



# FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2016

The month of April has come to an end and with it ends another successful year of the Seafood Expo in Brussels where all actors in the seafood sector came together under one roof.

Important developments took place during this month with the European Commission (EC) intensifying its fight against IUU and upping its game on the Mediterranean with the launch of a campaign to save the stocks (#MedFish4ever).

On another note, in this month's EP PECH committee, the EC Commissioner updated MEPs on the state of play of some important dossiers for the fisheries sector.

Additionally, the EC went forward with launching an info day on the Blue Growth calls under the EMFF and gave some tips & tricks on how to apply and what to look out for.

Lastly I invite you to take a look at the upcoming events taking place in the coming weeks.

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## IUU: new developments

The European Commission announced this month that it issued to Kiribati, Sierra Leone and Trinidad and Tobago a yellow card/ pre-identification for failing to tackle their IUU fishing problem (Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated). It also went forward with giving a green card (lifting the trade ban – red card) to Sri Lanka for improving its situation and tackling the issue in an effective manner.

More specifically the reasons as to why the EC went forward with this are:

- **Kiribati:** concerns about the country's capacity to control fishing activities by foreign fleets. There are serious risks that illegally caught fish could be laundered through the ports of Kiribati, as they do not have robust traceability systems in place for fisheries products. Kiribati's unwillingness to share important information on third country vessels operating in their waters undermines the Commission's work to improve transparency and sustainability of tuna resources in the Western and Central Pacific.
- **Sierra Leone:** legal texts governing fisheries are outdated and sanctions fail to deter illegal operators operating internationally under the flag of Sierra Leone, without the fisheries authorities' knowledge. In addition, the number of licensed vessels exceeds the available resources and authorities fail to monitor or control their waters.
- **Trinidad and Tobago:** has a large fleet operating internationally where authorities do not control or inspect foreign vessels, nor cooperate with relevant flag States. The poor traceability system also causes the risk of laundering of fisheries products.
- **Sri Lanka:** has now successfully reformed its fisheries governance system. By today it has amended its legal framework, strengthened sanctions and improved its fleet control.
- **Thailand (had been warned with yellow card a while back):** Commission is currently evaluating progress. The dialogue is proving difficult and there remain serious concerns about the steps taken by Thailand to fight IUU fishing activities. This means that further action by the Commission cannot be ruled out. A meeting with the Thai authorities in May will be a new opportunity for them to show their good will and commitment.

### The game of cards

Red card means trade sanctions and banned from being imported into the EU. Those countries are: Guinea and Cambodia

Yellow card means warned of the need to take strong action to fight IUU fishing. Those countries are: Curacao, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Thailand, Taiwan and the Comoros

Green card is given to countries that have reformed their systems, following a warning by the EU. Those countries are: Sri Lanka, Ghana, Papua New Guinea, Korea, the Philippines, Fiji, Belize, Panama, Togo and Vanuatu.

Find the EC press release and the Q&A.

# Med Campaign

## MEDFISH4EVER- It's our heritage, our future

At the Seafood Expo, the event of the month, the European Commission hosted the **Ensuring the sustainability of Mediterranean fisheries - Launch of the “#MEDFISH4EVER, our Heritage, our Future” campaign.**

### About

According to the European Commission, fish stocks in the Mediterranean are shrinking. Some are on the verge of depletion. All in all, 93% of the fish stocks assessed are over-exploited. Declining stocks have been signaled not only by fishermen who catch less and less fish but are also by scientists who have been monitoring the situation over the years.

As a shared resource, this would be a loss to all, but the impact on fishermen and especially small-scale fisheries would be crippling. Their very means of livelihood not to mention an ancient way of life would be lost. Continued profitability hand in hand with sustainability must therefore be the objective, putting the fisheries sector back on track.

### New Mediterranean Strategy

The European Commission launched during the Seafood Expo a new Mediterranean Strategy and a call for action at international level in order to fight overfishing, one of the key causes for the current state. The EU is willing to take the lead in seeking out solutions for this state of affairs, taking on board our Southern and Eastern Mediterranean neighbours.

At this event, Commissioner Vella expressed his intention to start working on a new Declaration on sustainable fisheries in the Mediterranean that would be a follow-up to the 2003 Venice Declaration and that, this time next year, should give new vision and impetus to conservation and sustainability in the Med.

