



pesc*a* info



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Advances in the preservation of resources

“We are still fishing too much and too little” was how Ms Bonino, European Commissioner in charge of fisheries, summarized the state of the position motivating Community policy regarding the preservation of stocks. If “too much” can be partly resolved by reducing the level of fishing and fixing the permissible number of fishing catches and quotas, “too little” requires regulating the use of fishing gear and protecting the environment. It is in this frame of mind that so-called technical measures have been implemented.

On 30 October last, the European Union’s Council of Ministers for Fisheries adopted a new law simplifying existing regulations and strengthening options taken in the past. Developing this new law was a difficult task and an agreement could only be drawn up following over a year of discussions between the Commission and representatives of Member States. The effort paid off, however, owing to the precarious balancing of our natural stocks. And even if the resolutions adopted during the Council are less ambitious than the Commission’s initial proposals, the benefits should be felt fairly quickly.

The new regulation means considerable progress, simplifying as it does current regulations, making them more easily applicable for fishermen and thereby easier to monitor. In this way, the use of meshes has been homogenized in two large geographical zones, preventing frequent changes when crossing into different zones; a number of derogations have been eliminated, limiting complications and risks brought about by the use of small meshes for fishing small-sized species; the range of meshes, adapted to the different species caught, are grouped together into a limited number, preventing a needless source of complexity. Furthermore, the new regulations only become effective in two years’ time, which allows fishermen time to adapt. Details of the measures taken are specified in our section on the Common Fisheries Policy.

The last Fisheries Council also examined other important matters for the future of fishing in the European Union. In particular, guidelines were drawn up for the fishing agreements with third countries and the Commission was charged with presenting a cost-benefit analysis of these agreements in 1999. Monitoring was also very much to the fore with the adoption of new regulations relating to the declaration of catches in the western waters affected by restrictions on fishing levels. Finally, the problems associated with Spain’s announcement of a fisheries protection zone in the Mediterranean and regulations on drift gill nets were tackled by Ministers.

Pesca Info will return to these files in later editions.

The Editor

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Region of the month

County Galway: aquaculture

European Commission Delegation
Library
2300 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037



The county of Galway in the mid-west of Ireland has quite a varied coastline, from the sheltered Galway Bay to the fjord which separates it from County Mayo to the north, with the coves and deep bays of Connemara in between.

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Such an environment offers a favourable setting for aquaculture, the relative insignificance of industry and agriculture contributing to the exceptional water quality. It is hardly surprising, then, that aquaculture is significant in the county, all the more so given that this industry, as all over Ireland, benefits from strong government support.

A new law, "The Fisheries (Amendment) Bill", 1996, was voted in by the Irish Parliament last May. This law, relating to the granting of licences for fishing in new grounds, was well received by the majority of the country's aquaculturalists, who feel that the law represents an appropriate framework for boosting the development of aquaculture in Ireland while taking account of environmental aspects.

In County Galway, oysters are the traditional activity in the bay that bears the same name (to the south-west), more specifically around Clarenbridge, where there is a natural bed. The site is currently undergoing renovation to provide better administration. Three-quarters of the finance for this operation has come from European funds raised within the framework of PESCO in 1996. The following year, an oyster co-operative was set up in Connemara, integrated into an aquatic tourist activity benefiting from the same type of aid.

Oyster-culture activities can, in fact, be found in north-western Connemara and the fjord of Killary. This location is also used for mussel-breeding on ropes, an activity that is growing, even if it is less significant than further south of the country in Bantry Bay (Co. Cork).

Ormer-breeding is also an activity which looks set for development, with a number of fishermen already devoted to it. The as yet experimental attempts at urchin-breeding should also be pointed out.

Scallop also features among restocking activities. Kilkieran Bay is one of the three sites (along with Brest harbour in France and Ardtoe in Scotland) selected for concerted action supported by the EU and Norway. In Kilkieran, Co. Galway, this action is conducted in association with a fishermen's co-operative which is also involved in managing a flat-oyster bed.

