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## **Mediterranean matters!**

The Common Fisheries Policy's conservation wing has tended to concentrate almost exclusively on the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea, all but ignoring the Mediterranean. This seems somewhat strange for a sea that not only lies along the coastal parts of France and Spain, but forms the entire coastline of Italy and Greece, supplying the Community's seafood market with a third of its output. Furthermore, the Mediterranean fishing industry is still very much a cottage industry, with a strong influence on the socio-economic make-up of these coastal areas.

The Community's first regulation on the conservation of resources in the Mediterranean has been in force since 1995. It sets out acceptable limitations on the use of fishing gear in waters under European jurisdiction. In addition, the Member States concerned are invited to use their initiative and to take whatever technical measures are required. The wishes of workers in the fishing industry, who were also involved in drawing up the regulations, have been taken into account.

In a delicate, enclosed environment such as the Mediterranean, resources can only be managed efficiently if all of the nations which enjoy its natural wealth are involved. The Commission is aware of this and has widened discussion to include all nations adjoining the sea, and even Japan and Korea, which have boats fishing in these waters. The first Diplomatic Conference, held in Heraklion in 1994, led to a collective awareness of the issue of management on an international scale, and a commitment to promote cooperation.

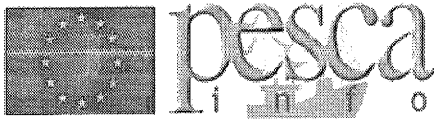
The second conference took place in Venice in 1996 and enabled the gains to be consolidated. Member States undertook to set up an expert group in charge of drawing up concrete and harmonized proposals on measures for the management and conservation of resources. The expert group's first deadline for submission of its report to the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM) is set for October 1997.

A common fisheries management scheme such as this constitutes a major step forward, one which should enable the launching of sub-regional pilot conservation projects. We look forward to seeing the first initiatives.

### **The Editor**

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## Region of the month

### Zeebrugge: a new lease of life, and ready for Europe

The fishing port of Zeebrugge has just undergone a major transformation. The old harbour is home once again to trawlers, docked alongside yachts and a submarine from the new marine museum. The quayside is dominated by a long, concrete building. Disused and fenced off from the outside world, it symbolizes a bygone age.

While there is no trace of fishing here any more, it has been brought back to life less than half a mile away, in the large docks of the inner harbour. Zeebrugge now boasts a new fishing market, located along a brand new quayside. This huge edifice presents a stark contrast to the old, disused "Minque", built according to new standards. It is the envy of other ports and is seen as the way ahead. Its vast, pristine foyer is the scene of intense activity every morning. Even in a hi-tech port such as this, however, local traders still cling to tradition, avoiding the foyer equipped with a set-dial specially built for them, to check for themselves that the fish is fresh.

The manager of the fishing market, a dynamic figure, has been forced to compromise somewhat. By installing a movable dial known as the "moby clock", for instance, he has allowed traders to benefit from computer technology. Such state-of-the-art equipment enables the traders to enjoy industrial practices which are all the rage at the moment. The fishermen estimate their catch two days in advance, adjusting their estimates on the basis of demand before going to market. The main 25 buyers, all exporters, are informed by fax straight away. For the other buyers, there is a recorded message which can be accessed at any time.

Quality is of the utmost importance around here, and not just in the market purpose-built to work in line with the cold chain. On the boats themselves, crews select the previous day's catch, to be processed separately. A specifications sheet contains no fewer than seven criteria to determine the quality of each day's catch. Products meeting all the requirements are specially packaged, so they can be given a stamp of quality. The remainder joins the standard batches.

The success of Zeebrugge's fishing market and the consistently steady performance of its average price have brought in ships from Ostend, whose fishing fleet is only half the size, with smaller ships. Six or seven traders have also arrived from The Netherlands. Nevertheless, the port has not escaped the effects of the recession. From 1992 to 1995, there was a steady fall in both haul and turnover. This was due in part to Dutch boats fishing their quota in local waters and unloading their catch in their own country. Despite all this, the port's endeavours paid off in 1996, with a sharp rise in both the quantity and value of fish landed.

