

The new Common Fisheries Policy and protection of Mediterranean fishing

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1. Introduction

As well as providing healthy and tasty food, fishing also creates employment and contributes to the economic and social prosperity of many parts of the European Union. However, nearly 20 years after launching a common fisheries policy, numerous economic, social and environmental problems in the sector remain unresolved.

Fish is a natural, renewable and mobile resource whose reproduction and movements are still relatively unregulated by man. Maintaining fishing at a satisfactory level requires a healthy marine environment ensuring conservation of the species. Fishing must therefore be regulated by means of international cooperation to protect marine ecosystems and safeguard resources. These, in fact, dropped noticeably during the 1970s and 1980s. According to FAO estimates, 60% of stocks are fully exploited or even over-exploited.

This study aims on one hand to examine a number of aspects of the extremely complex theme of sustainable fishing and on the other to provide food for thought on the proposals for reform. It thus examines the modifications introduced by the reform of the CFP and then goes on to consider the possible consequences and formulate proposals for Mediterranean fishing and its protection. The Mediterranean situation is, in fact, felt to require specific in-depth knowledge, in respect of the differences between its ecosystem and those of nor-

Abstract

Numerous economic, social and environmental problems in the fish sector such as impoverishment of resources and consequent reduction in catches, the constant loss of jobs and other exogenous factors such as the enlargement of the European Union, globalisation of the economy and the increasing importance of environmental factors in fisheries management demand attention and resolution at Community level.

While it has achieved positive results in recent years, various aspects of the CFP must be revised.

This study aims to provide food for thought on the reforms proposed by the European Commission and pays particular attention to the need to safeguard Mediterranean fishing, with its numerous specific characteristics.

Résumé

Plusieurs problèmes économiques, sociaux et environnementaux du secteur de la pêche tels que l'appauvrissement des ressources et donc la diminution des captures, les pertes d'emplois, et d'autres facteurs extérieurs tels que l'élargissement de l'Union Européenne, la globalisation de l'économie, l'importance croissante des aspects environnementaux dans la gestion de la pêche, exigent une attention et une solution au niveau communautaire.

Malgré les résultats positifs atteints ces dernières années, la PCP doit être révisé sous différents aspects.

Ce travail entend alimenter la réflexion sur les propositions de réforme faites par la Commission Européenne et prête une attention particulière à la nécessité de sauvegarder la pêche méditerranéenne, caractérisée par plusieurs particularités.

thern Europe.

The EU is one of the world's most important powers in the fishing, fish processing and aquaculture sectors. The value of the production chain – including fishing, aquaculture, processing and selling – amounts to about €20 billion and it accounts for more than 5,000 direct jobs (European Commission, 2001). However, the problems and characteristics of this sector, of a certain economic and social im-

portance, differ from country to country.

2. Origin and evolution of the Common Fisheries Policy

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) consists of a series of regulations governing the fish sector in the European Union by means of tools aimed at managing a common resource in respect of European Community treaties.

The first common measures in the fisheries sector date back to 1970¹ and regulate access to fishing grounds, markets and structures. Broadly speaking, they establish the

¹ The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) started out life as part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), but over the years, as the Community developed (progressive entry into the Community of countries with fleets and substantial resources) and in order to tackle problems specific to the fish sector such as conservation of resources and international relations (after the introduction of Exclusive Economic Zones or EEZs) it became obvious that it required its own independent identity. It was therefore necessary to wait until 1970, when a Common Market Organisation (CMO) was set up for fish products together with relative community structural policy.

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principle of equal access to the territorial waters of member states by all Community fishermen. In addition, to enable small fishing vessels to continue operating near their port of origin, a zone of coastal waters is reserved for local fishing. In parallel to the creation of a common market organisation for fisheries products, a structural policy for the sector was also developed. The Common Fisheries Policy was finally introduced in 1983.

In consideration of the biological, economic and social dimensions of fishing, the CFP is made up of four main components: the *conservation of fish stocks, structures, common market organisation* and *foreign policy* including in particular fisheries agreements with third countries and negotiations involving international organisations.

The first review of the CFP in 1992² focussed in particular on the respect of available resources and thus the need to regulate fishing activities. This new regulation, while maintaining the broad lines of the previous policy, sets out to correct the unbalance between fleet capacity and potential fish catches. The proposed remedy consists of reducing the community fleet, accompanied by structural measures to limit the social consequences.

