally obliged to produce a comprehensive strategy on how to integrate environmental concerns into fisheries policy for the Göteborg Summit in June 2001, the Fisheries Council produced a set of conclusions on integration, creating a starting point for a future comprehensive strategy. While setting the objectives for integration, the Council requested the Commission to support their

work on the strategy by proposing more concrete actions and timetables.

At the Göteborg Summit it was decided that the work of the Council should be completed and presented to the Barcelona Summit in March 2002. Unlike other outstanding strategies, the Fisheries Council again failed to deliver. A Communication from the Commission setting out a Community Action Plan to integrate environmental protection requirements into the Common Fisheries Policy is due to be published as part of the first CFP reform package. The Council is expected to use this as a basis for its integration strategy, potentially to be presented in Seville.

● EXPECTED CFP TIMETABLE: 2002

May	Roadmap Proposal for a Framework Regulation Proposal for a Regulation on scrapping of vessels Proposal for an amended FIFG Regulation Action Plan on environmental integration Action Plan on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
June 11	Fisheries Council, Luxembourg
July	Action Plan on scientific advice Action Plan for management in the Mediterranean Action Plan on discards Integrated Framework for fisheries partnerships Action Plan for cooperation in enforcement Strategy for the development of European aquaculture Communication on transparency, performance and compliance
September	Proposal of a Joint Inspection Structure Communication on the social, economic and regional consequences of restructuring Development of a Code of Conduct for responsible fisheries in Europe
October 14	Fisheries Council, Luxembourg
November 18	Fisheries Council, Brussels
December 16	Fisheries Council, Brussels

Mediterranean Fisheries: a different world



Michael Gunther/Still Pictures

Fisherman at work
in the Mediterranean

Antonio Di Natale
Director, Aqstudio Research Institute, Messina, Italy

A long time ago, well before elves and fairy tales, a Greek poet, Oppianus, wrote the first work on Mediterranean fisheries and fishermen – ‘De Aliueutica’. It was 177 BC and this is the first known document on the issue in the world. After many centuries, it was ‘printed’ in Italy in 1462 and a few copies still remain.

Tycoon of civilisation and temple of Neptune, the Mediterranean Sea is a semi-enclosed environment, including some deep areas. It also contains a great marine biodiversity, with more than 1,500 species in the area. Fishing is an important part of the Mediterranean culture and the diversity of species is targeted with any possible gear type a man can imagine: harpoons, gillnets, lines, hooks, pots and traps. Most of the gears still in use today were invented in historical times. Nowadays, 300 million people live on the Mediterranean coasts in summer, all asking for marine produce and having an enormous impact on the environment.

**‘Catches are even
more difficult to
estimate than vessels’**

The first industrial fishery

An industrial fishery was developed in the Mediterranean several centuries before anywhere else in the world: the tuna trap fishery. Hundreds of plants were distributed around the coasts, along the migration route of the bluefin tuna. Thousands of people were directly employed in the fishery. Only a few traps in Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Italy, Libya and Croatia are still in use today and the production is a marginal part of the total tuna catches.

In the 1960s, the declining use of tuna traps saw another industrial fishing activity develop: the tuna purse-seine fishery. Now, purse-seine fleets from Spain, France, Morocco, Tunisia, Italy, Croatia and Turkey provide the majority of the tuna catches.

Large artisanal fishing sector

There are still a lot of fishermen in the Mediterranean, most of them artisanal using small vessels of different shapes, often wooden boats made by capable master-carpenters. The official statistics of artisanal fishing fleets in the Mediterranean are unreliable for several reasons, above all because every owner of even a small wooden or plastic boat has various types of fishing gear onboard. There are many thousands of boats everywhere along the coast and in the small isles. A reasonable estimation is more than 200,000 professional fishing vessels in the 21 Mediterranean countries.

Eating it all

Catches are even more difficult to estimate than vessels, because much of the catch data is not collected and even the official statistics are partial or incomplete. Most species in the Mediterranean are caught in the fisheries, either as target species or as bycatch. The Mediterranean people use most of the edible species and there is a strong tradition to prepare fish, with many good recipes. As a result, a Mediterranean fish market is quite different from fish markets in the North Sea region; there is a wider variety and much more colour.

Since the demand for seafood is high, particularly in

the northern Mediterranean countries, fishermen are reluctant to reduce fishing capacity or to strictly follow regulations. The only species under a quota regime is the bluefin tuna. It was regulated in 1998 due to the dramatic results of the stock assessment, but control and enforcement is almost non-existent and the system clearly does not work. Luckily, the bluefin tuna stock seems to be healthier than the model predicted, even if the stock is clearly overfished and a large quantity of juveniles is caught every year. Temporary closures, usually for trawl fisheries, are applied in some areas in the EU waters, and during the closures fishermen receive economic support. The effects of the closures on the demersal stocks are negligible.

Smaller and smaller fish

The lack of big individuals is evident for several species, but this is a controversial issue among scientists. The Mediterranean cod is a species under high fishing pressure, and the big specimens recorded until 20 years ago are now very rare. In addition, nursery areas are affected by the trawl fishery. Millions of juveniles and sub-adult cod are sold at cheap prices on the market from flat wooden boxes. Red mullet and striped red mullet are commonly caught by gillnets and trammel nets, but large individuals are very rare and a significant number of juveniles are caught by trawlers.

