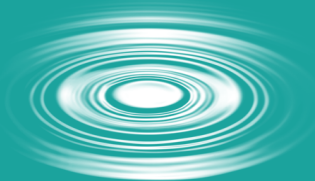


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TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

David Baldock
Director, IEEP London

As we approach a new century, few sections of society face more fundamental questions about the future than the fishing community. On the one hand, there is the prospect of dwindling stocks of many key species, declining job opportunities and increasing criticism of environmental damage. On the other, there are opportunities for revising the Common Fisheries Policy and building a new foundation for sustainable fishing which will support the next generation of fishing communities.

Progress towards sustainable fisheries must be made at a local and national level, bringing together all those with a legitimate interest and building a consensus where possible. However, most of the more strategic decisions and the overall direction of policy are set at a European level. This is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. As the prospect of a significant reform of the Common Fisheries Policy approaches, there is a need for a real exchange and dialogue between those concerned for the future of fisheries on a

European scale. Both the fishing community and environmental interests should be ready to listen to one another's views and contribute creative, forward looking proposals.

The purpose of this newsletter is to help to encourage such a dialogue and to provide an impartial and accurate source of advice for development on fisheries and the environment at a European scale. We will be tracking the key developments in Brussels and drawing attention to major reports and opportunities to participate in meetings or discussions. There will be articles on the future of the Structural Funds and the opportunities for seeking EU support for sustainable fishery initiatives. We also hope to encourage an exchange of ideas and experience between people in different countries and will be carrying articles by a range of authors from different backgrounds.

The newsletter is the first in a series which will be produced biannually this year and next and, providing support is available, for longer. With the support of our sponsors, it is available free and we welcome requests for further copies, comments, feedback and articles for future issues.

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Edited by Clare Coffey of IEEP London. Designed by Clifford Singer at édition. This Newsletter is financially supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust and DG XI (Environment) of the Commission of the European Communities.

Contributions from David Baldock (IEEP), Euan Dunn, (RSPB) and Karen Mitchell (IEEP) and Bert Keus (Dutch Fisheries Board)



IEEP London

COUNTDOWN

The 2002 CFP review – unravelling the process

Clare Coffey IEEP London

For many years, there has been considerable disenchantment with the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Indeed, the CFP is often labelled as one of, if not *the* most unpopular of the EC's policies, with fishers and environmentalists alike calling for radical change. The nature of these demands varies, some arguing for more widespread management of common fisheries resources at the European level. Others have pressed for a retreat from the present CFP, allowing greater regional and/or local management. The principle of 'subsidiarity' is used to defend this argument. Others still have argued for an overhaul of the types of measures which are used to manage fisheries, to rely less on 'command and control' types of legislation and more on economic instruments - such as incentive payments and taxes.

While this debate has been going on for many years, it has been given more impetus and direction as we approach the 'review' of the CFP in the year 2002. The 2002 review is heralded alternatively as the 'end of the CFP' or 'business as usual'. Neither of these outcomes is likely. Instead, it is likely that the present CFP will continue beyond 2002, but with some, possibly major, modifications. What is known, however, is that the 2002 deadline provides an opportunity at least to improve key aspects of the CFP.

The aim of this short article is to throw some light on the real subject of debate, while remembering that '2002' is just one development in the continuing evolution of the CFP.