The restructuring of the industry has also brought problems to an area where it has traditionally been a family-run affair, unable to make the switch-over to a Dutch-style wholesale activity. Even with new firms setting up in Zeebrugge, talk of a major restructuring centre is still a long way off.

#### Data sheet Zeebrugge

- *Location:* West Flanders, Belgium
- *Type of fishing:* demersals using beam trawlers
- *Fishing grounds:* North Sea, English Channel, Celtic Sea, Gulf of Gascony
- *Foreign contribution:* 10% of haul, from Denmark, Faroes, Ireland, Iceland and United Kingdom
- *Catches (1995):*
  - *haul:* 13,865 tonnes (almost 19,000 in 1990)
  - *value:* 1.44 billion FB or approximately 34 million ecus (over 2 billion FB in 1991)
  - *species:* mostly flatfish - sole, (*Solea* sp.), turbot (*Psetta maxima*), ray (*Raja* sp.), plaice (*Pleurectones* sp.), as well as cod (*Gadus morhua*), gurnard (*Triglia* sp) and great scallop
- *Number of vessels (1995):* 81, with 90% of beam trawlers between 20 and 40m long
- *Number of buyers:* 145, including 25 in exports

### **Questions put to Freddy POLLET, Director and General Manager of the Zeebrugge fish market:**

*Pesca info:* How is Zeebrugge placed within the EU?

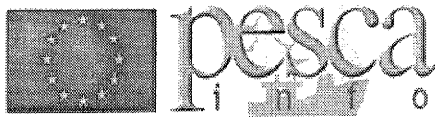
*Freddy POLLET:* We get our supplies from northern Europe and sell mostly to The Netherlands and France. But we are aiming to expand, having already set up partnerships with two European fishing markets, Ijmuiden in The Netherlands and La Rochelle on the French Atlantic coast. We hope to expand even further, and are currently in discussion with two other markets.

*Pesca info:* What does this partnership involve ?

*Freddy POLLET:* It takes many forms, but hinges on one factor, quality. Together, we have established international quality stamps and certificates, all using the same criteria. Our inspectors, who received joint training, work alternately in all three markets. We also envisage setting up cross-over programmes for our workers. We aim to establish not just some sort of network, but a real partnership of European fish markets.

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## **Common Fisheries Policy**

### **Fisheries management in the Mediterranean**

The Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea are not the only seas in Europe. There is also the Mediterranean, which lies along the coasts of Italy and Greece, and parts of France and Spain. Until early 1995, each Member State was responsible for conserving resources in its own waters. Since then, Community Regulation 1626/94, which provides for a number of technical measures regarding the conservation of Mediterranean fish resources, has come into force, signalling the start of a common policy for the long-term preservation of fishing stocks.

#### **Harmonizing regulations**

Before the new Regulation came into effect, the fishing industry in the Mediterranean was subject to laws which varied from one country to another. The decision-making authorities, including fishermen's organizations and local and national authorities, were mostly to blame for this, as were the wide range of measures, and the frequent adoption and modification of regulations. The new Regulation is intended to be much more straightforward. Among its aims are the banning of engines considered destructive from coastal waters, the setting-up of marine reserves, establishing maximum technical specifications for nets and lines, and minimum sizes for target species. Member States are free to tighten these regulations if this fulfils local needs.

#### **Regulating fishing capacity more than catches**

The Commission's approach to conserving resources in the Mediterranean differs considerably from its policy towards the Atlantic. In the case of the Mediterranean, given the range of methods used and its narrow fishing grounds, it would be difficult to adopt measures limiting the annual catches permitted without regard for fishing capacity. Instead, the Commission has established a common system for regulating the capacity by controlling the number of vessels allowed to fish (fishing licences) and the types of fishing gear used by the vessels.

#### **Fitting into an international framework**

Management of the resources of the Community's Mediterranean waters is impossible without the involvement of other adjoining states and countries operating fishing vessels there, such as Japan or Korea. The Commission has set the pace here, organizing a number of discussion groups and a Diplomatic Conference in Crete in 1994, which led to a multilateral commitment on the protection of fishing resources. A second conference was held in Venice in November 1996, whose outcome was the creation of an expert group, due to deliver its proposals as of end 1997.