A multitude of fishing methods

In the Mediterranean, many different fishing methods are used. The trawl fishery provides most of the commercial catches and affects more than 500 species. In some cases, for example the rose shrimp fishery, discards are a serious problem, both in terms of number of species and percentage in weight. In the long-line fishery, several types of gear are used. The surface long-line fishery is one of the most important, targeting large pelagic species such as bluefin tuna, swordfish and albacore. Foreign fleets are also fishing in the basin, particularly for bluefin tuna, and some of them act under a flag of convenience to avoid controls and quota restrictions. Besides the target species, the long-line fishery has a significant bycatch of sharks and turtles, but effects on marine birds are negligible. The bottom long-line fishery targets a variety of commercial species (cod, sea bass, scabbard fish) and is fairly selective.

Different types of gillnet fisheries are very common in the Mediterranean. The use of driftnets for large and medium size pelagic species was banned in EC countries from 1 January 2002, but several other fleets from Morocco, Turkey, Algeria, Albania and possibly Tunisia are still active. They are filling the niche left by the EC fleets, exporting swordfish to Italy and Spain. European fishermen, and particularly the Italians, are not very happy about that. It was a great sacrifice for them to stop this ancient fishery reported by Oppianus and it has strongly affected the economy of several coastal villages. Even the small-size driftnets are now banned in EC countries, but few people understand what this decision was based on.

A variety of gears is used in the gillnet fishery: bottom set, mid-water set or encircling nets of different mesh types. It

targets many different species and the high fishing pressure in some coastal areas is beginning to have major effects. For example, the deep trammels used in the last 15 years have seriously affected lobsters and Mediterranean cod.

All Mediterranean countries also have a purse seine fishery targeting shoaling pelagic species, mainly anchovies and sardines.

In several fisheries for shrimps, lobsters and fish, pots are also used. They are considered to be more selective. Clay pots are still used to fish for octopus along the North African coast.

Beach seines are widely used in the region, and are considered to be a social event in small villages, but they are banned in EC countries. Small pelagic species are sometimes caught with boat seines, and a fishery on amberjack using this method has recently developed.

Fish aggregating devices have been used since ancient times and are often made by palm fronds; dolphin fish, pilot fish, small amberjack and tuna-like species are the major targets, but a bycatch of juvenile wreckfish is often reported.

Hand lines and pole & lines are used by an incredible number of people, professionals as well as recreational fishermen, everywhere around the Mediterranean. The impact of these activities has not been assessed, but there is a strong suspicion that several coastal species or juveniles of other larger species could be significantly affected.

The harpoon fishery is almost a historical relic, but it is still practised in the Strait of Messina (Sicily) and in Turkey to catch swordfish, bluefin tuna, Mediterranean spearfish and moonfish. In several coastal areas, hand spears are used for octopus, squids, flying fish and Atlantic saury.

Brown meagre, Shi drum and Dusky grouper, quite common along the shallow rocky bottoms until 50 years ago, are now difficult to find in most of the coastal areas, due to spear fishing and, maybe, other environmental changes.

Continuous fishing pressure and pollution in some coastal areas were expected to result in a serious depletion of several fish stocks over the past three decades, but even if the situation is serious the changes have not been dramatic.

The great Mediterranean biodiversity appears to

‘Sometimes Neptune comes out of the seawater, nervously shaking his hair and the trident, trying to indicate the best way for fishermen and decision-makers’

make the entire ecosystem more flexible and able to respond better to the huge pressure of the numerous fleets in the area. But this capacity is limited and for

several years signs of stress have been quite evident.

Fisheries management

Most fisheries are ‘managed’ by the General Fishery Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), without any real power to impose regulations, while tuna and tuna-like species are under the control of the ICCAT (but only some Mediterranean countries are members and resolutions are mandatory only for members).

The GFCM has a difficult role: it must not only convince fishermen from all the countries to adopt the same rules, but also all the coastal governments, for management efforts to be effective. Shared stocks in the Mediterranean are often managed in different ways in different countries, and sometimes national regulations are conflicting. In addition, control and enforcement is minimal.

For the future of the Mediterranean biodiversity and the fisheries, it is important to find a way to better enforce the existing regulatory measures and, at the same time, to develop new rules. This has to be done with a true Mediterranean perspective. Practices and regulations from the North Sea or the Atlantic can not simply be moved to the Mediterranean, because the marine environment is different, the biology of species is different and even the mentality of the people is different.

Sometimes Neptune comes out of the seawater, nervously shaking his hair and the trident, trying to indicate the best way for fishermen and decision-makers. Then he waits for the results for a while and, disappointed, dives again to reach his temple on the Mediterranean sea-bottom.

Tuna penning threatens already overfished tuna stocks



‘Gold rush’ for tuna to supply high value Japanese sushi market

Roland Seitre/Scill Pictures

WWF has urged Mediterranean States and the EU to decrease fishing effort on the bluefin tuna stock and to regulate the rapidly expanding practice of tuna penning. The already overfished stock of bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean is now further threatened by increasing catches of tuna that is later fattened in pens. This relatively new practice is mainly targeting the Japanese sushi market.