You can learn more about this initiative here [#MedFish4ever.](#)

## Preparatory Committee on BBNJ

In the international arena, this month welcomed the **Preparatory Committee on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction**. The Committee which will look into the elements of a draft text of an international legally binding instrument (ILBI) under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), convened its first meeting from 28 March – 8 April 2016 at UN Headquarters in New York.

### Background

Conservation issues and sustainable use of Borders Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) are becoming more and more an issue of global attention with concerns on the threat level that anthropogenic activities pose to the marine environment. Hence, the 59th Session of the General Assembly established an ad hoc open-ended informal working group to look at these issues. This working group held its first meeting in February 2006 and tried to identify gaps and ways forward. Specifically, it recommended addressing certain issues as a whole (referred to as “the package”). Those were, amongst others:

- Marine genetic resources (also relating to benefit sharing issues)
- Environmental impact assessments
- Area-Based management tools (Marine Protected Areas fall under this point)
- Capacity building
- Marine Technology transfer

Nine meetings later, in January 2015, the Group reached an agreement on the need to establish a Preparatory Committee on Marine Biodiversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which would in turn make recommendations to the General Assembly on elements of a draft text of an internationally legally binding instrument (ILBI), and, on the 69th session of the General Assembly of the UN (2015) such a Committee was established.

### Way forward – Next Steps

In general, this preparatory committee (as was decided at the 9th meeting of the Working Group on BBNJ conservation) was tasked with making recommendations

on elements of a draft text of a legally binding instrument to the 72nd General Assembly of the UN in 2017; at that same GA it would be decided whether to convene an intergovernmental conference to elaborate the text of the agreement.

Specifically, at this Preparatory Committee, it was decided that at their next meeting (PrepCom 2) 5 informal working groups on Marine Genetic Resources, Area Based Management, Environmental impact assessments, capacity building/technology transfer and crosscutting issues (scope included) would take place in order to see where there is consensus or wide acceptance. Additionally, a list of issues put forward at PrepCom 1 would be circulated.

The committee will meet again for a two-week session in August, with two further sessions planned for 2017.

NGOs expressed hope that an intergovernmental conference can adopt the ILBI by the end of 2017.

### **On an EU level**

EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella, responsible for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, following the end of 1st PrepCom, remarked: *"The European Union has long championed the need for a new UNCLOS implementing agreement for biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction and was consequently a key player at this meeting. This agreement will represent a major step forward in enhancing international ocean governance, a key priority of my political mandate. It will implement and strengthen UNCLOS and overcome the current fragmentation of the legal order of the oceans. It should also contribute to a more sustainable use of our ocean resources, in line with the UN's recently adopted 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. I congratulate all participants on this constructive first meeting and encourage them to continue down the path of compromise and cooperation in order to achieve a universal agreement that will deliver healthy and productive oceans for current and future generations. The European Commission will continue to support this process, which we hope will lead to a formal intergovernmental treaty conference in 2018."*

On the 11th April, at the European Parliament plenary session, a discussion was held (and subsequently a vote) on a non-legislative report (find it here) from Romanian MEP Nicolai Norica (ALDE) on Fisheries aspects within the international agreement on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, UNCLOS. The interventions, much like the discussions at the meeting in the UN were divided between whether to include fisheries in the agreement or whether to enforce existing legislation and boost coordination and cooperation of existing regulating bodies. The same differentiations applied to the issue of MPAs, where some MEPs

called for a global network of MPAs, whilst others suggested that a case by case approach should be followed.

Read the report of the meeting prepared by IISD [here](#).



## EMFF: implementing Blue Growth

In April the European Commission launched the Blue Growth calls under the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) (as stated in the [EMFF 2016 work programme](#)).

**Blue Growth is the long term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole.** Seas and oceans are drivers for the European economy and have great potential for innovation and growth. It is the maritime contribution to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Three calls for proposals were launched under the EMFF (attached you will find the presentations with their practical aspects + challenges/objectives + type of activities, as well as a general tips&tricks presentation for applying):

- [Blue careers](#) (training, awareness raising, improved employability and others)
- [Blue labs](#) (pilots, tailored approaches, stakeholder driven, innovation, multidisciplinary, result-oriented and others)
- [Blue technology](#) (strategic and coordinated investment, transnational partnerships, joint roadmaps, common visions and others)

The calls will be open to all sea basins surrounding the EU coasts and will target a wide range of stakeholders of the blue economy.

