

INSIDE

2-3

CFP Update

4-12

European Scene

NEW ERA: NEW AND OLD CHALLENGES



Credit: James Brown

Estonian sprat trawlers. Enlargement of the EU increases the Community pool to include more Mediterranean waters and most of the Baltic Sea.

James Brown
IEEP London

This year has seen the EU enter a new era. The joining of ten new Member States in May pushed the EU borders eastwards and further into the Mediterranean and Baltic Seas, and so brought with it a change in the internal dynamics and politics of the Union. The new European Parliament elected in June and the new Commission appointed in November consequently grew in size to accommodate new Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and Commissioners from each new Member State. Heads of State also agreed on the new Constitution in October.

An immediate implication for fisheries has been the appointment of a Commissioner with a more dedicated fisheries role. While Fischler was Commissioner of both fisheries and agriculture, the new Commissioner of Fisheries, Dr Joseph Borg, will no longer be responsible for agriculture. Instead, his title is Commissioner of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs. The inclusion of Maritime Affairs in Borg's title reflects plans to establish a new Maritime Policy Task Force. This will be chaired by Borg and will undertake consultations for the development of a Green Paper on a EU maritime policy. The remit of the task force is reportedly to 'shape proposals for a future integrated maritime policy' and the Green Paper is expected in the first half of 2006. While DG Fish has not changed in its structure and areas of competence and it is not currently clear how this process will relate to the Marine Thematic Strategy (see page 10), such a Task Force and Green Paper may contribute to more integrated and coherent management of the marine environment.

Commissioner Fischler's successes in 'greening

blue Europe' were mixed, as is perhaps to be expected (see page 4). In considering his legacy, and what he has left for Borg to work with and build on, the institutional changes are particularly notable given their general permanence. Specific achievements are the realisation of Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) and the Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA). Major challenges remain for Borg, however, in greening EU fisheries management, and securing a sustainable and competitive industry more broadly. This is reflected in the range of issues raised in this and past editions of *El Anzuelo*, and the discussions at a recent high level EU Conference in Brussels in November (see page 12).

Borg explicitly identifies the environment as a key pillar of sustainability of fisheries management, running throughout his six priorities – stakeholder involvement; implementation of long-term, sustainable fisheries management through management and recovery plans; full use of structural policy; ensuring a level playing field through improved enforcement; improved sector competitiveness; and sustainable growth of responsible aquaculture. While these are not drastically different from current directions, there is a prominent absence of any mention of excess fleet capacity and the need to address this in his answers to European Parliament questioning, his statements of priorities and the new Mission of DG Fish (http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/fisheries/missn_en.htm). Rather, the focus is on limiting 'fishing effort' and 'fishing pressure'.

Managing the marine environment in a more integrated way, through an eco-system based approach, is a major challenge that lies ahead for the EU and Borg in particular. Defining what these terms mean in practice will be a first difficult step, from which implementation will need to be considered. The fragmented and sectoral approach to managing human use of the marine environment is a key problem and principle cause of environmental degradation, and a long-term vision is needed. However, this should not distract from the immediate and remaining challenges that are yet to be adequately tackled, such as stock decline and marine pollution.

Commissioner Borg's website:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/commission_barroso/borg/index_en.htm

Commissioner Borg's responses to parliamentary questions:
http://www.europarl.eu.int/hearings/commission/2004_comm/questionnaires_en.htm

Maintaining momentum of CFP implementation

James Brown
IEEP London

It was anticipated that the policy machinery would slow down during the period of EU enlargement, the election of a new European Parliament, the appointment of a new Commission and the summer break. While some policy initiatives were indeed delayed, policy makers remained busy and there were a number of developments that built upon ongoing initiatives. Several of these included important developments in environmental fisheries policy.

Institutional developments

On top of the wider EU institutional developments, the much-anticipated framework for Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) came into place in May (Council Decision 2004/585). This was shortly followed by the accepted proposal for the North Sea RAC (NSRAC), which held its first meeting in November. Following in the steps of the NSRAC, proposals are currently under development for all the other RACs, although progress

is notably slowest in the case of the Mediterranean. Many now look forward to seeing how stakeholders rise to the challenge of engaging in frank debates, and then how the Commission responds to RAC advice.

Transparency of fleet management

Tackling overcapacity, a key driver of overfishing, appears to have dropped of the Commission's agenda (see page 1), but work continues on fleet management. As part of a drive to improve transparency in fleet management, the Commission released a public version of the Community fleet register on its website (http://europa.eu.int/comm/fisheries/fleet/index_en.htm). This version contains all details of Member States' fleets with the exception of personal data, which is accessible by Member State Governments. It is still limited however to the details of the 'old' 15 Member States. While making the fleet register publicly available is a positive step in improving transparency, this seems to have been undermined by derogations for the new Member States from fishing fleet reference level requirements (Regulation 1242/2004). With no reference levels, it will be more difficult to monitor the new Member States' fleet sizes. The conditions on the use of public aid for fleet management in these Member States was also relaxed, with the ratcheting down of reference levels when public aid is used to decommission fleets being removed.

Levelling the playing field

Inadequate and uneven application of regulations continues to be a problem, both in terms of effective management and undermining the legitimacy of the CFP. This is highlighted by the second version of the CFP Compliance Scoreboard (http://europa.eu.int/comm/fisheries/scoreboard/index_en.htm), and the initiation of four infringement procedures this year (two against Spain and one each against the UK and France) relating to failures in enforcement or monitoring.

Progress has continued in establishing the Joint Inspection Structure (JIS), now termed the Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA). Details of its form and functions have been debated in the Council and a feasibility study has been undertaken. Ahead of this, the North Sea EU Fisheries Ministers (Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands) came together to form the 'Scheveningen group', signing a Ministerial declaration on 'the enhancement of cooperation in the field of enforcement of the CFP in the North Sea' at the July fisheries Council.

● Protecting coral reefs

The Council has adopted short-term measures to protect deep-sea corals around the Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands from the impact of bottom trawling. The Regulation amends the 2004 TAC Regulation (Regulation 2287/2003). This represents a temporary solution pending agreement on a more permanent measure amending Regulation 850/98, as proposed by the Commission (COM(2004)58).