According to Sergi Tudela, Fisheries Officer at the WWF Mediterranean Programme Office, “Blue-fin

tuna is the new ‘foie gras’ of the Mediterranean, resulting in a real ‘gold rush’ in the region. If nothing is done, wild blue-fin tuna will completely disappear from the Mediterranean Sea within the next few years, perhaps with no possibility of rebuilding stocks”.

Many of the 12 tuna farms operating in Spain, Italy, Malta and Croatia are subsidised. Other countries are involved in the practice too, including fleets from France, Tunisia, Turkey and Algeria. WWF estimates that together they produced 11,000 tonnes of tuna last year – more than half of the world’s total.

So far, this type of farming has been able to avoid controls under existing Mediterranean management bodies, such as the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), despite widespread recognition of the need to conserve blue-fin tuna. This is because it is currently seen as a ‘post harvesting’ operation, rather than one based on direct capture, and so falls outside of regional and international controls. WWF is calling for governments to close this legislative loophole and to increase controls on tuna farming “while there is still time”. Until this happens, WWF wants a moratorium on the establishment of new farms in the region.

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Stakeholders managing Natura 2000 area

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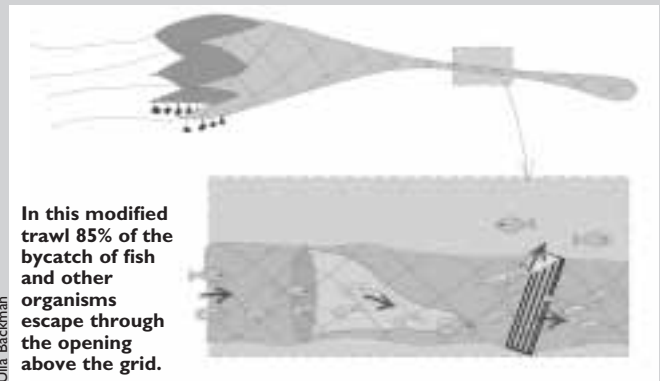
Rune Nilsen and Jan-Olof Hellberg are the recipients of this year's Environmental Award in Strömstad's municipality. The men are shrimp fishers in the Koster-Väderö area on the Swedish west coast. Their award reflects their work in developing a sustainable shrimp fishery in the Natura 2000 area Koster-Väderö Fjord.

The species diversity in the area is unique in Swedish waters. The fjord is connected with deeper waters in the Atlantic, and supports vulnerable hard bottom fauna. Reefs of the cold water coral *Lophelia pertusa* and rich fauna are found here. In 2001, the Swedish government proposed the area as an EU Natura 2000 site, based on the 31 km² reefs and 11 km² sublittoral sandbanks found there.

Economically, the most important activity in the area is the trawl fishery for North Sea shrimp (*Pandalus borealis*)

that lives in the deeper parts of the fjord. Local fishermen have been trawling for shrimp for almost 100 years and around 50 fishermen are still active in the area today. Most of their 30 boats are under 12 metres in length. The yearly catch of around 200 tonnes is divided between the fishermen based on an informal agreement. Special rules regarding the size of the fishing gear, the weight of the trawl and mesh sizes have been applied for many years. The fishery is also indirectly important for other sectors in the area, including the extensive tourism industry.

The protection of the unique biodiversity in the Koster-Väderö Fjord has been a subject of discussion for some time. The shrimp fishery was identified as the main threat to local biodiversity and a working group with representatives from the County Administration, the municipalities of Strömstad and Tanum, the National Board of Fisheries and the fishermen's organisations was formed in December 1999 to



In this modified trawl 85% of the bycatch of fish and other organisms escape through the opening above the grid.

Ulja Backman

address the issue. Fishermen and their organisations were sceptical at first, fearing substantial closures in their fishing area. Even the collection of data about the natural values in the area was initially seen as a threat. However, significant progress has since been made to reduce the impacts of the fishery.

Apart from mapping sensitive biotopes in detail, fishermen's knowledge of the behaviour of the gear, positions of the trawl hauls, etc was used to avoid damage to the most sensitive areas. Some very valuable areas were entirely or partly closed to trawling, while protection zones were established for others. It was also decided that the depth limit for trawling should be moved from 50 to 60 metres to protect the many valuable soft bottoms in the area. Selection panels, so-called 'grids', which reduce the bycatch by up to 85% were introduced in the shrimp trawls. In addition, adjustments were made to the size and weight of fishing gear

to reduce impacts on sessile bottom organisms such as *L. pertusa*. These measures have since been incorporated into Swedish fisheries legislation and came into force in 2001.

The work to protect the Koster-Väderö Fjord has shown the importance of solid knowledge and an open dialogue between authorities, researcher and users together with the will to try novel solutions. The measures that have been applied could greatly benefit biodiversity, while having only limited effects on the profits of the shrimp fishery. Experiences from this work are now being applied to other coastal fisheries along the Swedish west coast.

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Hauling the shrimp trawl.