The event was opened by Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, followed by Gesine Meissner, Member of the European parliament and keynote speakers from DG MARE and DG Research and Innovation as co-authors of the Communication on Innovation in the Blue economy ([see here the press release](#)).

Although the meeting was not attended by many fisheries-related actors, one speaker raised the concern that fisheries is not included in the Blue Growth campaign and this could lead to a marginalisation of the sector (even more than it already is). This lack of inclusion will lead the sector to an even more stagnant situation, especially after having heard the need to boost more innovation and youth employment in the field from speakers. Lastly, he added that it is immature to talk about “coherent” sea basin strategies when fisheries/fishers is (are) not even

included/invited to these calls (despite the fact that European Commission, during its presentations, included fisheries as a sector for investment and projects).

You can view the recording of the meeting here: <https://scic.ec.europa.eu/streaming/joint-launch-event-of-the-blue-growth-calls-under-the-european-maritime-and-fisheries-fund>

You can view the webpage with all the necessary information presented at the meeting here: <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/information-day-blue-growth-calls-under-emff-5-april-2016>

## EU Commissioner Vella discusses with PECH

At this month's EP Fisheries Committee (PECH), an item on the agenda was an exchange of views between the members of that committee and the EU Commissioner on Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries on the ongoing situation regarding the fisheries sector.

The Commissioner gave an overview of the current situation of the EU fishing sector by stating that most MSY objectives have been reached, the Common Fisheries Policy is in effect and the first steps towards regionalisation have been made via the discard plans and the multiannual management plans. He welcomed the negotiations with all stakeholders but urged the small scale fisheries to be more involved the discussions. He emphasized the importance of blue growth and blue economy and highlighted the importance of international ocean governance. He stated that soon a new initiative on global ocean governance would be launched by the EC.

He then went on to more specific topics:

- **Baltic Multi-Annual Plan (MAP):** He welcomed the agreement reached between the co-legislators and noted that more plans are in the pipeline (with a plan on the North sea to be the runner-up and 2 to be proposed regarding the Mediterranean; 1 western Med + 1 Adriatic).
- **Technical measures:** The proposal launched would simplify measures and ensure flexibility. It would involve regions and stakeholders' participation but the EC would still act as an overall controller and ensure a level playing field.
- **Landing obligation:** Discard plans are still being discussed and amended to address issues and shortcomings and the prospect is positive.
- **Data collection:** He emphasized the need to have quality data especially on certain aspects (e.g. small scale fisheries and the impact they have on marine environment).
- **Cod recovery plan:** He welcomed the agreement of this plan and urged the need to adopt it before the end of the year to avoid legal voids.
- **External dimension of the EU fleet:** The Fishing Authorisation Rights (FAR) proposal would improve the management of authorisation and regulate

better EU fleets fishing outside EU waters as well as 3<sup>rd</sup> country fleets fishing in EU waters.

- **SFPAs:** Gabon and Mauritius are Fisheries Partnership Agreements that are in the pipeline to be agreed; Morocco is expected to be agreed in 2017; whilst with Tanzania it is expected to start after summer; Ghana will start discussions on a new agreement shortly.
- **Mediterranean:** News are not good there as the stocks are in dire condition (bluefin tuna excluded) and swift action will be necessary.
- **Stock assessment:** He asked ICCAT to provide updated information on the situation of swordfish.
- **IUU:** The cooperation between border control agencies and fishing control agencies has been strengthened.

MEPs took the floor with comments and questions amongst which were:

- EP needs to be more involved; delegate acts just won't cut it.
- Quota distribution is not working well whilst small scale fisheries are not getting a fair share of the deal.
- Fishers need to be updated/informed more on the situation of the Landing obligation and the EC should provide an info leaflet of a sort to massively distribute.
- On the Mediterranean, swift action is needed.
- More investment is needed on innovation and increasing selectivity
- Common system of sanctions as well as a common EU certification to regulate imports and promote the EU sector.
- The ban on finning needs to be reviewed, especially when it comes to 3<sup>rd</sup> country vessels operating in EU waters.
- The need to look at MSY from a multi-species approach
- Better regulation and definition of gillnets and trawls. Same words mean different things in the various EU basins.