The opening up of the 'Western Waters' around the Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands had sparked some controversy, resulting in rather confusing political squabbling. To summarise:

- in November 2003, Council Regulation 1954/2003 – the so called 'Western Waters Regulation' – introduced 'equal access' to Portuguese waters between 100 and 200 nautical miles off the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands, as well as new effort ceilings for the area;
- in February 2004, the Autonomous Region of the Azores lodged an action against the European Council with the *Court of First Instance* of the European Communities, seeking the partial suspension of Regulation 1954/2003;
- also in February 2004, the Commission tabled a *proposal for a permanent ban* on the use of bottom-trawled fishing gear around the Azores, Madeira and Canaries (COM(2004)58), by means of amending Regulation 850/89;
- in March, the Autonomous Region of the Azores, supported by Seas at Risk and WWF, applied to the Court for (further) interim measures to suspend Regulation 1954/2003, which entered into force in August 2004, until the Court had time to rule on the legality of the measures;
- in July, the *Court of First Instance failed to support the application for interim measures to protect Azorean marine resources from fisheries impacts*;
- on 1 August, 'equal access' measures took effect, effectively opening fishing grounds in the waters around the Azores, Madeira and Canaries; and
- in mid-August, the Commission proposed *short-term measures to protect deep-sea corals around the Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands by amending the TAC Regulation (2287/2003) (COM(2004)555)*.

The measures are therefore the adoption of this latest proposal. As they expire at the end of this year, they will need to either be renewed as part of the 2005 TAC Regulation or adopted as the permanent measure proposed in February.

In November the Commission came forward with a proposal for a Regulation requiring the use of electronic logbooks by vessels and the development of remote sensing systems by Member States to use in conjunction with satellite vessel monitoring systems (VMS). If adopted, this will build upon the requirement under the basic Regulation (2371/2002) for all vessels over 15 metres to have a VMS device installed as of 1 January 2005.

Mixed progress on the environment

There have been several significant developments in terms of environmentally friendly fishing gears (see Box 2), bottom trawling and the protection of cetaceans. At EU level, a temporary trawling ban around the Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands was adopted in October to protect deep-sea corals (see Box 1). The summer term and institutional upheavals did little to help the adoption of the measures on a permanent basis. It is encouraging that the mechanism exists for such measures to be 'fast-streamed' but the pressure is now on for the Council to follow this with a permanent measure. Similarly, the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) adopted a ban on bottom trawling, bottom-set gillnets and longline fishing over five deepwater areas but it is not permanent and expires in three years. In the meantime many will be looking to the UN General Assembly for an international deepwater trawl ban (see page 4).

Cetacean bycatch remains a cause for concern. Because of continuing cetacean bycatch in the south west English Channel bass pair-trawl fishery, the UK requested emergency action from the Commission to close the fishery. This was rejected on the basis that it was not an 'emergency' situation, with bycatch largely occurring in the Spring, and that ICES data did not support the argument that the proposed ban would be

effective in addressing the bycatch. This is contrary to evidence from the UK Sea Mammal Research Unit research that bycatch is particularly high in November. In response to the rejection, the UK is working to ban pair-trawling in the 6-12 mile area. This would be the first such measure to be taken under the powers afforded to Member States under the 'new' CFP (Article 9, Regulation 2371/2002), although it will still require Commission approval as it will affect non-UK vessels.

Key proposals prompt new alliances

Other important policies in the pipeline at the moment include recovery plans, the eel Action Plan and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) (see Box 3). Although proposed last December, the two recovery plans for sole stocks and southern hake and Norway lobster stocks await agreement. It is expected that they will be substantially modified, particularly in terms of the effort management elements given the changes made to these parts of the cod and northern hake recovery plans last December. Given the superficial nature of the northern hake plan and the Council's disagreement with the Commission's idea of prohibiting fishing for silver eel in specific areas and seasons, the outcome of the recovery plans will be another important test of the Council's commitment to a reformed CFP.

The outcome of the EFF negotiations may have significant implications for the direction of the CFP. Being one of the first major policies to be debated under an enlarged EU it has generated new alliances, and differences, amongst Member States that have been reflected in other policy negotiations such as the Mediterranean Regulation. The 'Friends of Fishing', a group of Member States that opposed several key lines of the CFP reform, has been renewed and developed a coalition with the new EU Member States bordering the Baltic. In the first instance they are resisting the proposed European Fisheries Fund and pushing for subsidies for capacity renewal to be reinstated. This is a source of concern for those who argued for ending subsidies during CFP reform, and yet another challenge that lies ahead for Commissioner Borg.

● Environmentally friendly fishing methods

In June the Commission adopted a Communication (COM(2004)438) on the promotion of environmentally friendly fishing methods. The Communication is based on the stated requirement in the new CFP Regulation for 'measures designed to [...] minimise the impact of fishing activities on marine eco-systems' (Article 2, Regulation 2371/2002).

The Communication does not offer concrete proposals on how to reduce fishing effort. Rather than focusing on existing environmentally friendly fishing practices and ways to promote them, it instead focuses on generating more research in this area.

That said, the Commission does signal its intention to evaluate, by the end of 2005, the potential of financial and non-financial incentives for encouraging a move towards more environmentally-friendly fishing methods, which

should relate to the European Fisheries Fund discussions (Box 3).

The Communication also refers to the development of a 'procedure' for adopting technical measures that are developed and endorsed on a consensus basis within RACs, using Article 30(2) of Regulation 2371/2002. This article refers to decisions adopted using Management Committees, ie comitology. If this were to happen, then it would have the effect of significantly extending the powers of stakeholders in EU fisheries management. It also would make it vital that environmental interests are properly presented at RACs. The Commission is to come forward with a proposal in due course.

Finally, the Communication considers the possibility of developing 'measures that will give fishermen an alternative to discarding the illegal part of their catch'.

● Future fisheries fund

During July 2004, the Commission brought forward a set of financial proposals on EU expenditure during the 2007-2013 period. Amongst these was a proposal to set up a new European Fisheries Fund, replacing the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) which runs until the end of 2006.

With an overall budget of €5 billion, the new EFF is designed to help implement the 'new' CFP, as well as offering additional and locally targeted support to help certain coastal areas dependent on fishing. Three quarters of the budget would be targeted at the regions 'lagging behind', with €2 billion going to such regions in the 'old'

Member States, and a further €1.7 billion going to the 'new' Member States.

Although the Fund would be based on the same principles as FIFG, notably multi-annual programming, partnership and co-financing, the EFF is an improvement on FIFG in several respects. It strengthens the link between stock recovery and management, on the one hand, and access to subsidies, on the other. A wider range of opportunities is also provided for environmental projects, including 'aquacultural' payments to support environmental management activities that go beyond good aquacultural practice.

'Greening blue Europe together'

Niki Sporrong of the Fisheries Secretariat reflects on the achievements of Franz Fischler, the outgoing Fisheries Commissioner, through an environmental lens.

The phrase 'greening blue Europe together' was used by Franz Fischler himself in his editorial for *El Anzuelo* in Spring 2002, before any decision on CFP reform had been taken. At the time we were all still waiting for the delayed publication of the Roadmap. Looking back, I think that the phrase does capture many of Franz Fischler's ambitions for the EU fisheries sector.