Nevertheless, salmon-breeding remains the dominant activity, employing approximately 300 people spread over some ten farms. The fish are bred in floating cages located in sheltered zones, frequently in the beds of rias which plunge deep into the earth. The county's output accounts for approximately a third of Irish output which, for the moment, remains relatively modest (approximately 14,000 tonnes).

The "Irish Salmon Producers Group" is made up of approximately ten independent producers, some of whom work in neighbouring counties. This group contributes in particular to the existence of a not insignificant processing sector (approximately a hundred jobs in salmon-processing alone).

Questions put to Tom O'Brien of the "Irish Salmon Producers Group" in Kilkieran, Co. Galway:

Pesca-Info (P.I.): What are the features of salmon-breeding in County Galway?

Tom O'Brien (T.O'B.): The environment is excellent. The waters are of good quality and practically free from pollution.

P.I.: Does your settlement in this region not also lead to certain constraints?

(T.O'B.): The problems we encounter come in two forms: economic, which concerns the whole of Ireland, and logistical, especially in our western regions. The first problem is due to the lack of competitiveness of Irish production in the face of low costs in Norway and Scotland. We are still too small and need to develop this activity before we can lower our production costs. The second problem, i.e. transport constraints, is due to the remoteness of our very outlying regions. This leads to additional deadlines for delivery times (over 36 hours compared with continental producers) and higher transport costs.

**Data sheet
County Galway**

- *Location:* Galway, Connaught, Ireland
- *Type of fishing:* salmon, mussel, oyster, ormer and scallop-breeding
- *Number of plants:* 40
- *Output:*
 - *volume:* 6,000 tonnes
 - *value:* approx. 5 million ECU
- *Jobs in aquaculture:* 350
- *Jobs in processing:* 400





Common Fisheries Policy

The new regulation regarding technical preservation measures

Technical measures may involve both minimum mesh sizes for nets (codends or fixed vessels) and minimum sizes for landing, limits on fishing activities in a number of zones or by-catches. These provisions all aim at protecting fishing resources by essentially limiting catches of young species and come under the more general context of safeguarding marine ecosystems.

The Commission's proposals, presented in 1996, have been widely discussed and the Fisheries Council of 30 October 1997 adopted a series of measures relating, in particular, to the selectivity of fishing vessels, the strengthening of boxes and the minimum size of species.

An increase in mesh sizes and simple regulations regarding the use of trawl nets

For larger species, 100-mm meshes become the basic rule north of the 48th parallel. South of this line, the minimum mesh size is increased to 70 mm (including prawns). The regulation provides for the possibility to use smaller-sized meshes, however, where small-sized species are being fished. To prevent fraud, the number of different meshes held on board will be restricted and will be the subject of a regulation in 1998.

Furthermore, devices aimed at encouraging young fish to escape from trawl nets should be installed.

These mostly involve panels made up of square meshes which cannot close. From now on, such panels should be installed on the back of trawl nets used in fishing for shrimps or prawns north of the 48th parallel.

Boxes

Boxes aimed, in particular, at protecting young species have been created or specified. Fishing is prohibited for variable periods according to the abundance of young species. The most important boxes involve flat fish, especially plaice, in the south-eastern North Sea and cod along the coasts of the Iberian Peninsula. It should be noted that the Council of 30 October 1997 did not adopt all the Commission's much more ambitious proposals aimed at setting up new boxes.

Minimum sizes of species

Determining minimum sizes aims at removing any commercial value from very small-sized fish to discourage them from being caught. The minimum size of a number of species was revised by taking account of the characteristics of trawl-net meshes (increased for some, including whiting, reduced for others, including plaice). Moreover, a number of species which were not covered by this type of regulation were included as, for instance, octopus and swordfish.

The new regulation will take effect in two years' time, with transitional provisions in the first year.



PESCA on the spot

The fishing museum at Urk, The Netherlands

Within the framework of the PESCA programme, a subsidy was granted to the province of Flevoland for its Fishing Museum at Urk.