Mattias Sköld

Dolphin bycatch in pair trawls

As many as 53 dolphins were caught in 116 hauls over 71 days at sea, according to a study of UK pair trawls targeting bass in the Channel. Four UK vessels operate in the winter bass fishery, now using new nets to reduce bycatch. More than 50 French vessels also operate in the fishery. The bycatch issue has been a recurring problem in this fishery, but has recently been brought to public attention due to winter storms which

washed up more than 100 cetaceans on the south coast of England and over 300 on the coast of France.

The study of UK pair trawls was undertaken by the Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) in Scotland. A £33,000 (€54,000) grant has now been given to SMRU to work with the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association (SPFA), the UK's Sea Fishing Industry Authority (SFIA) and the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research (IMR) to reduce the bycatch. The aim is to design and implement a new

grid system, specifically designed for addressing problems in the bass trawl fishery, that will guide common dolphins out of the trawl before they become caught in the nets.

Pelagic pair trawls are also increasingly being used in the albacore tuna fisheries in the waters to the south west of the British Isles. A report of the Irish trial pair trawl fishery for albacore tuna recorded a bycatch rate of 145 cetaceans in 313 hauls caught by just four pairs of trawlers in the 1999 season – a bycatch rate even

higher than in the bass fishery. Despite these results, the pair trawl fishery is being promoted as an alternative to the now banned drift net albacore fishery. Some 50 Irish pelagic trawl boats are expected to take part in the fishery already in the summer of 2002.

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Regional Commissions in the Baltic Sea discuss fisheries and marine protection

Peter Funegård,
Senior Fisheries Officer, National Board of Fisheries, Sweden

The two regional Commissions in the Baltic Sea area, the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) and the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission (IBSFC) met on 20–21 February in Gdynia, Poland, to discuss issues related to nature protection, the development of sustainable fisheries and the possibility of moving towards ecosystem-based management in the Baltic Sea. The meeting was the first effort by an international fisheries management organisation and an environmental organisation to discuss problems related to sustainable development in the marine environment.

The seminar confirmed that the current intensity of commercial fisheries has significantly influenced the Baltic Sea ecosystem, species composition and size distribution of the main target species (cod, salmon, herring and sprat). In addition, non-commercial fish stocks have changed and bycatches have had negative effects on non-target species such as marine mammals and birds. On the other hand, deterioration of the marine environment has resulted in a loss of spawning areas, a decrease in fish stocks, contamination of fish by hazardous substances and an increase in fish diseases. Some of the most discussed issues were the increasing conflict between the salmon fishery and the protection of seals and the crucial need for information regarding the levels of dioxins

in the main commercial fish species.

The major result of the meeting was a list of proposals for joint action, such as the reduction of bycatches and discards, development of selective fishing gears and more ecologically sustainable fishing practices. The need to implement European measures to restore eel stocks and to continue the restoration of wild salmon populations and other salmonids were also identified as prioritised actions.

Further cooperation between the two organisations will include research projects on bycatch of birds, harbour porpoise and other non-target species. The seminar also recognised the need for studies on environmental impacts of offshore wind farms, primarily regarding possible effects on fish populations, spawning grounds and important bird areas. The need to continue the development of suitable ecosystem status indicators was also expressed by the seminar.

The meeting ended on a positive note. Cooperation between HELCOM and IBSFC on issues of common interest will increase and will in part be carried out through future seminars and workshops with participation of all relevant stakeholders.

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Black Sea needs international remediation

The Black Sea is under extreme pressure from overfishing, high levels of pollution and the effects of alien species, according to a report produced by international scientists of the UNEP initiative 'Global International Waters Assessment' (GIWA). GIWA, which is assessing the environmental state of over sixty water systems worldwide, has called for international remediation efforts as a matter of urgency.

The report estimates that over 600,000 tonnes of harmful nutrients are released into the Black Sea, mainly from household waste waters, industry and agricultural discharges. It also highlights the threat to the sea from raw sewage, coastal erosion and dumped deposits from dredged ports. The Black Sea borders Russia, the Ukraine, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria and Georgia, and the already high levels of pollution, particularly from industry, are likely to increase further as the region continues to develop economically.

The negative environmental impacts on the sea have, among other problems, resulted in the

decline of fish stocks and consequently fishing. Although catches are beginning to increase again, only six of the 26 species that were exploited in the 1960s are present in commercial quantities today.

EU Ministers met with Environment Ministers of the region in November last year to push forward protection of the Black Sea and the Danube – a major tributary and the main source of pollution. A declaration was adopted on water protection in the region, and commitments were made to restore the ecosystems and water quality. Ministers are expected to endorse a Commission Communication on cooperation in the Black Sea and Danube region later this year, which seeks to establish an informal task force on water related issues. The Commission communication also calls for increased involvement by the EU and Member States in the region, including coordinated technical and financial assistance.

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Environmental cooperation in the Danube – Black Sea Region

(COM(2001)615) is available at: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2001/com2001_0615en01.pdf

Cod and hake recovery plans

The European Commission's three-stage process to implement recovery measures for the severely depleted cod stocks of the North Sea and west of Scotland moved into its second phase on 19 October 2001. A new Commission Regulation (No 2056/2001) sets out additional technical measures designed to reduce the capture of small, young cod and allows the implementation of measures agreed between Norway and the EU in June 2001. As from 1 January 2002, mesh sizes for nets are to be increased and the use of large mesh or square mesh panels is required. Catch compositions are also regulated to ensure that the correct fishing gear is used, e.g. it is now prohibited to keep cod on board if more than 30% of the total catch consists of cod, unless the correct gear is fitted and in use on the vessel.