In September 1999, he was one of a small number of Commissioners under Jaques Santer to stay on for a second term. After having been responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development for four years, fisheries policy was added to his remit. This was initially questioned, as he

involved in the fishing sector. The difficulties did not begin under Fischler; trends were clear already in the preceding years. In the period 1990-1998, almost a quarter of the jobs in the catching sector and 14 per cent of the jobs in the processing sector were lost. The main reason for this decline was diminishing fish stocks, mainly due to overfishing, but the industry was (and still is) also going through a period of intense structural change, generally from smaller to bigger and from local to global.

When Fischler took up his post in 1999, the CFP reform process was already underway; the second phase of the consultation process, national

recovery. In the EU, two long-term stock recovery plans have been agreed, and another two are on the negotiating table, but the process has not been characterised by the urgency advocated by scientists and parts of the fishing sector. Long-term multiannual management plans are supposed to follow, but as the recovery plans take priority it is possible that we are in for a long wait. Some of the drivers

stakeholder involvement. During his time in office, stakeholder consultation has been broadened to involve not only the sector but also other stakeholders such as developmental and environmental NGOs. He has kept an open door policy with environmental interests, generally supporting their claims.

To conclude: his task has not been easy and the results have

'He has kept an open door policy with environmental interests, generally supporting their claims'

behind overfishing and the state of fish stocks, such as overcapitalisation through subsidies, were addressed through CFP reform, but the effectiveness of these changes cannot yet be evaluated.

To judge whether we have a more effective and coherent fisheries policy today is more difficult. There is no doubt, however, that the environmental component has been strengthened and that objectives aiming to protect the wider marine environment play a greater role in EU fisheries policy now than they did five years ago.

Fischler was clearly supportive of reform from the start. My guess is that he set out to reform both agriculture and fisheries policy in the EU fundamentally. The Commission is rarely able to take its ambitions all the way, however, and some parts of the CFP reform package were strongly opposed in the Council, such as the creation of a EU control agency with real teeth.

Coming back to 'greening blue Europe together', Fischler has in many respects been an advocate of environmental integration, including concrete measures to protect fish stocks and the wider marine environment, as well as greater

been far from perfect, but still more far-ranging than some had dared to hope for. His was a politically turbulent period, when many Ministers put the interests of their national fishing fleet first and fought the reform process in different ways. We saw the six 'Friends of Fishing' emerge, and the Director-General of Fisheries, Steffen Smidt, being forced out in the midst of the reform process under dubious circumstances.

After the December 2002 Council meeting, Fischler stated that compromise on reform still was 'an historic milestone in the EU policy on fisheries', a 'significant turning point' where ministers took difficult decisions and set an entirely new course for the CFP. We can give him and his Cabinet that, and urge the incoming Commissioner to carry through this legacy and not give in to national calls for back-tracking on subsidies, for example.

'The Commission is rarely able to take its ambitions all the way and some parts of the CFP reform package were strongly opposed in the Council'

comes from Austria, a landlocked country with limited interest in fishing activities. But this background may well have been an advantage, as he had few preconceived views on fisheries issues and no national interests to defend. As he now leaves his post to make room for the new Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Commissioner, Dr Joe Borg, it feels timely to reflect on the extent to which the environmental achievements under his leadership met his ambitions.

Franz Fischler was responsible for EU fisheries policy during an important time of change, but also a difficult time for many of those

meetings, had just been concluded. Two of his initial priorities for fisheries were: to take urgent measures to restore fish stocks, and to create an effective and coherent fisheries policy regime better suited to the needs of the 21st Century. Did he manage to do this?

Well, fish stocks in EU waters, and globally, are still in a poor state. Some have declined even further since 1999 while others have recovered to some extent. Steps have been taken at both the EU and international level, through CFP reform and at the WSSD in Johannesburg for example, to ensure stock

Contact: Niki Sporrong, Director The Fisheries Secretariat Tel: +46 8 704 4487/+44 1865 454136; Fax: +46 8 795 9673/+44 1865 454136; e-mail: niki.sporrong@fishsec.org; www.fishsec.org

Tuna farming in the Mediterranean: the bluefin tuna stock at stake

Raúl García
WWF Spain

Tuna farming is the fattening or growing of wild-caught tuna in floating facilities for a limited time period. It is a lucrative growth industry and has become a familiar activity in the Mediterranean since 1997. However, the industry poses a number of serious environmental problems, most notably for the wild bluefin stocks.

The industry has grown to the extent that 21,000-25,000 tonnes were introduced in cages in 2003. Against this growth, the scientific committee of the International Commission for the Conservation of Tuna (ICCAT) warned that fishing mortality of bluefin tuna in 2000 was 2.5 times higher than the sustainable level. Despite ICCAT's own scientific committee's recommendation of a maximum quota of 26,000 tonnes, ICCAT nonetheless proceeded to set the annual quota for 2003-2006 at 32,000 tonnes.

Further to the quota increase from that recommended, analysis of bluefin catch and farm production data strongly suggests that these quotas are being exceeded by around a third.

'Public EU funds have played a major role in fuelling the spectacular growth of the tuna farming industry in the Mediterranean'

These developments are highlighted in a recent WWF report. It further reveals that the tuna farming industry is spreading to other Mediterranean countries, including Algeria, Tunisia, Turkey and Libya, where restrictions are even weaker than in the EU. The growth of tuna farming and its role as a driver in the exploitation of wild stocks is not restricted to the Mediterranean however. Rather, it is a global problem, with Japan being the main consumer of bluefin tuna and also a key producer.

These problems have not arisen from industry responses to market forces alone. Public EU funds have played a major role in fuelling the spectacular growth of the tuna farming industry in the Mediterranean. WWF conservatively estimates that at least €20 million have been allocated to the fish-and-



Credit: Sergi Tudela/WWF

Fuelled by EU subsidies, tuna ranching is a lucrative industry that is undermining management of wild bluefin tuna stocks

farming production cycle through the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG).

Scrutiny of tuna fishing and farming activities in the Mediterranean highlights the faltering management of the bluefin tuna stock, which requires urgent action. WWF proposes four urgent basic measures to reverse this trend:

- 1) establish a specific quota for tuna farming;
- 2) eliminate EU subsidies for tuna farming;
- 3) modify the current Bluefin Tuna Statistical Document to cover the transfer of live fish captured by one country into cages of another country; and
- 4) ensure the traceability of all traded tuna.