Monitoring and control were stepped up to make the common policy more efficient, improve integration between the various components and guarantee respect for the regulations during all phases of the production chain³.

With the adoption of the Green Paper on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy (March 2001), the European Commission aimed to stimulate debate and feedback for proposals to review policy in the sector. The first package of measures (May 2002) contains a number of important elements, the most significant of which (described in brief below) sheds light on the most important aspects of the reform.

3. New Community orientation in the fishing sector

During the last 20 years, the Common Fisheries Policy has achieved a number of positive results by reducing conflict at sea, creating a certain stability in the sector and preventing exhaustion of stocks. However, the challenges of today make a major reform of the policy vital.

Impoverishment of fish resources, a drop in catches, the high number of fishing vessels, a constant loss of jobs and the lack of monitoring and control confirm the need for fundamental changes for a new common fisheries policy. This is exacerbated by exogenous factors such as the forthcoming enlargement of the European Union, globa-

lisation of the economy, the appearance of new elements in the sector and the increasing importance of environmental aspects in managing fisheries.

3.1 Overcapacity of the Community fleet

Given the urgent need to reduce the fishing effort and the proposal to abolish high fixed quotas, the Commission intends to tackle the problem of fleet overcapacity by reducing public aid for the purchase of new fishing vessels and increasing community funds in support of alternative employment for fishermen and restructuring of the sector. The new CFP does not justify the granting of state aid for purchasing new vessels or modernising the existing ones. This aid must be provided exclusively for improving safety on board. In future, public funds should therefore reduce excess fishing capacity and encourage the retirement or reemployment of fishermen.

According to the new guidelines of the CFP and considering the Community's main fish stocks and estimates of fishing activity in the EU, the reduction in fishing effort (up to a maximum between 30% and 60% depending on the stock situation and region) as part of operating plans covering a number of years should lead to the withdrawal of about 8,600 fishing vessels (8.5% of the total Community fleet) and a tonnage of about 350,000 GT (18% of total gross tonnage).

To encourage demolition of vessels, it is proposed to reprogramme funds currently available as part of the financial instrument for fisheries guidance (FIFG)⁴.

Table 1 provides details of aid granted to date as part of the 1994-1999 structural programme involving above all the fleet (more than 55%), 60% of which was allocated to decommissioning of vessels and 40% to their modernisation. For the 2000-2006 period, aid for aquaculture and processing industries will be increased, while there will be a relative reduction (from 55% to 41%) in aid for the fleet.

In terms of the distribution of community and national aid to the fisheries sector during the period 1994-1999, Spain received the most contributions (a total of €1,331.68

⁴ In the beginning, structural measures in the fish sector were financed by the EAGGF, but following reform of structural funds in 1993, the FIFG was created as an independent fund. EC Regulation no. 1263/1999 of 21 June 1999 defined the strategic priorities and field of application of the financial instrument for fisheries guidance for the period 2000-2006.

⁵ This was the MGP IV for 31 December 2002. Since 1983, the Community has drawn up MGPs (Multiannual Guidance Programmes) with the aim of regulating evolution of the fleets of the various member states. These MGPs are aimed at modifying the size of the fishing fleet of the individual member countries by establishing target reductions in order to bring the fishing effort into line with the volume of available resources. According to the logic behind the MGPs, the available resources must establish the size of the fleet and not, as was often the case in the past, the size of the fleet determine the Total Admissible Catch (TAC).

² Review of the regulation in 1983 led, on 20 December 1992, to its replacement with a new regulation, 3760/92, which determined fisheries policy until 2002.

³ New technologies were introduced to transmit data to the authorities and for the satellite monitoring of vessels above a certain length.

