

# FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE NEWSLETTER

## APRIL 2015



### European Parliament

### European Commission

### Aquaculture

### iFISH

### Events

The month of April featured the yearly Seafood Expo Global which is the world's largest seafood trade event where more than 26 000 buyers, suppliers, media, and other seafood professionals from 150 countries visit the exposition. During that conference, the European Commission announced that it would be issuing a warning to Thailand for failing to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, whilst also acknowledging the effort of other 2 countries for tackling this global problem.

Simultaneously, in Bilbao a conference was organised under the "DiscardLess" project (financed by the EU's 7<sup>th</sup> Financial Framework Program (FP7)), on "Implementing the Landing Obligation" where the chairs of 3 Advisory Councils (North Western Waters, Pelagic and South Western Waters) presented their concerns and aspirations to the discard ban. On the same topic, in April the European Parliament adopted in plenary the "omnibus" regulation thus giving fishermen a way out of this legal loophole they were caught in. In the same plenary, the MEPs adopted the first multi-annual management plan, on the Baltic, paving the way forward for other plans.

On the issue of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), an informative meeting was held to update stakeholders on the state of play, the problems ahead and the upcoming implementation phase of the directive.

Regarding the aquaculture sector, a stakeholder consultation meeting was held in the European Committee of the Regions to discuss an own initiative opinion on the "Future of European Aquaculture". Lastly, the European Technology and Innovation Platform (EATiP) held its annual general meeting where the aquaculture sector gathered and discussed its obstacles and potential opportunities ahead.

Concluding, I invite you to visit a new, consumer-facing microsite designed to provide consumers, policy makers, MEPs and journalists a more accessible platform to obtain factual, relevant and accurate information about the European fishing industry.

Enjoy the reading!



*Despina Symons*  
Director, EBCD



### Fishermen are given a 2 year grace period on the discard ban

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MEPs gathered the last week of April in Strasbourg to discuss and vote on 2 dossiers that will have a major impact on the fisheries sector for the years ahead;

- The “omnibus” regulation aligning the landing obligation with the current technical measures framework. This dossier was adopted with 573 in favour, 96 against and 21 abstentions. Adoption of this proposal means that fishermen will be given a 2 year period to adapt to the discard ban; more specifically, for the next 2 years failing to report the by-catch will not be considered as a serious infringements. Also, under the agreed text the European Commission must draft an annual report on the implementation of the discard ban; the requirement to keep in different storage the undersized fish has been removed; and most importantly a clause has been inserted to ensure that a parallel market for previously-discarded fish doesn’t take shape.
- The first multi-annual management plan, covering the Baltic Sea: The European Commission’s proposal was adopted but the vote on the legislative resolution was

postponed to give time to the rapporteur, MEP Walesa (PL, EPP) to enter into negotiations with the Council of the European Union (the Adoption of a formal mandate on the opening of negotiations and on the negotiating team will be given in the EP Fisheries Committee on the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2015). The agreed text ensures that the 3 fish stocks jointly managed (cod, herring, and sprat) will be maintained “**above**” Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). This is an important outcome as this is the first plan that will pave the way forward for other stocks and for other sea basins.

On another note, MEPs also gave their consent to a Council decision authorising Member States to become party, in the interest of the European Union, to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, of the International Maritime Organization.

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## Commission

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### EC issues formal warning to Thailand regarding IUU

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This month the European Commission officially issued a warning (yellow card) to Thailand for failing to meet the necessary requirements to tackle Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported fishing (IUU). They will be given 6 months to propose and implement a plan that will improve their fisheries monitoring, controlling and sanctioning systems and align them to international law.

In addition, the European Commission acknowledged the steps taken by Korea and Philippines to tackle the issue of IUU and are now in the clear (green cards); they had been issued a

warning – yellow card in November 2013 and June 2014, respectively.

Just as a reminder:

- ✓ Green cards: Fiji, Panama, Togo and Vanuatu in October 2014; Belize in December 2014 (after being put on the black list and banned from importing in the EU).
- ✓ Yellow cards: Ghana and Curaçao, received formal warnings in November 2013; Papua New Guinea, was warned in June 2014; Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, were warned in December 2014
- ✓ Red cards: Sri Lanka, Guinea and Cambodia were banned from importing into the EU.