Meanwhile, WWF calls for a strict and immediate moratorium on the development of new tuna farms in the Mediterranean. In addition to this, the whole management scheme of bluefin tuna fishing in the Mediterranean should be substantially improved: establishing a comprehensive monitoring scheme of catches in real time, setting up a comprehensive programme of on-board observers and reducing substantially the current quota in order to achieve sustainable fishing levels. As a significant player in the tuna fishing and farming industry and a member of ICCAT, the EU has an important role to play in this area, both domestically and through ICCAT.

Contact: Raúl García, Fishery Officer, WWF Spain,
Gran Vía de San Francisco, 8-D 28005, Madrid; Tel: +34 91 354 05 78;
Fax: +34 91 365 63 36; email: pesca@wwf.es Report available at
http://www.panda.org/news_facts/publications/marine/publication.cfm?uNewsID=13510&uLangId=1

Landing of critically endangered sturgeon

Inspector Nevin Hunter (Devon and Cornwall Constabulary) and Dr Vincent Fleming/Alison Littlewood (JNCC)

The landing of a common sturgeon (*Acipenser sturio*) in South Wales in June 2004 raised the issue of the lack of awareness, amongst fishermen and fish vendors, of the legal protection granted to some fish within the EU.

The fish weighed 120kg and was 2.7m in length. It was sent for sale to Plymouth market after the fish was first offered to, but declined by, Buckingham Palace. In UK law, sturgeon are 'Royal Fish' and must be offered to the Crown. A fisheries inspector, on advice from the local police, warned that the species was protected by European and UK law and should not be sold. Despite this, and a police investigation, the fish seemed to change hands before it was offered, for scientific study, to the Natural History Museum in London.

Common sturgeon are considered by IUCN to be critically endangered; only one population is now known to survive on the European coast. As a result, this fish is protected at European level through the EC CITES Regulation and the EC habitats Directive which, together, prevent deliberate killing, capture and commercial use. Protection is applied in Great Britain through the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act.

However, as in this case, common sturgeon are occasionally taken as by-catch in inshore waters. Such catch is not considered an offence in UK law if the act was the incidental result of a lawful operation and could not reasonably be avoided. However, such by-catch cannot subsequently be used commercially and,



Credit: Fishing News

The sturgeon of nearly 3 metres at Plymouth market

given the rarity of the species, every effort should be taken to return any live-taken specimens to the wild unharmed. A plan for the recovery of the common sturgeon is to be considered at the Standing Committee of the Berne Convention in December 2004. Posters are also being produced for UK fish markets and harbours to illustrate protected fish and other marine species.

Contact Dr Vin Fleming, Head – International Unit, Joint Nature Conservation Council (JNCC), UK Tel: +44 (0)1733-866870; Vin.Fleming@jncc.gov.uk

Smart Gear competition

Charlotte Mogensen
WWF Europe

Bycatch is a major fisheries management problem due to its adverse ecological impacts on certain marine species and the removal of biomass from marine ecosystems.

According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, the level of unintentional catch, discards and bycatch of fish species is estimated to be 27 million tonnes per year, with an estimated range of 17.9 to 39.5 million tonnes. This compares to an estimated global commercial capture fisheries production of 94.8 million tonnes in 2000. The massive nature of the global bycatch and discards figures clearly suggests serious ecological, economic, and livelihood threats.

The EU has not escaped the

bycatch problem, as highlighted by the European Commission's recent Communication on Environmentally Friendly Fishing Methods (COM(2004)438). The aim of this Communication is to make fishing operations as selective as possible to retain target specimens of the right species and size with minimum impact on marine species and the marine environment.

In a similar vein to this Communication, WWF launched an international Smart Gear competition this summer to help address the bycatch problem. Participants are invited to join in the competition to develop gears or methods that increase selectivity for target fish species and reduce bycatch of non-target species in ways that enable fishermen to maintain profitability. The competition

will be judged by a coalition of fishermen, scientists and conservation groups, including CEFAS and WWF.

This competition is open to anyone – including professional gear manufacturers, amateur inventors, fishermen, students, engineers and scientists – to find practical solutions to bycatch. The winning entry

will receive funding to take the design from the drawing-board stage to prototype development, testing, and initial manufacture.

Contact: Charlotte Mogensen, Fisheries Policy Officer, WWF European Policy Office; Tel: +32 2 743 88 00; CMogensen@wwfepo.org; <http://www.smartgear.org>

Fourth world fisheries congress

The fourth World Fisheries Congress was held in Vancouver in Spring this year. Environmental issues were high on the agenda, with one day dedicated to discussion of how industry and environmental organisations can further the objective of reconciling fisheries with conservation. Eco-labelling, maintaining biodiversity, ecosystem modelling, marine protected areas, and fisheries

trade were also topics of discussion. The proceedings of the Congress will be published in 2005 and will be available for purchase from the American Fisheries Society. The fifth World Fisheries Congress is scheduled for 2008 in Japan.

For more information visit: <http://www.worldfisheries2004.org> /<http://www.fisheries.org>

Turtles bycatch: simple measures for the Mediterranean Regulation



Credit: Oceana

The EU fleet accounts for significant levels of turtle bycatch

Ricardo Aguilar
Oceana Europe

The global swordfish and tuna long line fleets set around 1,400 million hooks every year. About ten per cent of that effort is concentrated in the Mediterranean Sea where the Spanish, Italian and Greek fleets, together with those from north Africa, take about 15,000 tonnes of swordfish.

However, the fishery is also responsible for bycatch in vulnerable and endangered species. One of the species that attracts most attention due to its threatened status is the loggerhead turtle. Forty thousand turtles are hooked each year in the Mediterranean, over half of which are captured by Spanish fishermen.

The EU Mediterranean Regulation that is currently under discussion therefore presents an important opportunity for addressing this problem.

It has been demonstrated that there is a high concentration of juvenile and sub-adult loggerhead turtles in the western Mediterranean Sea, especially the area between the Alborán Sea and the Balearic Islands. These turtles originate not only from nesting beaches in the eastern Mediterranean but also from the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic coast of the USA.

Hook size, shape and depth at which it is set, and the length of daylight time it remains in the water seem to be key factors in the levels of turtle bycatch. Studies conducted in the USA between 1999 and 2003 have shown that the use of circular hooks instead of the classical J shaped hooks could drastically reduce the levels of by-catch by between 65 and 90 per cent. Following

pilot projects in the United States, it is now compulsory to use the circular hook in the western Atlantic.

At that time neither the Spanish government nor the European institutions showed any interest in circular hooks as a possible solution, but interest is now increasing as to their possible implementation in Europe.

As part of its research into the Mediterranean swordfish fishery, Oceana researchers are currently working with fishermen onboard Spanish longliners in the Mediterranean, trialling the circular shape hooks and gathering information. Meetings are also being held with the Spanish fisheries sector to discuss the possibilities of developing proposals to trial new hooks and other modifications to the fishery.