Specifically on IUU, MEP Engstrom (Green/SW) asked that Thailand be given sanctions (red card) for their lack of failing in IUU matters or to the least remain on the list of flagged countries (yellow card).

Also, MEP Duncan (UK, ECR) raised the issue of choke species under the landing obligation and signalled the need to tackle this issue before it turns into a major problem. He also criticized the EC for not taking a stronger stance regarding the Faroes and their quota allocation.

The Commissioner replied to the MEPs:

- On blue growth and blue economy, the EMFF promotes these agendas.

- On quota allocation, it is a MS initiative but it is true that a better allocation system is needed.

On IUU, Thailand has gone forward with many changes. Also, 3 countries are soon to be identified as also non-cooperative (yellow) whilst one existing will be removed from the list.

The agenda point was finalised with an exchange of thanks and a commitment from the Commissioner to keep the PECH committee continuously involved in the discussions and updated on the state of play.

## Baltic plan and FAR

This month the European Parliament Think Tank has released 2 briefings about 2 hot topics: Multiannual plan for Baltic fisheries and New rules for managing the EU external fishing fleet.

### **Multiannual plan for Baltic fisheries**

Multiannual plans for fisheries management are an essential tool to ensure the sustainable exploitation of fish stocks and marine ecosystems. They also offer increased predictability to fishermen in the long run. In October 2014, the European Commission proposed a multiannual plan for stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea and for the fisheries exploiting them. This Baltic multiannual and multispecies plan is the first proposed plan to build on the principles of the 2013 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. Seen as a test case, it may have some spill-over effect on new proposals for multiannual plans, some of which are expected from the European Commission in the near future.

The Council adopted its general approach on 20 April 2015, and the European Parliament voted on legislative amendments in plenary on 28 April, before referring the matter back to the Committee on Fisheries. After 10 months of difficult interinstitutional negotiations, a compromise was reached in March 2015 in trilogue discussions. The EP's Committee on Fisheries endorsed the trilogue result on 19 April and the plenary should vote on the final outcome in June.

You can learn more about this plan [here](#).