DEFINING THE 2002 REVIEW

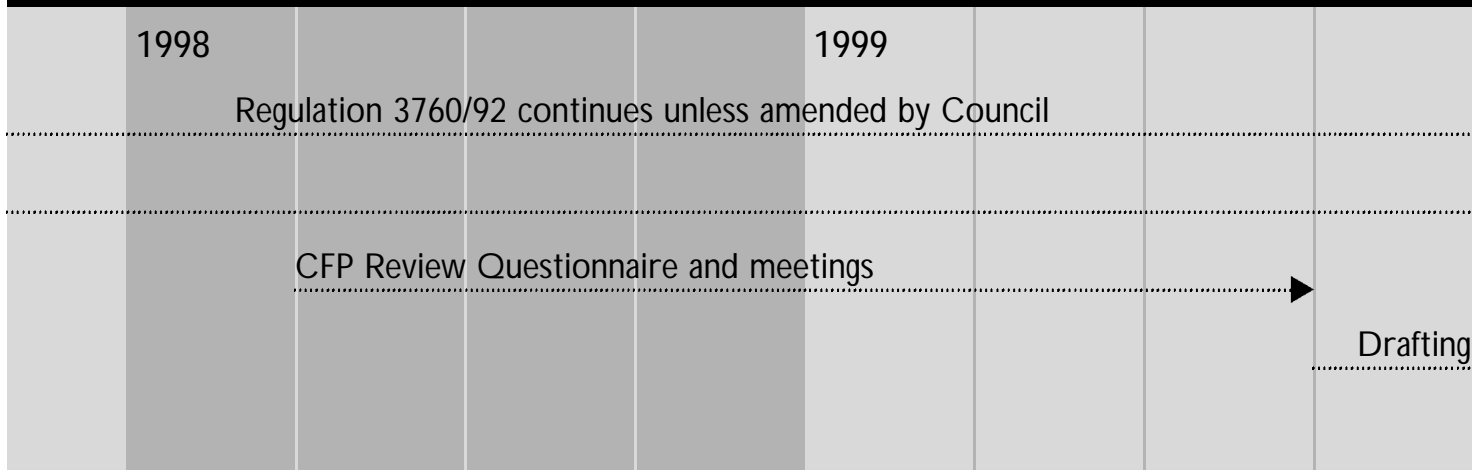
Although one hears of the 'review of the CFP', this in itself may be somewhat misleading. In fact, the basis for the review comes from Regulation 3760/92 - a key CFP instrument which lays out the framework for the

Portuguese inshore fishing boats



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● TIMETABLE FOR THE REVIEW OF REGULATION 3760/92



TO 2002 . . .

conservation and management of Europe's common fisheries resources. This framework legislation supports various 'daughter' measures dealing with access to Community waters and fishery resources, and managing and monitoring fishing activities. Unlike its forerunner, Regulation 3760/92 is permanent - almost all of its provisions will remain in place unless or until they are altered by a decision of the Council.

There is one exception to this rule. Those provisions which restrict access of fishing vessels to the inshore waters of other countries will cease to apply at the end of 2002. The restriction was introduced in order to protect local fishing communities against competition from other fleets, thereby limiting the broader principle that all EC vessels have 'equal access' to EC waters. If it is decided that such a restriction is to continue beyond 2002 a new measure will need to be proposed by the Commission, and agreed by the Council. At this stage, there is every indication that future access restrictions will indeed be agreed in some form.

However, it is possible that these may be accompanied by more explicit conditions on fishing in these areas.

Before a decision is taken on this or other aspects of the regime, the Commission is to draw up a report on the state of the Community's fisheries. It is also to comment on how far Regulation 3760/92 has been implemented. This will provide a basis for any Commission proposals on reform which would then need to be adopted by the Council acting by Qualified Majority Voting. The histogram provides a general indication of the expected timeframe for the review and negotiation of subsequent legislation, although the actual time taken to agree changes may vary considerably.

EARLY START TO 2002 REVIEW

It is perhaps a sign of the extent of feeling over the CFP, that work on the 2002 review has already com-