Not only would modifications protect turtles, but they would also reduce the enormous numbers of juvenile swordfish caught by the longline fleet, which is putting the stock in peril. These changes to the fishery could revive stock levels in a relatively short timeframe since this is a species with a high reproductive capacity.

Oceana would like to see, in the context of the Mediterranean Regulation, the implementation of measures such as an increase in hook size, greater depth of casting fishing gear, use of circular hooks to reduce accidental catches, and the establishment of closed seasons or prohibited zones. These measures could be introduced through scientific studies and pilot projects to establish their effectiveness.

Contact: Ricardo Aguilar, Oceana Europe, Plaza España, Leganitos 47 - 6°, 28013, Madrid, España; Tel: +34 911 440 886; email: raguilar@oceana.org; <http://www.oceana.org/>

La Méditerranée – peut elle encore attendre?

Dr. Serge Collét

Associate Professor CIES
MAJISE, University of Cosenza

The Mediterranean Action Plan (COM(2002)535), tabled in October 2002 by the Commission, has been generally well received. Despite this, the Mediterranean Regulation that the Commission subsequently proposed a year later (COM(2003)589) has been rejected for diverse and contradictory motives by the European Economic and Social Committee (26 February 2004), the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries (16 March 2004) and finally the European Parliament (1 April 2004) by a majority of 38 votes.

This strong opposition to what is an innovative and coherent approach is not as unanimous as it may appear at first glance. In March, the Confederation of Hellenic fishermen of more than 30,000 small-scale fishers voiced to the Parliament that 'after two meetings with the representatives of the fisheries' sector (May, June 2003) it was considered that the new regulation involved essential measures which should be applied immediately due to the gravity of the situation'. Furthermore, the 'Lisi report' (of the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries) was 'irrational if not dangerous especially in respect of Green Paper, Road Map (...) and discussions'. This appraisal, with

some regional hues, was shared by other fishers from France, Malta, Cyprus, Spain and Italy in July during a meeting in Messolonghi, Greece, under the invitation of the Hellenic Fishermen's Confederation. This grass roots meeting was attended in a spirit of true and fair dialogue by a representative of the Commission.

In October 2004, DG Fisheries tabled a non-paper for discussion with professional organisations and NGOs on the ongoing themes of implementing responsible fishing practices, increasing selectivity, protecting the littoral zone and habitats and rebuilding marine ecosystems. It presented many fine-tuned options on hotly debated and crucial issues, continuing and deepening the consultations. Led by the Italian fisher's associations (who unanimously declined to attend the Messolonghi meeting) the French Comité Régional des Pêches et des Elevages Marin, Greek trawlers and purse-seiners, and the Chamber of Agriculture of Slovenia, left the consultation 'condemning the criteria and approach of the proposal' and claiming that 'if adopted the proposal measures would have resulted in a huge crisis and disorder in the Mediterranean sector'.

The strong resistance comes from the semi-industrial fleet, essentially medium trawlers purse-seiners and hydraulic dredgers, which ignore the fact that Italian fish landings fell 32 per cent between 1996 and

2002, and 29.8 per cent (128,170 tonnes) between 1972 and 2002. Annual landings from Italian Mediterranean fisheries are now around 300,000 tonnes, significantly lower than the average 570,000 tonnes per year between 1979 and 1989, or the 460,000 tonnes during the 1990s. This decline in landings is a concerning indicator of the decline in the state of the marine ecosystems.

As Commissioner Fischler rightly stated in his speech to the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries on 21 September, simply exporting fishing effort to Tunisia, Senegal, or Morocco by means of joint ventures is not a viable solution

permanent withdrawal policy.

The very urgent and real issue is to cooperatively tailor and implement measures that will restore the productive capacity of the sea without increasing the social losses. Marine protected areas, days-at-sea restrictions, redirecting the market by the means of Producer Organisations, concentration of landings and labelling are all potential options. The redraft of the Mediterranean regulation that the Commission has proposed can halt the degradation of the European Mediterranean fisheries. It combines networks of marine protected areas, the protection of the littoral zone and increased

'the "Lisi report" was irrational if not dangerous'

for the thousands of small family business. Indeed, the social fabric of the Italian fishing sector, its very social sustainability, is at risk. Between 2000 and 2002, 18 per cent of fishing employment (8,600 jobs) were lost, and more than 1,300 boats were withdrawn, mainly small coastal vessels averaging 17 GRT. The effects from increasing operational costs, the reduction of subsidies and incentives, and the drift net ban come on top of the loss of marine ecosystem productivity. The declining landings and employment highlight that the situation of the sea productive capacity is much more the issue at stake than the so called 'erroneous and punitive' EU

gear selectivity, which can later be fine-tuned. Further to this, management plans and a Mediterranean Regional Advisory Council (RAC) provide the opportunity to generate cooperation and social creativity which could be used, for example, to elaborate public eco-labelling schemes or to tailor more shrewdly the management of fishing activities according to traditional experiences of many coastal communities.

Dr. Serge Collét, Associate Professor CIES MAJISE, University of Cosenza. Nominee for the Pew Programme in Marine Conservation 2005 Fellowship, ravenswordfish@t-online.de; www.uni-hamburg.de/Wiss/FB/09/Ethnolol/Collét

CITES goes marine

Marine species were high on the agenda at the 13th Conference of Parties to the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), held in Bangkok in October. Delegates agreed to add three new marine species – humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*); date mussel (*Lithophaga lithophaga*); and great white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*) to Appendix II of the Convention. Listing on Appendix II means that trade will be controlled in order to avoid exploitation that could threaten

the survival of the species.

In addition, sturgeon will benefit from tighter trade controls on caviar under Appendix II. Delegates voted for rules that require all caviar to be exported in the same year that it is processed. The move closes a loophole that allows fraudulent traders to declare their caviar was caught the previous year and so avoid quota limits.

Trade protection for cetaceans was also considered at the meeting. Delegates voted to prohibit commercial trade of the Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella*

brevirostris), adding it to Appendix I. The dolphin is found in South-east Asia and its small populations have been threatened by fishing bycatch and live capture of individuals for display in aquaria. Minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) remain on Appendix I, after the Parties rejected Japan's proposals to downlist the species to allow trade in whale meat. Listing on Appendix I means that trade is prohibited except in exceptional circumstances.

Parties agreed to undertake

intersessional work on the protection of deep-sea and migratory species whose range extends beyond the jurisdiction of coastal States, ie transboundary species. This issue was also considered at the 3rd World Conservation Congress hosted by IUCN in Bangkok from 17-25 November.