The third phase of the cod recovery measures will be to agree longer-term, multi-annual strategies. Early indications suggest that up to 50% of permanent cuts in fishing effort

and/or capacity are being proposed by the Commission for cod and hake recovery programmes. Additional measures for debate include target levels for spawning stock biomass, multi-annual total allowable catches, rules relating to catch handling to prevent discards, extra compensation from the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance for "tie-ups" and a premium rate for decommissioning cod or hake vessels.

Furthermore, special measures for hake, which were due to expire at the end of March 2002, have been extended. Regulation 494/2002 was adopted on 19 March, establishing additional technical measures for the recovery of the hake stocks in the North Sea, waters to the west of Scotland, Skagerrak and the Bay of Biscay. The Regulation places restrictions on net mesh sizes and immersion of nets and will be effective until the end of September 2002.

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Boost for Spanish fisheries

The autonomous regions of Spain have received €25.8 million for fisheries and aquaculture related developments from EU structural funds, predominantly FIGF. The largest part of the funding will be spent on the fishery sector, including €6.75 million on renovation and fleet modernisation, €1.8 million towards adjusting fishing effort, and €2 million to fisheries improvements as part of the national plan for 2000-2006. A further €6.5 million is to be invested in a development programme for the regions, which will develop and modernise the production and

distribution infrastructure, while €4.3 million will be spent on boosting the agro-food industry. Over €3 million will be directed to the development of aquaculture, with an additional €1 million for establishing a marine cultivation plan.

The funding comes in advance of CFP reforms likely to focus heavily on reducing fishing capacity and effort, and to stop funding of most modernisation measures.

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North Atlantic study

An international team of scientists has revealed startling results from the first ever ocean-wide study of fisheries in the North Atlantic. Daniel Pauly and colleagues at the University of British Columbia Fisheries Centre estimate that the catch of preferred food species, such as cod, hake, tuna, haddock and flounder, has declined by over 50% in the last 50 years. Fishing effort has increased substantially to maintain yields of these species, but this has had adverse effects on productivity.

Previously this problem was thought to be localised, such as in Newfoundland and in New England where devastating

collapses in fish stocks have been observed. However, the new pan-Atlantic study reveals that the whole Atlantic Ocean is at risk. In an interview with Seaweb, Pauly commented that "...we are unequivocally losing the battle to manage fisheries in the North Atlantic", and put forward the view that "the necessary next steps are substantial reduction in fishing fleets, reduction and eventual abolition of subsidies to industrial fisheries, and the establishment of networks of 'no-take' marine reserves".

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Key species in the Mediterranean Sea under threat

Dr Natalia Martini
Oxford University, UK

Posidonia oceanica is a marine seagrass species endemic to the Mediterranean Sea whose conservation is essential to maintain the integrity of coastal ecosystems in the face of natural and anthropogenic disturbance. It currently occupies an area of 20,000 square miles, from the shoreline down to depths of 40m. Due to its structural complexity, *P. oceanica* provides nursery areas for many fish species and creates a barrier to coastal erosion.

P. oceanica is protected under several international conventions and European laws, such as the 1979 Bern Convention on wildlife and natural habitats in Europe and the 1986 Protocol to the Barcelona Convention concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean. The Habitats Directive 92/43 and Regulation 1626/94 on fisheries technical measures in the Mediterranean Sea also provide protection.

Despite this, *P. oceanica* is under threat. Along the Italian coasts there are two main causes for its continued regression: changes in sediment composition and structure and physical impact of fishing gears. Illegal trawling within the three-mile limit or in waters less than 50m deep has taken place over the last

twenty years. Intensive trawling can convert *P. oceanica* meadows into regions of mud, thereby reducing potential habitats for many fish species, several of them commercial.

In Italy, studies of coastal *Posidonia* beds began in the early eighties. In the Central Tyrrhenian Sea (Western Mediterranean), seabeds between Capo Circeo and Terracina (Lazio, Italy) have been sampled during the last 15 years to monitor the effect of fishing gears. These studies were partly funded by local authorities because artisanal fisheries were suffering from this unsustainable exploitation of marine resources. Scientists suggested the introduction of underwater structures, in particular artificial reefs, within seagrass beds, hoping to reduce trawling impact by preventing the practice altogether. These artificial physical barriers would destroy any trawling nets that are swept through the area. Based on Italian legislation adopted in 1982, artificial reefs have been employed in the Central Tyrrhenian Sea and in the Ligurian Sea, and have proven an effective conservation measure for *P. oceanica*. Today, artificial reefs are internationally recognised as important instruments to preserve and enhance marine biodiversity, and the European Artificial Reef Network has been created to investigate



Posidonia — under threat from fishing practices in the Mediterranean.

Natalia Martini

their potential use in the general management of marine coastal resources.