The Commission has, at the same time, strengthened links with the FAO and its regional organization, the General Fisheries Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM), which is one of the leading sources of cooperation in scientific research into management and conservation for all the relevant states.





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## PESCA on the spot

Following the Community's call for proposals on transnational cooperation and networking projects in areas dependent on fishing, the six projects listed below have been chosen (OJEC C142 of 14 May 1996):

**REFITOUR**, restructuring of fishing vessels and retraining of workers into tourism, presented by Djursland College, involving Denmark and Ireland.

**MAREDUNET**, networking of European marine training institutions on the Internet, promoted by the French Association for the Management of Marine and Aquacultural Colleges (AGEMA), and involving training centres in France, Belgium, Italy and The Netherlands.

**European coastal household network**, promoting the development of marine tourism in areas dependent on fishing, enabling seamen in areas undergoing restructuring to find a host of new job placements offered by the DIC, and involving the following countries: F, P, I, E, S, UK, IRL, EL.

**Aqua-Line**, involving the setting-up of a system for collecting and disseminating information on the possibility of branching out into aquaculture in remote regions of the Union, put forward by Aqua TT UETP Ltd and involving the following countries: IRL, UK, P, EL.

**Pêche Fish Co**, a partnership project involving the Kent and Nord-Pas-de-Calais regions for the development of fish-product processing industries and the management of resources in the English Channel, put forward by East Kent Initiative.

**Primeras jornadas hispano-portuguesas sobre pesca**, a forum for the exchange of experiences in the fishing industry in Andalucia and the Algarve, set up by Federación Andaluz.

A second call for proposals will be published in next January's OJEC.

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## Interview of the month

### Interview with John Stephanis, Director of the Selonda aquacultural group

November 1996

*Editor's note: intended as a medium for freely voiced opinions, the PESCA bulletin reflects the views held by professionals. Articles express the opinions of the authors alone.*

*P. I (Pesca info ):* Could you give us a brief description of your activities?

*J.S (John Stephanis):* Selonda Aquaculture is a Greek company specializing in breeding and marketing catfish and sea bream. Altogether, we have two hatching plants, including the biggest in the Mediterranean, and 11 production sites with a total capacity of 3,100 tonnes. There are two companies specializing in product-selling, one concentrating on the Greek market and the other exclusively on the export market.

*P.I :* What particular difficulties have you come across marketing and producing in an EU environment?

*J.S :* I feel that there has been insufficient support for quality enhancement. Both national and European authorities have been too lax in implementing existing regulations. There was a fall in the production price for seabass and sea bream of around 57% in current ecu prices between 1990 and 1995. I would put this slump more down to shortcomings in marketing, rather than overproduction. Another relevant factor is competition from products from the southern Mediterranean, for which payment of import duties when entering the EU market is sometimes avoided.

*P.I :* How would you suggest aquaculture can be promoted in the EU?

*J.S :* With regard to the Mediterranean itself and the rate the industry is developing there, EU and national aid can help maintain current growth rates by being directed towards:

- promotional activities;
- research into new species;
- research into cost-reduction methods, including disease prevention and treatment, or improvements in nutrition.

*P.I :* In your opinion, which proposals under the Pesca initiative would be useful to you?

*J.S :* To be brief, I consider the Pesca proposals on the restructuring of firms involved in aquaculture and trading in aquacultural products to be of particular interest.

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## Newsflash

### **Second interregional Pesca meeting: Balearic Islands, February 1997**

The meeting will be given over to disseminating the results of research into fisheries, with 10 or so Mediterranean regions taking part.

### **Pesca conference on fish-product processing: Brussels, June 1997**

Pesca Info will take this up in later editions.

### **Recent EC publications:**

"The conversion of fisheries-dependent areas"; "European Union aid for the development of fishing (1994-1999)" - brochures detailing FIG and PESCA financing for all countries, available in English, French and the language of the relevant country; "Control of activities in the fisheries sector".

*This column is available to you if you wish to announce various events or actions likely to interest the fishing world.*

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