● CANVASSING STAKEHOLDERS' VIEWS

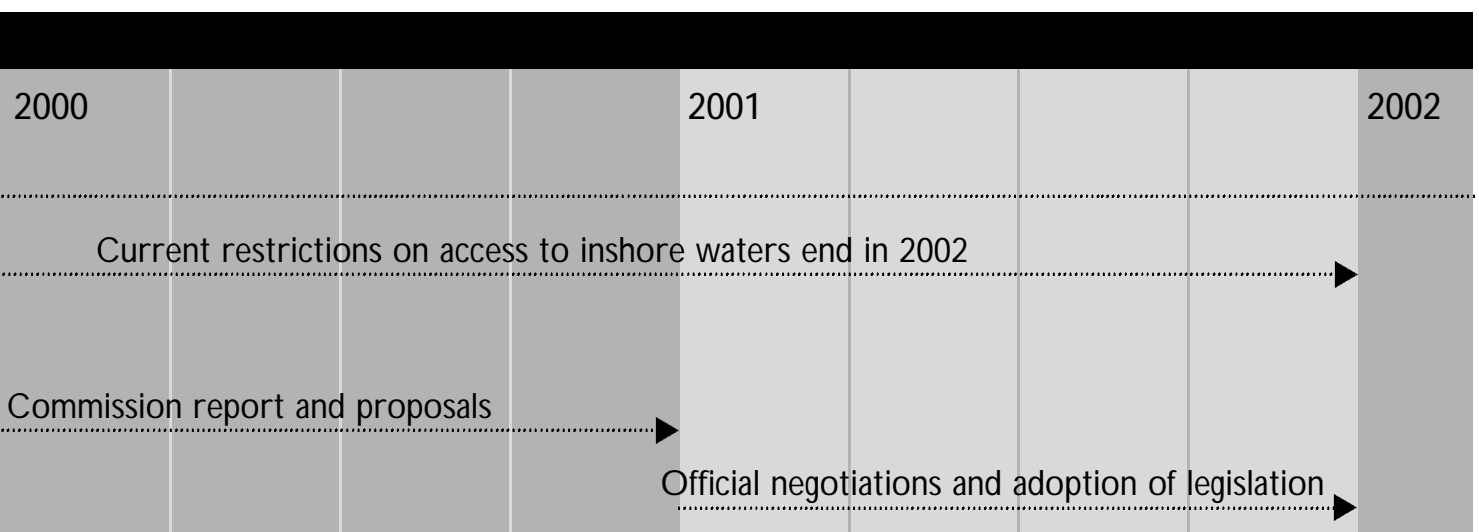
To officially launch the 2002 review process, Emma Bonino, the Fisheries Commissioner issued a questionnaire in March 1998 encouraging 'open and constructive debate' with all parties concerned. The questionnaire is to be followed by a series of meetings in the Member States, starting in Ireland in September 1998 and ending in Italy in June 1999.

The questionnaire, which runs to nine pages of detailed questions, covers most aspects of EC fisheries policy, including access to waters and resources, resource management and conservation, international cooperation and fishery agreements, the market for fishery products, and support measures. A specific question under 'resource management' asks whether the present CFP takes 'sufficient account of environmental considerations? If not, what improvements do you propose?'

The document was distributed widely, to around 300 organisations representing fishermen, traders, processors, consumers and environmental interests. Official news on the outcome of the exercise has not been released although a report was presented by the Commissioner during the June 1998 Fisheries Council meeting.

menced, some four years before the Commission is due to report. Similarly, although in principle the review could be limited to the question of access under Regulation 3760/92, the Commission has signalled its desire to make the review exercise a wide-ranging 'reflection' covering many aspects of the CFP. In doing so, the Commission intends to assess the CFP's overall contribution to resource conservation, employment, profitability and competitiveness, as well as other objectives such as the protection of the environment. To this end, a questionnaire was circulated in 1998 to help identify the main areas on which the reflection exercise should focus (see insert above).

Despite the early start to the formal 2002 process, it is important to remember that the CFP is a constantly evolving policy, with opportunities for improvement also arising from discussions elsewhere. In particular, ongoing discussions on marketing, control and enforcement, structural policy and third country agreements can each play important roles in the transition to fisheries which are socially and environmentally sustainable.