Within the framework of the EU 'LIFE' programme, the Italian Ministry for the Environment has now started a research project called 'BioItaly' to map and establish sites of interest according to the Habitats Directive. To date, 3,000 sites have been recognised, among them several *P. oceanica* areas. Further actions towards an enhanced monitoring scheme for seagrasses and the mapping of their distribution is also expected.

Yet despite these important efforts, the decline in this

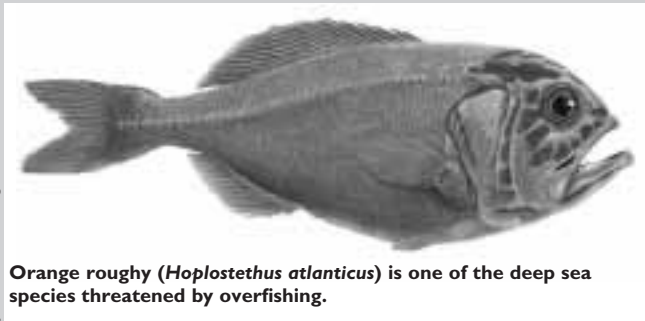
species is likely to continue. A key factor is the resistance by the fishing industry, which appears unconvinced of the needs or benefits of conservation and the particular advantages of artificial reef structures. Securing more effective conservation is therefore likely to depend upon establishing good relationships with the local fishing industries, persuading them to join the conservation effort.

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Deep-water fish stocks under threat

UK nature conservation agency advisors are warning that unless action is taken immediately, fishing in deep-sea waters will lead to irreversible damage to target fish stocks and the seabed. As Mark Tasker, Head of Marine Advice at the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, explains

“Fishermen must understand that they cannot apply the same principle to deep-water fishing as those used on the continental shelf. Reproductive cycles of deep-water fish take much longer than for species in shallower waters and thus stocks take much longer to recover from any fishing. Habitats and wildlife of the deep sea evolved over many centuries and have been virtually undisturbed since the last ice age”. Three documents have recently been launched which highlight not only the need to reduce fishing effort on deep-sea stocks, but also raise serious concerns about the effects on deep-water habitats, which have previously



Jon Baldir, Hildberg

Orange roughy (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*) is one of the deep sea species threatened by overfishing.

been untouched by fishing gear.

Fishing of deep-sea stocks has increased, in part due to the decline of traditional stocks, such as cod. Since the 1970s, ICES estimate that the catch per unit effort for ling and tusk alone has fallen by 70% in ICES areas north and west of the British Isles, a trend which is replicated elsewhere and for other deep-sea species. Consequently, they called last year for immediate reductions in fishing pressure on fully or over-exploited deep-sea fish stock.

Taking these concerns on

board, the Commission has released a proposal (COM(2001)764) to fix fishing opportunities for deep-sea fish stocks. This is the first time that the Commission has sought to introduce conservation measures for deep-water fish, prompted by scientific advice indicating that such stocks are being heavily over-exploited.

The proposal sets out total allowable catches for a number of deep-sea species, including deep sea sharks, blue ling, orange roughy and red seabream. In its proposal, the Commission

stressed that deep-sea fishing grounds are related both to Community waters and to international waters managed by the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, therefore recognising the importance of applying conservation measures unilaterally.

Subsequently, in March the Commission released another proposal regarding fishing effort management for deep-sea stocks (COM(2002)108). This proposal aims to bring in additional measures to control exploitation of deep-water species, to collect scientific data and to establish enforcement rules. The Council is still to make a decision about the proposals.

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UNEP/WTO grapple with fishing subsidies

Off the west coast of Africa catches of some key fish stocks have been falling sharply and the decline has been linked to over-fishing by foreign fleets, including EU vessels. A study of Mauritania shows that catches of octopus have halved in the past four years, while species such as sawfish have completely disappeared. The number of people employed in the traditional octopus fishery in Mauritania has also fallen: from a peak of nearly 5,000 in 1996 to around 1,800 today.

The Mauritanian study, as well as studies on Bangladesh, Senegal and Argentina, were released at a UNEP fisheries workshop in Geneva in March. At the meeting, links between international trade and subsidies were discussed, as were their social and environmental impacts.

According to Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, 'fish stocks in many developed country waters have been severely depleted as too many, often heavily subsidised, fleets chase too few fish. As a result they are looking elsewhere for

catches. It is vital that the unsustainable fishing of the past and the present is not exported to the developing world'.

The workshop came at the start of a new round of talks under the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Following the 2001 Doha Agreement, the Round will include negotiations on fisheries subsidies.

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No agreement on blue whiting

Commissioner Franz Fischler has announced that the EU will reduce its catches of blue whiting in the North-East Atlantic by 35%, and has urged other relevant coastal states to take similar actions. The stocks are said to be in 'serious danger' due to increasing demands, which saw catches triple between 1998-2001 despite recurring warnings from scientists. According to the Commission, the EU has kept catches under its responsibility at a stable level, and other parties

are said to be responsible for the year-on-year catch increases, which in 2001 approached a staggering 1.8 million tonnes. A technical meeting involving all the relevant states (the EU, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway), held in Reykjavik on 11-12 February, failed to agree on catch reductions for 2002. It was decided, however, that a recovery plan should be put in place, and that the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) should be asked to provide scientific advice to inform its development. Since the meeting both Iceland and the Faroe Islands have set unilateral quotas for this year, but according to the European Commission reductions are far from sufficient. Discussions on future regulatory measures will resume at the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) meeting on 9-12 April 2002.

