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Women in the fishing world

Fishing has long been seen as a man's world owing to the fact that attention is focused on the sole activity of salt-water fishing where, in fact, very few women are involved. Thus, beach fishing, which is sometimes considered the privilege of women (as is the case in Galicia) was unknown; in the Galician region of Spain there is a real division of labour between women professionally employed to collect shells on the sea shore and men involved in various types of fishing.

The role of fishermen's wives in the running of fishing businesses was also unknown. In fact, fishermen very often leave various tasks, like accounting and dealing with administrative documents, to their wives. Moreover, international meetings for fishermen's wives have been being organized for a number of years so that they can exchange information on experiences (see our heading «[Newsflash](#)»).

Also, it should not be forgotten that the fishing industry involves more than catching fish. At the processing level, the role of women in sardine-canning factories is a long-standing tradition. At the beginning of the century, according to need, mobility among women was high along the whole of the French Atlantic coastline from Concarneau to Hendaye. There are often large numbers, if not a majority, of women working both as employees and managers in the fish trade... and even more in fish shops!

With the development and promotion of female labour, women can indeed be found at all stages. Admittedly, women on ships remains the exception; nevertheless, in the Bigouden area in Brittany alone there are six - sometimes entering the profession through necessity (to save the family business) but also through vocation. The majority accompany their husbands and one of them, a skipper, has even become spokeswoman for the inshore fishermen as illustrated in the [interview of the month](#). However, women are also found in responsible positions: shipowner, trader (one of the main Italian businesses in this industry even had the distinctive feature of all of its employees being women), representative for professional organizations, minister or... European Commissioner.

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Region of the month

Hirtshals: a multipurpose port in the heart of the North Sea

Hirtshals port lies at the extreme north of the Jutland Peninsula and belongs to the five large Danish ports (with Skagen - its neighbour - Esbjerg, Hanstholm and Thyborøn). The fishing industry forms the economic spearhead of this region which is entirely oriented towards the sea.

The other major port activity is the car ferry service to and from Norway; tourism must also be mentioned - having perhaps encouraged the creation of a huge North Sea centre. The latter includes aquariums, documents and videos on fishing as well as promotional exercises presenting the management of various activities and the environmental problems of the North Sea. The centre houses major Danish research organizations in the fishing domain (DIFTA, DIFMAR), professional organizations and representatives of administrative bodies.

Hirtshals is particularly representative of the diversity of Danish fishing even if the industrial activity - which is very important in Denmark - is in the minority here compared with large centres in the south like Esbjerg and even the other port in the North Jutland region: Skagen. The flotilla is very diverse. The port accommodates both large industrial seiner trawlers over 50-m long and cutters, using trawl nets or Danish seines (encircling nets culminating in a cod end used for catching demersal species), or the trap-setters which are approximately 10-m long.

The port is divided into two parts located on either side of the car ferry basin. Three basins to the west which accommodate all kinds of boats and 2 large basins to the east reserved for large units. However, the contrast is more visible on shore with, to the west, the logistics and administrative buildings and one of the fishmarkets and, to the east, a large concentration of refrigerated and non-refrigerated warehouses and trading and processing companies.

In fact, Hirtshals, Hanstholm and Skagen house a very large majority of companies involved in processing seafood products for human consumption. The industries process fish landed by both the local fleet and units from the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway and the Faroe Islands.

Half of the value landed by the Danish fleet, and an even greater share of the volume, consists of herring and mackerel captured by the port's 11 large seiners; this explains the attention this sector receives in the following interview.

Questions to C. OLESEN, Director of the organization of Danish producers using the purse-seine fishing method.

Pesca-Info (P.I.): What are the main problems the members of your organization have?

C. OLESEN: They are of a structural nature and concern the appropriateness of our fleet to resources. What disturbs us most is the lack of long-term information on the availability of resources. We are unable to know in advance the TAC amount for our target species in the North Sea. We estimate, to an even lesser extent, the overall quota reserved for EU fleets and the share Denmark can exploit. We have old vessels we would like to replace, but how can we decide on the relevance of an important investment decision without

being able to anticipate the catch possibilities?