The Shetland sandeel fishery

The Ecosystem Approach in action

Dr Euan Dunn
Marine Policy Officer
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

INTRODUCTION

The Shetland Islands to the north of Scotland have had a local inshore sandeel fishery since 1974. Compared with the massive, Danish-led sandeel fishery in the North Sea, the Shetland fishery is relatively small. Shetland landings reached a peak of 52,000 tonnes in 1982, compared with over 1 million tonnes caught in the wider North Sea in 1997. However, apart from its value to the local economy, the significance of the Shetland fishery lies not in its size but in its close overlap with the feeding areas of internationally important seabird populations. The collapse of the sandeel stock in the 1980s and the resulting widespread breeding failure of the birds brought fishers, fisheries managers and bird conservationists into sharp conflict. In the longer term, however, this led to an unprecedented level of cooperative research and dialogue about the best way to manage the fishery.

The result was a pioneering application of the Precautionary Approach, and indeed of the Ecosystem Approach, to managing finfish stocks in European waters. The management regime for the Shetland fishery has gradually been refined to strike a better balance between fishing and bird interests, and a scheme for 1998-2000 is widely regarded as the most satisfactory balance yet. This paper briefly outlines the evolution of this agreement and assesses its significance for the overall management of fisheries in the UK and Europe.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SANDEELS FOR SHETLAND'S SEABIRDS

Shetland supports around 1 million breeding seabirds, several species in nationally and internationally important numbers. Shetland's seabirds are especially dependent on sandeels for food, having few - if any - alternative prey species to switch to in times of shortage. Moreover, the fishery extends close inshore, near to seabird colonies and their feeding areas, increasing the possibility of competition between seabirds and man.

After the peak of sandeel landings in 1982, catches steadily declined as a result of low recruitment which also caused massive breeding failure in the birds. Shetland's arctic terns, for example, raised virtually no young between 1980 and 1984, and the adult population had nearly halved by 1990. While not blaming the fishery for the decline, the RSPB argued that the management of the fishery, in particular the uncertainty in stock assessment and the lack of catch limits, was inappropriate and that the Precautionary Approach called for much tighter regulation of the fishery. What was needed was a management regime which would ensure that Shetland's industrial fishery was sustainable for the sandeel stock itself, for dependent seabirds and other marine wildlife.

Ultimately, the collapse of the stock led to closure of the fishery from 1991-94. The closure was an opportunity to undertake detailed research on the sandeel stock and its relationship with seabirds. This scientific approach enabled a 'cooling off' period in which a more constructive dialogue developed between the key players: the Shetland Fishermen's Association, the Scottish Office Agriculture

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Environment and Fisheries Department (SOAEFD), Scottish Natural Heritage (the statutory government body for nature conservation in Scotland), and RSPB. Prior to the fishery re-opening in 1995, SOAEFD consulted with all parties before arriving at a series of strict controls for the period 1995-1997 to ensure that fishing effort would be unlikely to deplete sandeels around Shetland, especially in periods of poor recruitment.

The resulting management regime was a significant advance and established a healthy process of trust-building and transparency among the stakeholders, made easier by the small size of the Shetland community in which individuals could quickly get to know and meet one another. It was agreed that the management arrangements would be reviewed every three years. The 1997 review thus offered the opportunity for fine-tuning the management for 1998-2000 (see insert). While SOAEFD remained responsible for the final management package and its implementation, relations between the local fisheries and environmental interests in Shetland had developed to the stage where they could negotiate key elements of the package and make proposals to SOAEFD for consideration.

The RSPB was particularly pleased with the moratorium on fishing during the main breeding season of the seabirds, and felt that this justified the somewhat increased catch limit. From the fishers' point of view, the increased catch limit greatly increased the potential financial value of the fishery. Delegating the quota management to the fishers was also welcomed as it ensured more sensitive local stewardship of the fishery.

LEARNING FROM THE SHETLAND EXPERIENCE

A number of conclusions have arisen from the Shetland management package, including:

Importantly, the agreement was a cooperative effort. It was possible only because the trust was earned by a prolonged period of dialogue among stakeholders, particularly between environmental organisations and fishers.

Faced with uncertainty, the precautionary approach demands two responses - a more cautious approach to fishing and enhanced knowledge. Management of the fishery in Shetland made progress in responding to both of these requirements.