For more information contact Juan Carlos Vasquez, Legal and Trade Policy Officer at the CITES Secretariat, Geneva. Tel: +41 79 409 1528; email: juan.vasquez@unep.ch; web: www.cites.org

International attention to cold-water coral reefs

Emily Corcoran
UNEP-WCMC

Concern over the state of the world's cold-water coral reefs is increasingly being supported by scientific evidence and met with institutional responses. The recent report *Cold Water Coral Reefs, Out of Sight – No longer out of Mind* presents a comprehensive and up to date compilation of the information currently available on cold-water coral reefs around the world. It examines the ecology, distribution and vulnerability to threats, providing expert recommendations for the concerted and urgent action that needs to be taken in the conservation, protection and sustainable management of these fragile ecosystems.

Although knowledge is still incomplete, cold-water coral reefs have been observed in more than 41 countries around the world. They occur in coastal waters, along the edges of continental shelves and around offshore sub-marine banks and seamounts in almost all the world's seas in waters as shallow as 39 metres to a depth of more than one kilometre. Unlike warm-water corals they grow in deep, dark waters where they depend on currents to supply food such as zooplankton and organic matter. As long-lived, slow growing and fragile ecosystems, cold-water coral reefs are vulnerable to physical damage. Such reefs face a number of threats, with fishing being the most significant, in particular from bottom fishing with trawls and dredges.

Given the increasing need for a strategy to protect these reefs, the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) decided in July 2004 to include cold-water coral reef issues within its remit. Under the lead of Norway, a process was put in place to establish a work programme for an *ad hoc* committee on cold-water coral reefs. ICRI is an open forum, which brings governments and other organisations together in pursuing a common desire to reverse the degradation of coral reefs. ICRI catalyses the experience of the global coral reef community, building consensus on coral reef issues and puts this forward to the international community. The UK government is currently hosting the ICRI Secretariat together with the Seychelles government. Another outcome of this new focus is the report *The Status of Coral Reefs of the World, 2004* to be launched in the UK in December includes a dedicated chapter on cold-water coral reefs.

Cold Water Coral Reefs, Out of Sight – No longer out of Mind Freiwald, A., Fosså, J.H., Grehan, A., Koslow, T., Roberts, J.M. 2004. Cold-water coral reefs. UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge UK <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/press/cold-water-coral-reefs/index.htm>
Contact: Ms Emily Corcoran, UNEP-WCMC Tel +44 (0) 1223 277314, emily.corcoran@unep-wcmc.org; ICRI Secretariat icri@unep-wcmc.org; ICRI Forum www.icriforum.org and cold-water coral reef *ad hoc* committee <http://www.icriforum.org/List/Postings.cfm?CONFID=80>

World's smallest fish identified

Scientists in San Diego have described the world's smallest, lightest animal with a backbone: the miniscule 'stout infantfish' (*Schindleria brevipinguis*), a new species of fish no longer than the width of a pencil.

Found exclusively in the vicinity of Australia's Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea, only six specimens are known to exist. The largest specimen, and the only female, measures 8.4 millimetres in length while the males measure just 7 millimetres. Roughly 1,100,000 of these fish weighed together would barely tip the scales at one kilo.

The first stout infantfish was captured in 1979 by the Australian Museum's Jeff Leis during fieldwork in the Lizard Island/Carter Reef area of the Great Barrier Reef. After it was left unstudied for years, H. J. Walker of Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego, and William Watson of the Southwest Fisheries Science Center, National



The stout infantfish is no longer than the width of a pencil

Marine Fisheries Service, in La Jolla, recently analysed the animal in detail for the first time. A full scientific description of the animal has since been published in the Records of the Australian Museum.

The stout infantfish supplants the dwarf goby as the new record holder of the world's smallest vertebrate. The scientists developed the animal's name to characterise its thick, or 'stout', structure as compared with other infantfish. 'Infant' describes the

uncommon early-stage features of the animal. It is transparent without pigmentation, except for its eyes, and lacks teeth, scales and certain characteristics typical of other fish.

The stout infantfish's unusual appearance corresponds with its extremely short lifespan, which is believed to be approximately two months. Many features characteristic of a larval stage of development appear even though it is fully mature.

In addition to being

interesting in its own right, the identification of the stout infantfish is another reminder that many important species remain undiscovered.

Contact Mario Aguilera or Cindy Clark; Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, 9500 Gilman Drive, 0233 La Jolla, CA 92093-0233; Tel: +1 858 5343624; email scrippsnews@ucsd.edu; http://scrippsnews.ucsd.edu/article_detail.cfm?article_num=639; http://www.amonline.net.au/pdf/publications/1429_complete.pdf

Credit: Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Marine Thematic Strategy Developments

The sixth Environmental Action Programme (6EAP) establishes a programme for Community action on the environment. The European Parliament and Council adopted the 6EAP as Decision 1600/2002, thereby setting down in legislative form actions that should be undertaken. Encompassed in these actions is the need to develop seven Thematic Strategies, each intended to tackle a key environmental issue in one holistic document.

One of the proposed Strategies concerns the protection and conservation of the marine environment – the Marine Thematic Strategy.

According to the 6EAP, the Commission should take into account the terms and implementation obligations of regional marine Conventions in developing the Strategy. Moreover, it should take account of the need to reduce emissions and impacts of sea transport and other sea and land based activities, for instance.

Each Strategy has essentially been taken forward in the same way, whereby a 'Towards a Thematic Strategy' Communication was issued by the Commission and then considered by the Parliament and Council. In addition, stakeholder consultations have

been key to their development, with working groups considering aspects of each Strategy. The preparatory 'Towards a Marine Strategy Communication' (COM(2002)539) was published in October 2002. The final Strategy must be completed by July 2005, at the latest, and is expected to emerge in spring 2005. It is likely to consist of two elements:

- an overarching strategy document setting the way forward for marine environment policy; and
- a proposal for a EU Marine Act, which most

likely would take the form of a Directive.

Any legislation would first have to be adopted by the Council and European Parliament, and would then be binding on the Member States.

As mentioned elsewhere, the Commission is also likely to propose a Green Paper on EU Maritime Policy (see page 1). However, it is not currently clear how this will relate to the Marine Thematic Strategy. The two papers are not linked, with DG Environment leading the Marine Thematic Strategy and DG Fish in charge of the Maritime Policy Task Force.

ECJ ruling on implications of the habitats Directive for fisheries

In September, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that certain fishing activities may only be authorised in a Natura 2000 site when it is certain that they will not negatively affect the environment. This ruling is important because it provides legal interpretation of the EU's nature laws that are binding on all Member States, not just the Netherlands. As such, it can be expected to have significant implications for inshore, and potentially offshore, fisheries management.