P.I.: What can you suggest?

C. OLESEN: The inspection system for catches is very strict in Denmark; we would like the same to apply in the other Member States. This would perhaps enable us to make a better estimate of quota amounts. It would also be interesting to consider a system of individual transferable quotas which could be adapted to the management of the resources we target (small deep-sea fish). Finally, at local level, it would also involve making the units comply with the ISO 9000 standards; seven of our 11 vessels have received this type of approval. This could contribute to making our product's reputation more secure and thus be of interest to more processors.

Data sheet

Hirtshals

- *Location*: North Jutland, Denmark
- *Type of fishing*: purse seine, Danish seine, demersal trawl net, nets.
- *Fleet*: 179 units, including:
 - 11 large seiners
 - 8 vessels using the Danish seine
 - 25 deep-sea trawlers
 - 23 inshore trawlers
 - 113 inshore trap-setters
- *Catches (1996)*:
 - *species*: small deep-sea fish - herring (*Clupea sp*), mackerel (*Scomber sp.*), demersal species - cod (*Gadus morhua*), plaice (*pleuroctones sp*)
 - *volume*: 175 000 tonnes of which 130 000 tonnes are landed by Danish fleets and 45 000 by foreign vessels.
 - *value*: 455 000 000 Danish kroner (ECU 61 500 000) of which 331 000 000 kroner (ECU 44 700 000) by Danish fleets.
- *Number of fishermen*: 375
- *Jobs in processing*: 500.

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Common Fisheries Policy

The Fourth MGP

After long debates, the Council of Ministers adopted on 15 April 1997 the council's pilot decision relating to "objectives and procedures aiming at restructuring the Community fishing industry for the period from 1 January 1997 to 31 December 2001 with a view to attaining a lasting balance between resources and their exploitation", in other words the Fourth Multiannual Guidance Programme (MGP IV).

Basic findings: a number of stocks are in danger

Consultations with several groups of experts have enabled concrete evidence to be revealed that a number of fishing stocks are seriously threatened. However, a distinction is made between those presenting a short-term **risk of collapse** and those which are **overexploited** and present a medium-term risk of collapse. Alongside these two categories of endangered resources, the following are to be found: stocks said to be **fully exploited** - i.e. those where the balance would be compromised by a moderate increase in the fishing effort - and those for which no sufficiently accurate scientific information is available, and for which a cautious approach is justified.

Some clear objectives: the fishing effort must be reduced

MGP IV lays down the following as 5-year objectives:

- to reduce the fishing effort for stocks presenting a risk of collapse by 30%;
- to reduce the fishing effort for overexploited stocks by 20%;
- not to increase the fishing effort on fully exploited stocks or for which not enough is known about the situation;
- an increase in fishing efforts remains possible for underexploited stocks.

To conclude, fishing efforts are to be reduced in most cases or, at best, are not to be increased over the next five years.

Adjust fleet capacity accordingly

As the objectives in terms of fishing efforts have been laid down, the next step is to identify the European fleet-adjustment measures. To do this the different sectors and fishing grounds of each Member State's fleet must be identified in relation to stocks. According to the composition of catches by sector or fishing ground, specific reduction rates may be calculated on the basis of stocks.

The text adopted by the Council presents three possibilities: either reduce the fleet capacity expressed in **KW and TJB**, reduce the activity expressed in **days at sea**, or a composition of both: reduction of activity and capacity. The group of vessels under 12-m long, other than trawlers, will be exempt from these measures, but their capacity cannot be increased.

Each Member State was to prepare and submit a programme, enabling it to attain these new objectives, to the Commission by 30 June 1997. The text also makes provision for a new evaluation of the situation and

the evolution of stocks for 1999, with a possible adaptation of MGP IV objectives to new data.