Failure to apply the Precautionary Approach to management of the massive North Sea fishery for sandeels (see also article in *European Scene*) has been heavily criticised by two respected Danish fisheries biologists (Gislason and Kirkegaard, 1997). A lesson from Shetland is that stock assessment is unable to predict when fishing may deplete the stock and thus threaten sensitive areas (for breeding seabird colonies and other marine wildlife). This is a major gap in risk



CH Comerwall (RSPB Images)

assessment and dictates the need for stricter regulation of the North Sea sandeel fishery in sensitive areas.

Fishing for Sandeels

In terms both of conflict resolution and incorporating environmental objectives into fisheries management, there are lessons from Shetland for European fisheries generally. As principles, the Precautionary Approach and the Ecosystem Approach to fisheries management need to be at the heart of the revised Common Fisheries Policy and its implementation. Quite simply, fisheries need to learn to adapt to the marine environment, not the other way round.

Reference

Gislason H and Kirkegaard E, 1997, The industrial fishery and the North Sea sandeel stock Summary of presentation at the seminar on the Precautionary Approach to North Sea Fisheries Management, Oslo 9-10 September 1996, *Fisken og Havet* Nr 1

● MANAGING THE SHETLAND SANDEEL FISHERY

The management package for 1998 to 2000 was the product of negotiation between the fisheries sector and environmental interests. It represents an unprecedented level of consensus and includes the following:

- A closed season in June and July to preclude the possibility of competition with seabirds such as arctic terns when they are feeding their young. There is also an extension of the fishing season after the end of July. (Previously, all fishing had to cease after July).
- An increased Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 7,000 tonnes annually, compared with a annual TAC of 3,000 for 1995-97.
- Annual reviews of the TAC to take account of any marked changes in sandeel recruitment.
- Landings restricted to two designated ports in Shetland.
- Shetland fishermen, through their Producer Organisation, to decide how quotas are allocated to licensed vessels.

North Sea herring on road to recovery

Provisional advice from the ICES Advisory Committee for Fisheries Management includes positive news for the North Sea herring stocks, Atlanto-scandian herring and blue whiting. The outlook is less positive for European eels, with stocks in serious decline.

The ACFM advice is used by the European Commission as the basis for proposing annual total allowable catches (TACs) for the EC fleet. Provisional advice forwarded in May 1998 suggests that the drastic cuts made to North Sea herring TACs during 1996 and 97 have had the desired effect, resulting in the recovery of stocks to safe biological minimum levels. An emergency management regime adopted to help the stock recover should be continued.

In contrast, the European eel population is thought to have reached historically low levels, with migration of young eels, or elvers, having declined noticeably since the 1980s. While the precise cause of this decline is not known, the advice calls for the rapid introduction of fishing restrictions in relevant lakes and rivers.

ACFM has also called for precautionary measures to be taken to protect vulnerable deep-water species.

For further details contact: ICES, tel +45 33 15 42 25; fax +45 33 93 42 15; <http://www.ices.dk>



Sorting herring

UK acts to protect marine habitats

The UK Government has announced a ban on a new form of fishing to protect an important marine habitat. The measure prohibits dredging for razor shells, troughs and carpet shells in order to protect shallow inlets, bays and sandbanks on England's east coast. The area is among a number of

marine sites submitted by the UK Government as candidate Special Areas of Conservation under the EC Habitats Directive 92/43.

The ban follows advice from the Government's nature conservation agency, English Nature, suggesting that a new unrestricted fishery for razor shells in particular could damage the local habitat. It is hoped that cooperation between English Nature, the local Sea Fisheries Committee and the Fisheries Ministry will allow a controlled fishery to operate. The results from the fishery are to be used to develop suitable management rules, eventually allowing the precautionary ban to be lifted.

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European Commission/NGO Contact Group: a forum for dialogue

The European Commission recently set up a contact group to provide a forum for continuing discussion between environment and development Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and relevant Commission services. The Group reflects increasing attention being paid by many NGOs to the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), as well as pressure for greater internal coherence between EC policies.