With this European contribution, the museum, located in the former town hall, can now be renovated in keeping with the site's historic character. Improvements will be made to it. The museum will also be enlarged, however, to include an adjacent building in which a fisherman's house will be reconstructed with furniture from the last century.

The museum will evoke the history of the island of Urk in various ways. The collections gathered here will enable the everyday life of the period to be relived in this fishing village, which houses The Netherlands' biggest fish market in terms of landed value.

The project will cost approximately ECU 320,000. Out of this figure, PESCA is contributing up to ECU 150,000, while the municipality of Urk will bear the remainder of the cost.

The project will contribute towards strengthening and diversifying the local economy and, in particular, developing the town's tourist infrastructure. The museum should be opened around February 1998.

For further information regarding the PESCA programme in Flevoland, contact Mr A. Hubers, Province of Flevoland, Department of Economic Affairs.

Internet: provincie@flevoland.nl



Interview of the month

Interview with Rogerio Martins of Docapesca - Lisbon's fish market

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.

Introduction: Lisbon is one of Europe's major platforms for the entry of seafood products, which are distributed on the domestic market in particular and, to a lesser extent, in Spain. With 70 kg per inhabitant per year, Portugal has the highest rate of consumption in the EU. A nocturnal guided tour of Pedrouço fish market, run by the public enterprise, Docapesca (like all fish markets in Portugal) will bear this out.

P.I. (Pesca Info): *Could you give us a few examples of products originating in extra-Community waters?*

Rogerio MARTINS (R.M.): In the first of the large halls located beside the quay, landings from the Portuguese fleet are up for sale. Among others, sub-tropical species are found, including porgy and dentex, caught in Moroccan waters using longliners and trawlers. The number of African fish landed here from boats may be estimated as averaging between 20 and 30 tonnes a day.

P.I.: *Do the fish in the other large halls originate elsewhere?*

R.M.: Yes, and they are very varied. For instance, we have fresh fish from Senegal and Mauritania

(porgy, sole, grouper, etc.) which arrive directly in Lisbon by plane from Dakar and Nouakchott (*NDLR: According to the relevant services at Lisbon airport, deliveries are up to around 50 tonnes per week*). However, other species shipped fresh by plane originate from our fishing grounds in the Açores.

P.I.: *What about frozen products?*

R.M.: We receive very large quantities of products by container off-loaded from boats in Lisbon's trading port from all over the world, including India, China, USA, northern Europe (especially cod). Up to 20 containers can arrive on any day. As you can see, anything can be found here: not just porgy, but also cutlassfish, meagre and others.

We import many seafood products since our fishing grounds and methods are forever diminishing and consumption is not falling.

P.I.: *Your plants are huge but are not yet up to European standards. Do you have any plans in this regard?*

R.M.: We do in fact have considerable storage facilities: 15 cold rooms with a total capacity of 63,800 m³, of which one alone accounts for 22,000 m³. At the same time, we provide in total 130 selling points in both of the large halls we are crossing.

To answer your question, it is true that we are not as well equipped as Setubal, for example, which is further south and was set up more recently. There are plans for standardizing in the future, but these are not yet well established.

Newsflash

Expo '98 in Lisbon

The next world fair - with the theme "The oceans - a heritage for the future" will be held in Lisbon from 22 May to 30 September 1998 on a new site by the Tagus. Pesca Info will discuss this in a later edition.

Enquiries: EXPO '98

- Tel.: (351) 1 831 98 98

- Internet: <http://www.expo98.pt>

Ancona Trade Fair (Italy) in May 1998

The fifth seafood trade fair and the 58th international fisheries fair will be held in Ancona on 14 and 17 May 1998.

Enquiries: Fiera di Ancona

- Tel.: (39) 71 58971

- Fax: (39) 71 5897213

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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Comments and suggestions are welcome at:

Pesca Info

European Commission

DG XIV/D/1 - J99

Rue de la Loi, 200

B-1049 Brussels

Fax: +32 2 2963033

URL: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg14/pesca>

URL: <http://www.pesca.lu/>