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PESCA on the spot

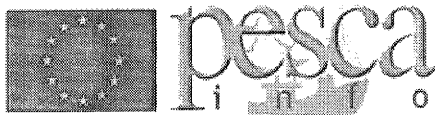
The European maritime centres...

Michèle Lecomte, from Honfleur (South Normandy) is President of an association of European maritime centres. This move is included in a project financed by the Pesca fund and involves promoting, in various EU maritime regions, structures which are both places defending maritime culture, and information, training and economic development centres. They would enable professional people to meet - especially those involved in offshore fishing residing in small localities - and access various pieces of information they rarely have access to.

Projects exist in the Sporades in Greece, in Sicily, the Azores, Sweden in the Gothenburg region, at Killybegs in Ireland and in the Scottish Highlands, etc.

Each centre will have its dominant specific field (tourism, underwater jobs, cultural and historic fields, etc.) but they will benefit from a European label. They will be integrated into a network which will enable them to have closer contact with the Communities in Brussels and facilitate exchanges. Thus, they will be able to accommodate travelling exhibitions, seminars and house, for instance, stands ensuring the promotion of products from regions accommodating the same type of structures.

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Interview of the month

Interview with Scarlett LE CORRE, female fisherman and representative for offshore fishing...

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.

Scarlett LE CORRE, skipper in Guilvinec (Bigouden area, South Brittany) is one of the few women to go to sea alone. She holds numerous representative positions (Vice-President of the local and regional fishing committees, and family allowance fund for fishermen, member of the national committee...) to defend her passion: offshore fishing.

P.I. (Pesca Info): How did you become involved in fishing?

Scarlett LE CORRE (SLC): Through my love for the sea! My father collected algae and as a little girl I used to go along with him on his boat. When the factories closed, he turned to offshore fishing: I continued to go with him. Once I became an adult, I wanted to do it as a job, which was not easily accepted by either my parents, other fishermen or, to an even lesser extent, by administrative bodies. Fortunately, my husband was an able seaman and I accompanied him as a steward. Through this I discovered new horizons and met people both in Africa and the Nordic countries. Then my husband became a mechanic for fishing activities. As for me, I brought up my children, then went back to work (as a representative, then as a beautician) whilst managing the family budget at the same time. Then, one day, an administrator for maritime affairs became sympathetically aware of my passion... I got my role and less than two months later, my boat.

P.I.: Being a fisherman's wife and a mother already involves a great deal of work, were you able to keep everybody happy?

SLC: Yes, thanks to my job. I am the only one on board and work at my own pace. I cast anchor and bring in my nets in accordance with the family schedule: I am there at mealtimes and especially to help my children with their school work. I have become diversified in algae culture - following a study trip to Japan - and encouraged other inshore fishermen to do so. I have invested a lot of time in this action especially since one of my sons intends to do this job (the other one wants to go salt-water fishing). To enhance the value of the fishing catches and these algae cultures, I have also become involved in processing. Here too, I am motivated by the thought that my daughter intends to work in this sector!

P.I.: You are also fighting for the whole profession of offshore fishing in which you are recognized as their spokeswoman. Does being a woman help you?

SLC: Certainly. I am chosen rather for my personality, the actions I have initiated, especially in my defence of offshore fishing, diversification, and management of activities in the coastal waters. However, as a woman, I am treated with more respect. I have been able to speak my mind, which a man would have found more difficult to do without creating uproar or even coming under attack. In the Bigouden area, in particular, women are respected!



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Newsflash

The venue for the **Sixth International Meeting of Fishermen's wives** was the Isle of Noirmoutier (France) on 1, 2 and 3 May last. This event welcomed participants from the whole of the coastal area in France as well as Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Further meetings should take place in two years at St-Jean de Luz (Atlantic Pyrenees, France).

The Commission has just published **two calls for proposals concerning fishermen and fishermen's wives involved in offshore coastal fishing**. Closing date: 15.9.97. Contacts: DG XIV or http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg14/calls/calls_en.htm

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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