The first meeting was held in Brussels on June 19, 1998. Ten NGOs participated, as well as a number of Commission officials from various Directorates General, including the Commissioner responsible for Fisheries, Emma Bonino.

The aim of the meeting was to ascertain the respective activities and priorities of NGOs and the Commission, with each presenting its programme. Following a general debate, it was agreed that another meeting would be held before the end of the year (in October or November). Two subjects were proposed for the agenda: the ongoing reform of the Structural Funds and the evaluation of Fisheries Agreements.

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Extending the ban on drift nets

After a considerable impasse, the Council has finally agreed to a

Commission proposal prohibiting further the use of large drift nets. The agreement comes four years after the original proposal was forwarded, although there has been criticism of the ban from both industry and the environmental lobby.

Since 1992, legislation adopted within the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy has included provisions banning the use of large drift-nets, with 'large' defined as greater than 2.5 kilometres. Despite the existence of this Regulation, however, there remained concern that larger nets were being used, particularly in the Mediterranean. There was also evidence that even legal nets were having an unacceptable impact on populations of species of marine mammals and turtles. Despite pressure for a more widespread ban on drift-nets from the European Parliament, the Commission and the Spanish Government, there was insufficient support for such a move in the Council. That was until 1997 when the UK Government announced a change in policy.

The more widespread ban, finally adopted in June 1998 under Regulation 1239/98, prohibits altogether drift-netting for certain species from 2002 onwards. Keeping such nets on board fishing boats, or indeed landing species which have been caught using these nets, will also be prohibited. The species involved include primarily swordfish and tuna (large pelagics), cephalopods and shark. Inshore drift-net fisheries targeting salmon and sea trout fisheries are not included, nor is drift-net fishing in the Baltic Sea.

The financial aid package to help vessel owners and fishers affected by the ban is still to be agreed. Ireland, France and Italy are the main countries affected, although the Italian fleet is by far the most significant. A specific aid package for the Italian swordfish fleet was already agreed in 1997. A final compensation package to accompany this new Regulation is to be agreed later in 1998. It is likely to consist of aid for ceasing activities altogether, or for converting vessels to other fisheries.

An area which is not likely to be resolved in the short term is the use of drift nets once they have been officially 'decommissioned'. In particular, there is growing concern that nets are being exported to non-EC countries where similar controls may not exist, in effect undermining the global UN Resolution.

European Parliament wades in on industrial fisheries

The European Parliament recently added its opinion to the ongoing debate over industrial fishing. In a resolution, the Parliament claims the practice is justifiable so long as the principle of 'sustainability' is respected. To ensure this happens, accurate research and monitoring is required, as well as rigorous controls on landings. 'In cases where the data are unclear, the precautionary approach must be followed unreservedly.'

Industrial fisheries involve the use of small-meshed nets to catch large quantities of fish which is subsequently reduced into fish meal and fish oil. The final product is used to supply artificial feed for the poultry, pig and aquaculture sectors. Oil derivatives are also used in the production of margarines and cooking fats.

Within the EC, most attention has been focused on the North Sea, the Skagerrak and the Kattegat industrial fishery due to its size and perceived impact. The fishery is dominated by a Danish fleet, though vessels from Scotland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland are also present. Small-meshed trawls (mesh sizes less than 16 and 32 millimetres) are used to catch sandeel, Norway pout, sprat and herring. Encircling nets, or purse seines, are also used by Norwegian vessels.

According to the report accompanying the EP resolution, nearly 60 per cent of the total annual North Sea catch is taken for industrial purposes. Among the concerns voiced over this fishery is the direct impact it is having on the target species, as well as depriving other species of fish, sea birds and marine mammals of food. A significant proportion (20 per cent) of the catch consists of human consumption fish, and there is also concern that the final use of the protein energy is highly wasteful.