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## State of play with the MSFD

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This month the 13th meeting of the Working Group on Good Environmental Status (WG GES) took place in Brussels. The goal of the GES is to assist in the development of criteria and methodological standards for good environmental status and address issues of their application by EU Member States, within the framework of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

Member States, stakeholders, Commission, members of ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) and the JRC (Joint Research Center) were present. The discussions revolved around the 11 Descriptors reflected in the MSFD, of which three are of upmost importance for fisheries:

- ✓ Descriptor 3 The population of commercial fish species is healthy

- ✓ Descriptor 4 Elements of food webs ensure long-term abundance and reproduction
- ✓ Descriptor 6 The sea floor integrity ensures functioning of the ecosystem

### Progress in GES

Both ICES and JRC are the bodies in charge of making the technical reviews of the Descriptors, through several workshops, and to present Manuals, something that happened in October 2014. Member States made comments on these, and a workshop took place beginning of 2015 to discuss cross-cutting issues.

The Commission Decision on the definition of GES should try at this moment to close open issues, especially regarding those cross-cutting ones. The full revision of the Descriptors is planned to happen before summer 2016.

The main outcomes of the workshops centered on tackling cross-cutting issues such as the need for integration of the “biodiversity” descriptors, the establishment of clearer links to assess in other policies and the need to use pressure-based assessments to inform the ecosystem status.

### Descriptors 3, 4 and 6

A state of play was given regarding these three descriptors according to ICES advice.

#### Descriptor 3

Over all, the situation in terms of the indicators 1 (exploited sustainably consistent with high long-term yields) and 2 (have full reproductive capacity in order to maintain stock biomass) is of a broad agreement, but the indicator 3 (the proportion of older and larger fish/shellfish should be maintained (or increased)) is not yet operational and needs to be revised. The populations need to be fished at an appropriate yield to reach MSY.

Scientists were not able to reach an agreement on what is GES for these populations but by 2016 ICES will provide methods to assess this descriptor.

Different opinions were expressed at this point especially regarding the MSY. Others considered that the problem of size composition will never be solved on a scientific level and therefore the indicator should be removed. D3 also has to be studied from different perspectives since the approach differs from one fishery to another. There were suggestions to join knowledge and advice with STEFC (Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries).

The work regarding the MSY will continue.

On the 21 of May, at the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the "Marine environment and fisheries" workshop, D3 will be discussed.

#### **Descriptor 4**

Regarding this Descriptor (Food Webs), further clarification on surveillance indicators and accounting for uncertainty is needed, and this could be done through EU projects and ICES working groups to formulate appropriate methods by 2016.

Best practice guidelines are planned to be developed by 2017 jointly by Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs) and ICES.

Maybe the most important problem that occurs regarding D4 is that the revision does not address food web stability, the functional role of lower trophic guilds and the relevance of size to foodwebs. National and European projects could further develop D4 indicators.

#### **Descriptor 6**

This is one of the trickiest descriptors that lead to a long and complicated process of assessing the seafloor. There are no operational indicators for this Descriptor so regional approaches to

methodological standards are underway, having ICES and Regional Sea Conventions working together in this issue. There are no agreements on boundaries or assessment methods; no agreed list of habitats; a limited understanding of relationship to different types of pressure; time scales and spatial scales of recovery.

Projects within ICES and within RSCs are planned to be in place to tackle these deficiencies.

#### **Next meetings:**

4-5 May Marine Strategy Coordination Group

21 May 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the "Marine environment and fisheries" workshop.

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### **Aquaculture**

## **Committee of the Regions: "The Future of European Aquaculture"**

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is drafting an own-initiative opinion on "The Future of European Aquaculture", with Mr Jesus Gamallo (ES/EPP) Director-General for External Relations and Relations with the European Union, Region of Galicia, as the rapporteur.

The objective is to identify obstacles and recommend possible solutions for the development of the aquaculture sector in Europe, including licensing, competitiveness, quality management, environmental sustainability and market and distribution chain.



### Stakeholder Consultation

In order to do so, a stakeholder consultation took place on the 23th of April at the Committee of the Regions, where industry, NGOs and Commission met with the rapporteur to give their inputs.