In 2002, the Dutch 'Raad van State' (Council of State: the highest judiciary authority of the country) requested a

preliminary ruling from the ECJ on the interpretation of Article 6 of the habitats Directive (92/43). The request related to the concept of 'plan or project' and the 'appropriate assessment' of the implications of certain plans or projects, in this case (the licensing of) fishing activities. The request was made following litigation brought by Dutch environmental organisations against the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries over the legality of licences issued for mechanical cockle fisheries in the Dutch part of the Waddensee, a

Natura 2000 site.

The prevailing view has often been that fishing licences restrict exploitation rather than permitting access. As a consequence, fishing licenses have, at least in some quarters, been considered a management tool contributing to the management of protected areas, and thus not requiring an appropriate assessment under Article 6(3) of the habitats Directive. However, the Court ruling makes clear that, at least where an assessment is undertaken as a basis for annual licences, this is not an acceptable interpretation of the Directive. To the contrary,

the Court ruled that fishing 'for which a licence is granted annually for a limited period, with each licence entailing a new assessment both of the possibility of carrying on that activity and of the site where it may be carried on, falls within the concept of 'plan' or 'project' within the meaning of Article 6(3)'. This verdict is likely to have important ramifications for national and local regulators and some operators as it further opens the debate of whether fishing activities more generally fall under the definition of a 'plan or project', and hence necessitate appropriate assessments.

● PUBLICATIONS

- *Progress on EU Stock Recovery Plans*. IEEP Briefing No. 19, IEEP: London. <http://www.ieep.org.uk/PDFfiles/PUBLICATIONS/CFPBriefings/Briefing%2019%20-%20Recovery%20Plans.pdf>
- *Turning the Tide - Addressing the impact of Fisheries on the Marine Environment*. Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution <http://www.rcep.org.uk/fishreport.htm>
- *Outstanding Environmental Issues in relation to European Fisheries*. RIVO report Number: C062/04 18 August 2004 <http://www.rivm.nl/bibliotheek/digitaaldepot/reportRIVO.pdf>
- Latest ICES Newsletter. Volume 41, September 2004 <http://www.ices.dk/products/newsletters/lces41.pdf>
- *Arctic environment: European perspectives*. Environmental issue report No 38/2003 http://reports.eea.eu.int/environmental_issue_report_2004_38/en
- *How is Your MPA Doing? A Guidebook of Natural and Social Indicators for Evaluating Marine Protected Area Management Effectiveness*. <http://effectivempa.noaa.gov/guidebook/guidebook.html>
- *The worldwide costs of marine protected areas*. Balmford A, Gravestock P, Hockley N, McClean CJ, Roberts CM Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2004 June 29;101(26):9694-7. <http://www.panda.org/downloads/marine/balmfordetalproofs.pdf>

Deep sea corals threatened by EU bottom trawl fleets

Matt Gianni

Independent consultant and Political Advisor to the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition

The international concern over the impact of bottom trawl fishing on cold-water corals and highly diverse, species-rich deep-sea ecosystems extends to the waters of the Northeast Atlantic (see page 9). Over the past decade, European Union fishing vessels have increasingly expanded the scope of their operations into deeper waters in response to declining catches and tighter restrictions on bottom fishing in the shallower waters of the continental shelf. A number of vessels are now engaged in deep-water bottom trawling throughout the areas known or likely to be rich in deep-water corals, dragging nets across the bottom a thousand metres or more beneath the surface. Severe damage to *Lophelia* reefs has been documented all along the continental margin from

parties to the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Northeast Atlantic adopted the Ministerial level Bremen Statement in June 2003, declaring that they would 'take immediate measures to protect coral reefs from further damage due to use of active fishing gear [eg bottom trawls] on the reefs' given the ecological importance of the reefs and the 'practical irreversibility' of the damage caused by bottom trawling.

Since then the EU has taken several steps to implement this commitment within EU waters, most notably the permanent closure to bottom trawl fishing of the 'Darwin Mounds', an area of deep-water corals northwest of Scotland, and the temporary closure of a large portion of the waters around the Azores, Canary and Madeira Island groups to bottom trawl fishing to protect deep-water corals.

'There is growing momentum at the UN General Assembly... for collective action by the international community as a whole'

northern Scotland to Spain. Further north, the Institute of Marine Research in Bergen, Norway, estimates that some 30-50 per cent of cold-water corals in Norwegian waters have already been damaged or destroyed by bottom trawl fishing.

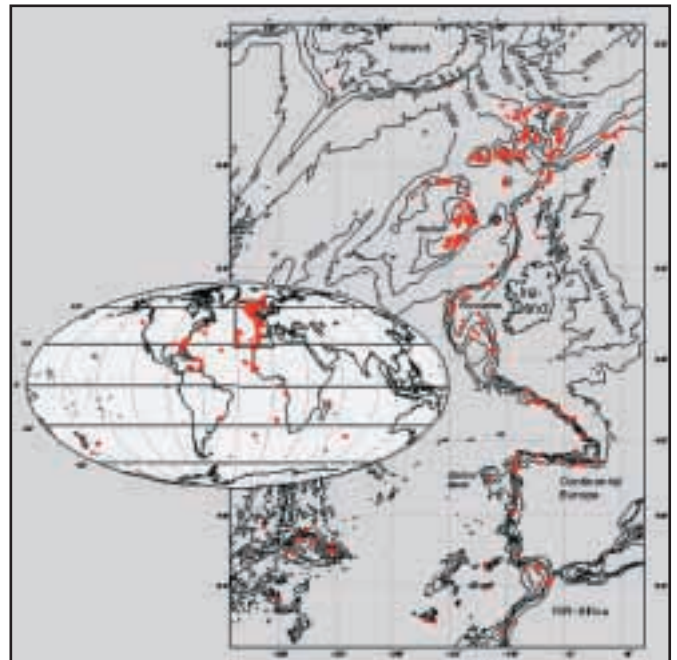
Over the past two years, the ICES Advisory Committee on Ecosystems and the United Nations Environment Programme, amongst others, have published reports highlighting the threat posed to these ecosystems by deep-sea bottom trawl fishing.

Responding to these concerns, the European Community and Member State

Many more areas need to be protected, in particular deep-sea areas in international waters. Unfortunately, in the latter case, in the Northeast Atlantic and elsewhere, very little regulation of the ecological

'the EU until now has been a major opponent of this initiative'

impact of deep-water bottom fisheries takes place. In most high seas areas there are no regulations whatsoever. According to a recent report released by IUCN, WWF, Conservation International and NRDC, Spanish vessels accounted for approximately 40



Distribution of cold-water coral *Lophelia Pertusa* in the Northeast Atlantic.

Credit: Andre Freiwald, University of Erlangen, Germany, 1999.