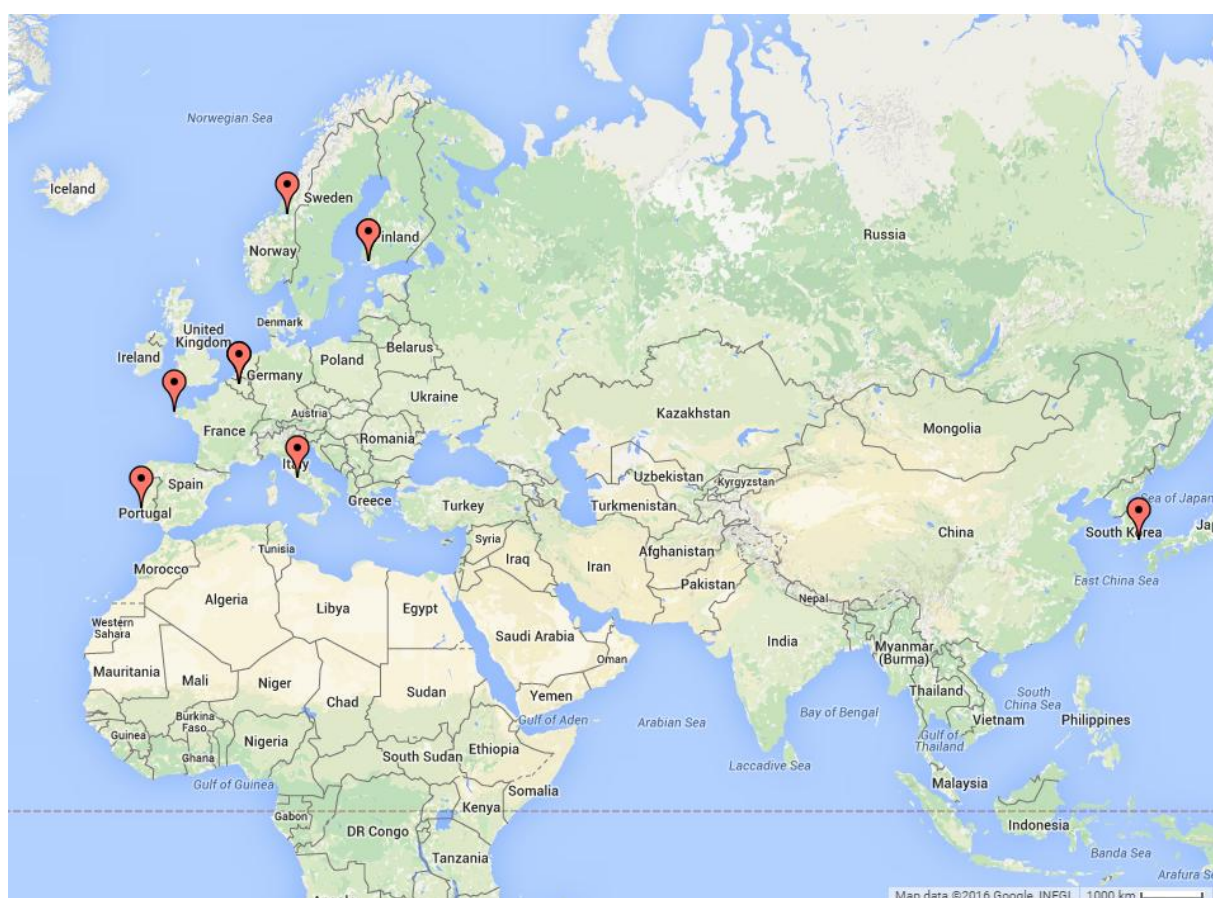
### **New rules for managing the EU external fishing fleet**

In December 2015 the European Commission proposed a revised system for issuing and managing fishing authorisations, intended to improve monitoring and transparency of the EU external fishing fleet. The proposal, replacing the current 'Fishing Authorisations Regulation' 1006/2008, would apply to all EU vessels fishing outside EU waters, and to third-country vessels fishing in EU waters.

The current scope of the authorisation system would be extended to include practices which have been poorly monitored so far, such as private agreements between EU companies and third countries and abusive reflagging operations. Member States would authorise fishing vessels using common eligibility criteria, complemented by specific conditions depending on the nature of the authorisation. Part of the electronic fishing authorisations register, showing who fishes what and where, would for the first time be publicly accessible.

On 15 February 2016, Member States in the Council generally supported the proposal, but also expressed some concerns, in particular in connection with the additional administrative burden that the proposal might entail. Parliament's Fisheries Committee is due to start discussing its draft report in April 2016.

Read the briefing [here](#).



DATE	NAME	CITY	COUNTRY
3-5 May	<a href="#">ABNJ Deep Seas Project- Workshop for the new edition of the World Wide Review on Bottom fisheries in the high seas</a>	Rome	Italy
18-19 May	<a href="#">European Commission, European Maritime Day – Turku 2016 Conference</a>	Turku	Finland
23-27 May	<a href="#">7th World Fisheries Congress: Challenge to Sustainable Fisheries and Safe Seafoods</a>	Busan	Korea
24 May	<a href="#">European Commission, Conference “Tapping into Blue Growth: the way forward for European aquaculture”</a>	Brussels	Belgium
25 May	<a href="#">European Fisheries and Aquaculture Research Organizations (EFARO) - Blue growth and innovations</a>	Brussels	Belgium
30-31 May	<a href="#">Council of the European Union - Informal EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting</a>	Brussels	Belgium
30 May- 3 June	<a href="#">ICES Conference: “Understanding marine socio-ecological systems: including the human dimension in Integrated Ecosystem Assessments”</a>	Brest	France
31 May	<a href="#">LDAC Executive Comittee + General Assembly</a>	Lisbon	Portugal
30-31 May	<a href="#">ECsafeSEAFOOD Seminar: Environmental Contaminants of Emerging Concern in Seafood: Are Producers, Processors, and Consumers on the Safe Side?</a>	Froya	Norway





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CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**