Mr Gamallo emphasized the slow development of the aquaculture sector in Europe, stressing the importance it has for some countries such as Spain and France, whose products are of particular quality compared to the ones imported in the European market (mainly from China, whose sustainability is at stake). Member States and especially regions and local administration need to become involved in the process and maintain a fluent communication in order to help entrepreneurs to keep investing in aquaculture.

According to the rapporteur, the European Commission's Strategic Guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture published in 2013 are of importance to tackle this issue (find the Guidelines [here](#)). In response to these Guidelines, the European Commission has received inputs from Member States and later in the year workshops will be organised as well as a new study which will have a consultation phase. A study on feasibility for labels just for seafood will be published in 2016.

Several challenges were identified by stakeholders:

- Developing an action plan and guidelines for shellfish
- Accessing to quality space and waters
- Avoiding the high expenses on last step of the distribution chain
- Reducing red tape and regulatory constraints
- Improving the information flow among administrations
- Protecting aquaculture areas and their perimeters
- Improving the transparency of national plans and take into account NGOs in the whole process
- Improving training and helping new entrepreneurs

### Next steps

The timetable for this opinion is as follows:

- 5th May 2015: Exchange of views on the Own-initiative opinion on "The Future of European Aquaculture" at the Committee of the Regions (find agenda [here](#))
- 18 June approval of the own-initiative opinion in Gaia, Portugal
- Vote in the October Plenary of the Committee of the Regions

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## Annual meeting of EATiP

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In April, the European Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Platform held its annual meeting where different projects were presented and discussed, their background information and EATiP's contribution. Presentations were made on projects such as Diversify, Fishboost, Arraina, Oraqua and others. Also the role of EATiP as a European Technology Platform and its importance in taking part in European Strategies (Blue Growth Strategy, Blue Med) was emphasized. Lastly, a presentation from a representative of the European Commission was

given on the Horizon 2020 financial mechanisms available to promote a competitive and environmentally-friendly European aquaculture.

You can find the various presentations [here](#).

**iFISH**

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## More needs to be done to support the fishing industry

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Europeans believe the fishing industry has a vital role to play in feeding a growing world population but have accused Governments of failing to do enough to support the sector, according to a survey of consumers spanning the continent.

The findings come in the first ever pan-European survey of attitudes among consumers towards the fishing industry and to eating fish as part of their regular diet. Four thousand consumers in eight major European nations took part in the survey earlier this month. Among the key findings were that 71% of those responding thought the industry had a vital role to play in feeding a growing world population but with 84% saying that Governments should do more to support the sector and fishermen.

Despite the fishing industry contributing €71.3 billion to the EU economy\*, only 1.7% of the EU's

2014 budget for sustainable growth in natural resources was allocated to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, against 97.5% of funding allocated to European agriculture. This equates to €1 billion of funding for the fisheries sector against €57 billion bolstering the agricultural sector in 2014 alone. \*\*

The survey also disclosed that 70% of Europeans eat fish at least once a week, partly for health and taste reasons. Spanish consumers were revealed as the most avid fans, with the majority (almost 75%) eating fish at least 2-3 times each week. Most consumers (84%) preferred to eat fish at home rather than in restaurants.

In each of the countries surveyed – the UK, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Denmark and the Netherlands - the majority (73%) of consumers said they...

Read more [here](#)

*(Source: [Europêche Press Release](#)– see the full press release [here](#))*

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# Upcoming EVENTS

11 May	Council	Agriculture and Fisheries Council	Brussels, Belgium
18-22 May	EP	Plenary	Strasbourg, France
18-20 May	ICCAT	ICCAT WG convention amendment	Miami, Florida
21 May	Marine Strategy Coordination Group	<a href="#">4th Marine environment and fisheries workshop</a>	Brussels, Belgium
26-30 May	European Aquaculture Society	<a href="#">World Aquaculture 2015</a>	Jeju Island, Korea
27 May		<a href="#">Towards a Roadmap for Blue Investment and Jobs in the Mediterranean'</a>	Athens, Greece
28 May	Long Distance AC	<a href="#">Executive Committee and General Assembly</a>	Dublin, Ireland
28-30 May	European Commission	<a href="#">European Maritime Day 2015</a>	Pireo, Greece
28-31 May	IUCN	<a href="#">Little Sydney: Protecting Nature in Europe" Conference</a>	Hainburg, Austria

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