While accepting a limited justification for industrial fisheries, the Parliament resolution calls for accurate research and monitoring of the impact of industrial fisheries on all species living in and from the sea. Catch and by-catch limits should be respected, supported by rigorous controls in ports where the fish is landed. More specific provisions are also called for, including a management plan for the sandeel fishery and designation of protection zones in environmentally sensitive areas.

For further details contact: European Parliament Committee on Fisheries Secretariat, tel +32 2 284 4593

Icelanders leagues ahead on fish consumption

In the run-up to this year's Expo '98, Eurostat has produced a statistical analysis of Europe's fishing industry - European Fisheries in Figures. According to the report, the average EU citizen consumes in the order of 22 kg of fish per year, with the Portuguese population devouring as much as 57 kg per year. The figure is dwarfed by Iceland, however, where inhabitants eat an average 1.8 kg per week, or 93 kg per year.

Apart from highlighting the importance of fisheries as a source of protein, the report provides an overview of production patterns, compared to 1970 when the first EC fisheries legislation was adopted. Since then, most Member States have experienced an increase in fish production. Germany, Portugal, Belgium and Spain have suffered the greatest cuts in productivity, influenced by declining distant water fleets. Overall, today's catches are dominated by cod, hake, haddock, herring, sardines and anchovies, with much of this taken in the north east Atlantic.

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Integrating Fisheries and the Environment in the North Sea: progress report

The Commission has prepared a report (COM(98)326) on the Community's response to the 1997 North Sea Intermediate Ministerial Meeting (IMM) on the Integration of Fisheries and Environmental Issues. The report was welcomed by the Council in June 1998, although it has been heavily criticised by environmental organisations.

North Sea Fisheries and Environment ministers and Commissioners met in Bergen in March 1997. The resulting Statement of Conclusions identified a series of action points, addressed at relevant authorities. The Commission report identifies progress made in specific areas, such as agreement on fleet decommissioning targets, technical conservation measures and species and habitat protection. Few actions relate specifically to the IMM, however.

The Commission has been invited to prepare a full report on the IMM follow-up by 31 March 1999.

Controversy over Dutch mussel fishery

Bert Keus

Dutch Fisheries Board

The European Commission has decided to take legal action against the Netherlands for non-respect of the European Union's nature conservation legislation. The case concerns the birds Directive. The Commission is of the opinion that the Netherlands does not properly protect the Wadden Sea, which is considered one of the EC's most important special protection areas designated under the Directive.

The application to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) follows a complaint from a Dutch bird protection organisation in 1993. In 1993, the Dutch government introduced a new policy for mussel and cockle fishing in Dutch coastal waters (Policy Document on Sea and Coastal Fisheries). This aimed at harmonising fishing effort and nature conservation where possible, and separating the two where necessary. In line with a decision taken on the Wadden Sea's trilateral ministerial conference in Esbjerg, 26 per cent of the Dutch Wadden Sea was closed permanently for mussel and cockle fishing. Additional measures were also taken to prevent food shortage for birds.

The Dutch shellfish fishermen were asked to draw up a management plan in order to minimize the impacts of mussel and cockle fisheries on nature in the areas that remained open for fisheries. It was decided to evaluate the effectiveness of the new policy in 1997.

In its Application to the Court of Justice the Commission states that the Dutch policy does not sufficiently prevent adverse effects on the area's bird life and that the Wadden Sea habitat is deteriorating as a consequence of shellfish fisheries.

In the view of the Dutch fishing industry, the case is weak for several reasons. Firstly, the Commission has only considered the measures taken by the Dutch government, while it has ignored voluntary measures taken by the



industry, such as a reduction in the number of cockle vessels from 27 to 23 and voluntary closure of all areas featuring sea grass beds or stable mussel beds.

Secondly, the Commission failed to consider the outcome of the policy evaluation which was undertaken in 1997. The evaluation suggested that there was no clear correlation between recent fishing activity and the decline of some bird populations. For the fishing industry the fact that the population of oystercatchers increased by more than 30 per cent between 1975 and 1985 when there were no restrictions on shellfish fishing at all is proof that other factors were at work.