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Online conference on fishery exclusion zones

An internet conference entitled 'Fishery Exclusion Zones in Europe: assessing their value' was held from 21 January until 11 February this year as part of an EU funded project, VALFEZ (Value of Exclusion Zones as a Fishery Management Tool in Europe). The aims of the on-line conference were to disseminate results from research and facilitate an exchange of information and expertise in relation to the use of fishery exclusion zones. Although this forum has now closed, the discussions can still be viewed at the conference site, together with a number of invited discussion papers and electronic posters.

Conference website: http://www.valfez.org/internet_conf/

UN Fish Stocks Agreement in force

The 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement entered into force on 11 December 2001. This first global fish stocks agreement is one of the main instruments to follow the 1992 Rio Summit. It sets out principles for the

conservation and management of fish stocks that straddle international boundaries or are highly migratory. This is to be based on the precautionary approach, while ensuring that management in national waters and adjacent high seas is compatible and coherent, and that effective mechanisms for compliance and enforcement on the high seas are in place. The Agreement also recognises the special needs of developing States in relation to the management of stocks.

The EC has adopted a Decision to conclude the Agreement, but this will not be deposited with the

UN until all 15 Member States have done the same. At present, Greece, France and Ireland have still to complete their ratification processes – something that is now unlikely to happen before the August/September 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

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Mr André Tahindro, Sr Ocean Affairs/Law of the Sea Officer, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations, New York, USA. Tel +1 212 963 3946; email: tahindro@un.org

ADVANCE NOTICE

The Institute for European Environmental Policy invites you to a public High Level Seminar

A Sustainable Common Fisheries Policy: expectations on reform
the event is being held in Brussels on 21 May 2002

Keynote speakers include:

Margot Wallström, Environment Commissioner
Dr Caroline Jackson MEP, Chair of European Parliament Environment Committee

To register your interest in attending, please contact: Ruth Rutstein, IEEP, tel. +44 20 7799 2244; email: conference@ieeplondon.org.uk



Sustainable fisheries top priority at the North Sea Conference

Thomas Borchers

Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany

The Fifth International Conference on the Protection of the North Sea took place in Bergen, Norway, on 20-21 March. Among the participants were Ministers responsible for environmental issues from the North Sea states and the European Commission. Observers from other countries, intergovernmental organisations and a multitude of international environmental protection and industry associations were also present.

The goals of the conference were to assess achievements of former North Sea Conferences and provide a new and future-oriented impetus for marine protection through increasing international cooperation. The basis for discussions was the "Progress Report" - a comprehensive survey of achievements and deficits since the last North Sea Conference.

In the light of severely threatened fish stocks, the considerable damage to habitats and the upcoming reform of the EU Common Fisheries Policy, the conference focussed on the demand for more sustainable fisheries and the establishment of an ecosystem approach to the management of human activities affecting the North Sea.

In addition, the following issues played a major role: test of "ecological quality objectives" to develop operational objectives as part of an ecosystem approach to management; designation of marine protected areas to form a network of well-managed sites by 2010; a clear vote against the release of genetically modified marine organisms (such as fish) through restricting cultivation to secure, self-contained, land-based facilities; and a strong statement in favour of development of renewable energy technology, *inter alia*, offshore wind energy, taking environmental and nature conservation issues into account.

Issues such as shipping, hazardous substances, eutrophication, offshore installations, radioactive substances, marine litter and waste management, spatial planning and future cooperation were also on the agenda. In fact, the Conference was surrounded by a Norwegian campaign against radioactive emissions from Sellafield that is supported by the fishermen. At a conference on the Lofoten islands on 15 January, fishermen from all over Norway hoisted a black flag as a symbol of mourning for the local marine environment to highlight the threat that the emissions pose to Norwegian fishing communities.

The participants of the 5th North Sea Conference clearly wanted to send a strong signal to European Fisheries Ministers

that integration of environmental protection requirements into the principles, objectives and operational procedures of fisheries management, as part of this year's review of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, is a priority. Environment Ministers urged their fisheries colleagues to make progress to this end and offered their full support in the implementation process.

Some of the more specific requests were:

- to further reduce, without delay, the capacity of the fishing fleet and the deployed fishing effort;
- to establish catch quotas consistent with scientific catch recommendations based on the precautionary principle;
- to continue the assessment of the effects of all fishing activities, *inter alia* industrial fisheries, and to promote fishing activities with less impact on the ecosystem;
- to identify additional areas to be closed permanently or temporarily to fishing activities for the protection of juvenile fish;
- to reduce to the extent possible unwanted bycatch and introduce further measures to prevent high-grading;
- to improve fisheries practices with the interim objective to reduce bycatch of harbour porpoises to less than 1.7% of the best population estimate and a precautionary objective to reduce bycatches of marine mammals to less than 1% of the best available population estimates; and
- to develop and adopt, as soon as possible, a recovery plan for harbour porpoises in the North Sea.