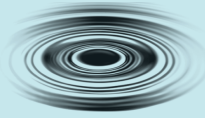
per cent of the total catch by bottom trawl vessels fishing on the high seas of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans combined in 2001.

Since 2002, the issue has come before the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). This year the UNGA called on States to take urgent action to protect deep-sea biodiversity from bottom trawl fishing on the high seas. There is growing momentum at the UNGA and in other international fora for collective action by the international community as a whole. Indeed, a global coalition of scientists,

bottom fisheries and protection of deep-sea biodiversity.

Unfortunately, the EU until now has been a major opponent of this initiative. Rather than continuing to oppose most restrictions on deep-sea bottom trawl fishing fleets on the high seas, the EU must play a more constructive role, consistent with its commitments and legal obligations, to support and promote international efforts to protect these fragile and vulnerable ecosystems before many more are destroyed and unique deep-sea species, many of which have not yet been discovered by science, are lost forever to extinction.

Contact Matt Gianni, Cliostraat 29 – 2, 1077 KB Amsterdam, Netherlands; Tel: +31 20 670 1666; email: matthewgianni@netscape.net
Further reading: Gianni, M. *High Seas Bottom Trawl Fisheries and their Impacts on the Biodiversity of Vulnerable Deep-sea Ecosystems: Options for International Action*. IUCN/NRDC/WWF/CI. 2004. www.iucn.org/themes/marine/pubs/pubs.htm; www.panda.org/coral; www.savethehighseas.org



Apart from acting as a source of independent information on fisheries and the environment, *El Anzuelo* aims to present different perspectives on the issues, and thereby encourage discussion and debate among the various players. If you wish to respond to material included in this or the previous issue, we would be happy to hear from you.

CONFLICT WITH COMMERCE

Dear Editor

■ In response to Mr Fletcher's letter about the problems the Wash Banks Flood Defence Scheme has created for his oyster farm (*El Anzuelo* Volume 13), I feel that I should detail what the project is and why it was developed.

The purpose of the project was to provide an improved flood defence for the people of Boston and 80,000 hectares of Grade 1 agricultural land in the surrounding area. This has been achieved through the improvement of 8 km of flood embankments, the creation of a 78 hectare realignment site and a 12 hectare brackish lagoon.

The Wash is England's largest Site of Special Scientific Interest and is recognised as one of its greatest coastal wetlands: it was designated as a SSSI in 1972, a Special Protection Area (SPA) in 1988 under the EU birds Directive, and finally proposed as

the largest marine candidate Special Area for Conservation (cSAC) under the EU habitats Directive in 1996.

Inter-tidal habitats are being lost at a rapid rate, as they are trapped between static man-made sea defences and rising sea levels, a process known as 'coastal squeeze'. Managed realignment schemes such as the Wash Banks help to replace coastal habitats that are being lost through this process. As well as providing a key part of the sea defence, the new saltmarsh at Freiston Shore is helping to offset ongoing losses and is contributing to Britain's Biodiversity Action Plans targets. The 78 hectares of saltmarsh created here is 56 per cent of the national target for saltmarsh creation per annum.

Additional benefits for wildlife, people and the local economy have been acquired by using the flood defence scheme as 'matched funding' to access European

Union Objective 5b funding. This money has been used to facilitate a variety of environmental and access improvements which have encouraged tourism and recreational use of the local area. Car parks, a bird hide, and a cycle route as well as interpretation boards and promotional leaflets are just some of the outputs.

The Agency deeply regrets that this nationally important flood alleviation scheme at Freiston Shore has so severely compromised Mr Fletcher's oyster farm, but it is not possible to turn the clock back and undo the scheme. We are currently negotiating with him a compensation package for his losses.

Andrew Osborne, Project Team Manager, Environment Agency, andrew.usborne@environment-agency.gov.uk, Tel: +44 (0)1733 464469

STAKEHOLDERS DISCUSS CHALLENGES FACING EU FISHING SECTOR

At a high-level conference held in the European Parliament in November, a wide range of stakeholders from EU Member States and international institutions discussed priorities and solutions to the environmental challenges facing the EU fisheries sector.

■ On 8-9 November, the Institute for European Environmental Policy and the Fisheries Secretariat held a high-level conference in the European Parliament on *Sustainable EU fisheries – facing the environmental challenges*. The conference was held under the patronage of the EU Council Presidency and attracted over 100 participants from the EU Member States and a number of international institutions.

Five discussion papers focusing on key issues were developed ahead of the conference, to set the scene for discussions and frame the debate in an objective manner. The topics covered by the

briefings were (1) State of Europe's regional seas; (2) Production; (3) Consumption and trade; (4) Policy Instruments; and (5) Governance.

These topics were selected because they correspond to key aspects of fisheries policy and management. The subjects also broadly correspond to the European Environment Agency's 'DPSIR' framework that is used to describe the interactions between the environment and society, reflecting Driving forces, Pressures, States, Impacts and Responses.

After a morning of keynote addresses by the Director-General of DG Fish, Jörgen Holmquist, Professor Serge Collét, Anthony Cox from OECD and others, the participants spent almost a full day in intensive group discussions on the themes *Production of fish, Governance, Instruments, and Consumption and trade*, in a joint effort to find possible ways forward.

The conference sought to identify a number of specific areas where new or

renewed effort was needed. This included new ways of tackling unacceptable levels of bycatch and discards, balancing the competing interests of the fishing and aquaculture sectors, refocusing subsidies to support a more efficient, competitive and environmentally friendly sector, harnessing retailer and consumer power, and marine protected areas. A number of topics that came up in all groups were the need to try a wider range of instruments in EU fisheries management, particularly rights-based instruments, the necessity to improve knowledge and data collection in order to implement an ecosystem-based approach, and support for a more coordinated approach to control, enforcement and penalties in order to tackle Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

For conference proceedings, presentations and briefings, visit http://www.ieep.org.uk/research/research_pages/Fisheries.htm#subsix

IEEP is an independent body for the analysis and advancement of environmental policies in Europe. While a major focus of work is on the development, implementation and evaluation of the EU's environmental policy, IEEP 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 sustainable fisheries programme, which aims to identify, develop and build a consensus around alternative approaches to fisheries management. It is part-funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and is sent free of charge to key practitioners in the Member States of the EU and in Candidate Countries. If you would like to subscribe to *El Anzuelo* please send your details by mail, fax or email to: Debby Rosin, IEEP, 28 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AB, UK. Fax: +44 (0)207 799 2600; email: central@ieeplondon.org.uk. While production is moving towards an electronic publication, please specify whether you wish to receive *El Anzuelo* by post.

El Anzuelo is also available online at www.ieep.org.uk