Furthermore satellite monitoring of fishing positions of cockle vessels has shown that no more than 3.5 per cent of the Dutch Wadden Sea was fished during the period 1992-1996. Even if cockle fishing had a significant negative effect on certain habitats, these would have been very local and could not have resulted in deterioration of the ecosystem as the Commission claims.

Concerning the protection of stable mussel beds, the Commission is of the opinion that these are insufficiently protected since only 26 per cent of the Wadden Sea is permanently closed for fishing. As has already been stated, however, fishermen voluntarily closed all areas with stable mussel beds. Additional areas have been closed where new mussel beds were thought likely to develop. In one such area stable mussel beds have

indeed developed, proving the valuable knowledge which fishermen can bring to nature conservation.

All told, these measures have resulted in a situation of virtually no mussel seed fishery on intertidal flats in recent years. In 1994 only about 6 per cent of a spatfall of over 150,000 tonnes of mussel seed was harvested in the intertidal. Since then, tidal flats have been closed altogether for mussel fishing. It could therefore be concluded that mussel fishing has had no effect on the development of mussel beds since the introduction of the new policy in 1993.

Finally, the Commission may soon be confronted with further efforts to harmonise fishing practices with nature conservation. The 1997 evaluation showed that the relatively small area of intertidal mussel beds in recent years could be an important factor in determining the Wadden Sea's bird populations. The Minister of Agriculture has stated that in the next five years greater effort will be made to improve possibilities for developing mussel beds. There is an ongoing debate about the criteria to be applied when designating areas with a higher protection level. It can therefore be expected that many of the arguments the Commission has put forward will be outdated when the case comes to be heard in court.

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Opportunities for fisheries

POOR TAKE-UP OF FIG AND PESCA

Ongoing reviews of the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIG) and the PESCA Community Initiative suggest that Member States are failing to spend their programmed allocations. Importantly, only a limited number of projects have attempted to address wider environmental impacts of fisheries.

Funding for fisheries related projects under the two instruments amounts to some ECU 2.8 billion over the period 1994 to 1999. Both FIG and PESCA offer support to sustainable development of the fisheries sector. More innovative projects are particularly encouraged under PESCA which can be used to fund pilot projects aimed at improving fisheries management, for example. However, recent figures suggest that funds are not being taken-up as planned, with many Member States still showing large underspends for PESCA and FIG.

INFORMATION ON HOW TO USE STRUCTURAL FUNDS FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

On March 18, as part of its so-called Agenda 2000 exercise, the European Commission published a raft of proposals relating to the reform of one of the EC's major expenditure programmes - the Structural Funds. As a consequence, there will be new opportunities to

use the Structural Funds, including the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance, to support nature conservation projects. This is especially important for regions which have sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation under the EC habitats Directive, where there is a need to promote sustainable fisheries activities that are compatible with the conservation of nature.

The Structural Funds can already be used to support nature conservation projects - but take-up is low due to inadequate knowledge among environmental authorities, NGOs, and the members of Structural Fund Monitoring Committees of the opportunities open to them; and insufficient appreciation of the contribution nature conservation projects can make to local employment and development.

A new EU-wide information and awareness programme therefore aims to show local and regional authorities and environmental organisations how the Structural Funds can be used to protect nature and create jobs at the same time. The programme is jointly sponsored by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage and is being co-ordinated by IEEP London. Project partners include WWF, the Nova Institut in Germany, Legambiente in Italy and TERRA in Spain. A key output of the project involves the distribution among interested parties of information dossiers.

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IEEP London is an independent body for the analysis and advancement of environmental policies in Europe. While a major focus of works is on the development, implementation and evaluation of the EC's environmental policy, IEEP London has also been at the forefront of research and policy development in relation to the integration of environmental considerations into other policy sectors.

This Newsletter is part of IEEP's workprogramme on Policy Measures for the Sustainable Management of Fisheries which aims to identify, develop and build a consensus around alternative approaches, with a view to influencing the review of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2002.

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