Environment Ministers originally intended to commit their fisheries colleagues to develop a recovery plan for harbour porpoise, but after various interventions from the fisheries side they will now draw up the plan themselves in cooperation with Fishery Ministers. This offers an opportunity finally to bring together environment and fisheries representatives to jointly support the protection of species and habitats affected by fisheries.

The Bergen Declaration should be considered an opportunity for environmental representatives to actively shape and influence the CFP reform process, but in too many cases decision-making was left to fisheries experts when aspects relevant to fisheries were discussed.

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Complete text of the Progress Report and the Bergen Declaration are available at: <http://www.dep.no/md/nscl>

For further information on the Lofoten conference: <http://www.lofoten-online.com>

Drift net ban from 1 January 2002

From 1 January 2002, it is illegal for EU vessels or vessels active in EU waters to catch listed species of tuna, swordfish and sharks, as well as cephalopods, using drift nets. Drift netting for salmon and cod is not covered by the ban.

The new drift net provisions were introduced as a result of international concern over the bycatch of non-target species, including dolphins and turtles. Earlier EU rules prohibiting the use of nets longer than 2.5 kilometres were considered to be ineffective and the EU has provided money to help convert vessels out of these fisheries for several years. However, there is evidence that EU drift nets have been sold to third countries and are still in use. In other cases, it seems that drift netters are being replaced by pair trawlers which are now also causing concern due to significant dolphin bycatch levels (see separate article).

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Fisheries product labelling rules adopted

A new Regulation (No 2065/2001) on labelling rules for fishery products entered into force on 1 January 2002. The Regulation is designed to provide more information to consumers about fisheries and aquaculture products, and requires all fisheries products retailed in the EU to be labelled with information on the commercial name of the species, the production methods used

(farmed or wild) and the area where the fish was harvested. By providing more transparent information to the public about where and how fish have been produced, the Commission is hoping that the requirements will boost consumer choice and strengthen the traceability of fisheries products from 'ship to shop'. With regard to wild caught fish, however, information that would allow greater consumer choice in terms of environmental impact will not be included on the labels. While the labels will signify the general area fish were taken, consumers will not be advised of the specific area, method of capture, nor whether the species is taken from a sustainable source. Future debate about eco-labelling of fisheries products has been proposed in the Commission's Green Paper on the Future of the Common Fisheries Policy.

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The Regulation can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2001/l_278/l_27820011023en00060008.pdf

Coordinated management of Caspian Sea sturgeon under way

The five Caspian Sea States have launched a coordinated programme for surveying and managing sturgeon stocks in the Caspian Sea. The plan is a response to the CITES ban on caviar traded by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Russia in June last year, triggered by rising concern about over-exploitation of the stocks.

High catches and illegal poaching, encouraged by the high

price that caviar brings on local and foreign markets, together with the wider effects of environmental degradation, has put the sturgeon in danger. As a result, catch levels in the 1990s were a mere tenth of the catch levels in the 1970s, and populations of all the commercially exploited sturgeon species are thought to have decreased by at least 90% over this time period.

According to the CITES Secretariat the plan marks the way forward for integrated management of the resource, but the crisis is far from over. Export quotas for caviar for 2002 have been set at 142 tonnes across the Caspian States, 9.6% below the 2001

quota. The decision is based on research carried out at the request of CITES, which for the first time involved all of the Caspian States. Iran is joining the other four Caspian States in their obligation to establish a long-term survey programme and to make concerted efforts to tackle illegal harvesting and trade, including domestic trade and the implementation of a caviar labelling system, by June 2002.

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Mr Juan Carlos Vasquez, CITES Press Officer, International Environment House, Geneva, Switzerland. Tel +41 22 917 8156; email: juan.vasquez@unep.ch; website: <http://www.cites.org/>

● PUBLICATIONS

- *Facts and Figures on the CFP: Basic data on the Common Fisheries Policy*, European Commission, available at: http://www.europa.eu.int/com/m/fisheries/doc_et_publ/liste_public/facts/pcf_en.pdf
- *Annual Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the results of the multi-annual guidance programmes for the fishing fleets at the end of 2000*, COM(2001)541, available at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/fisheries/doc_et_publ/factsheets/legal_texts/docscom/en/com_01_541_en.pdf
- *Synopsis of selected R&D projects in the field of fisheries and aquaculture*, European Commission, available at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/fisheries/doc_et_publ/liste_public/studies/synopsis/index.htm
- *Report on the Monitoring of the Implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy - Synthesis of the Implementation of the Control System Applicable to the Common Fisheries Policy by Member States*, European Commission COM(2001)526, available at: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/rpt/2001/com2001_0526en01.pdf
- *Trawling in the Mist: Industrial Fisheries in the Russian Part of the Barent Sea*, a TRAFFIC species in danger report by Alexey Vaisman, TRAFFIC Europe. For further information contact: Caroline Raymakers, TRAFFIC Europe; Bd Emile Jacqmain 90; 1000 Brussels; Belgium; Tel +32 2 343 8258; fax +32 2 343 2565; email: craymakers@traffic-europe.com
- *World Fisheries and Aquaculture Atlas CD-ROM*. Produced by the FAO. This CD-ROM presents a comprehensive and global view of both capture and aquaculture fisheries. For further information contact: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy, www.fao.org

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