Tab. 1 *Community and national aid to the fisheries sector*

Area	1994-1999 Programme						Forecast expenditure 2000-2006	
	EU contribution (FIG)		National contribution		Total public aid		EU contribution (FIG)	
	millions	%	millions	%	millions	%	millions	%
Decommissioning	542.30	29.96	351.80	41.12	894.10	33.54	652.8	18.1
Renewal and modernisation of the fleet	459.28	25.38	134.22	15.69	593.50	22.27	839.3	23.2
Aquaculture	125.25	6.92	44.13	5.16	169.38	6.35		
Maritime areas/port facilities	118.47	6.55	58.98	6.89	177.45	6.66		
Processing/marketing	376.21	20.79	143.98	16.83	520.19	19.52	2,116.9	58.7
Other (promotion, technical assistance, etc)	188.43	10.41	122.44	14.31	310.87	11.66		
TOTAL	1,809.94	100	855.55	100	2,665.49	100	3,609.0	100

Source: European Commission, Directorate General for Fisheries, Green Paper Vol. II (2001)

In addition, no fishing vessel will be admitted to the fleet until an equivalent capacity is withdrawn without public aid.

According to opinions expressed within the Commission, these measures should reduce the fleet and fishing effort.

The European Union fishing fleet consists of just over 100,000 vessels (table 2) with a total power of slightly less than 8 million kW and a total tonnage of just over 2 million GRT. During the last ten years, the number of vessels has dropped by 7%, while the capacity of the fleet is down by 5% in tonnage and 7% in engine power. One of the reasons for this reduction can be identified in community strategies aimed at reducing fleet overcapacity in order to achieve a better balance between fishing effort and available fish resources.

As can be seen by the figures, the structure of the EU fleet is extremely variable. Greece has the most numerous fleet with more than 20,000 craft (20% of the total), although 93% of these are shorter than 12 m. The Spanish fleet is in second place with about 29% of the total tonnage of the EU; 75% of its fishing boat is of modest size.

With respect to the northern European countries, as well as being highly fragmented, the Mediterranean fleet also differs for the wide range of equipment used in relation to the high number of species involved.

Community vessels are an average of 19 years old. Only 16% were purchased during the period 1988-1998. Relatively speaking, the newest fleets belong to the Nether-

Tab. 2 *The community fishing fleet per member state (1998)*

EU member state	No. vessels	%	Power kW	%	Capacity **	%
Belgium	142	0.1	64,896	0.8	23,082	1.1
Denmark	4,373	4.7	380,877	13.1	97,932	4.8
Germany	2,310	2.4	171,457	2.1	75,103	3.7
Greece	20,445	20.4	654,199	8.2	111,933	5.5
Spain	17,521	18.1	1,474,421	18.4	589,359	28.7
France	8,537	8.9	1,141,528	14.3	209,460	10.2
Ireland	1,182	1.3	190,625	2.4	61,082	3.0
Italy	18,934	16.5	1,513,677*	18.9	260,603*	12.7
Luxembourg	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	1,053	1.0	482,263	6.0	174,344	8.5
Austria	-	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	11,171	11.7	393,671	4.9	123,923	6.0
Finland	3,882	4.0	219,745	2.7	24,170	1.2
Sweden	2,123	2.1	256,542*	3.2	48,840*	2.4
United Kingdom	8,433	8.7	1,047,690	13.1	253,409	12.3
EU - 15 Total	100,106	100	7,991,591	100	2,053,240	100

* 1997 data

** Statistical tonnage (mixture of GRT, GT and national standards)

Source: European Commission, Directorate General for Fisheries, Green Paper Vol. II (2001)

million) followed at a considerable distance by Italy (€277.32 million) and Portugal (€178.23 million).

Member states are also obliged to maintain the capacity of their fleets within the limits established in the multiannual guidance programme⁵. These limits will be lowered to take account of the capacities withdrawn as a result of public aid. Member states must guarantee that the capacities withdrawn as a result of public aid are not replaced.

Tab. 3 *Jobs in the fish industry per sector (1997)*

EU member state	Fishing	Aquaculture	Processing
Belgium	745	137	1,260
Denmark	5,866*	1,093	8,588*
Germany	4,422	2,865	11,280*
Greece	41,334	3,164	2,409
Spain	68,275*	14,845*	16,850*
France	25,084	15,853	12,132
Ireland	6,274	2,198	4,920
Italy *	43,547	8,665	6,448
Luxembourg	-	5	-
Netherlands	2,379	404	3,300*
Austria	-	800	100
Portugal	29,416*	544*	6,475*
Finland	3,003	909	560
Sweden	2,634**	794**	1,993**
United Kingdom	18,706*	4,110*	19,920*
EU – 15 Total	251,685	56,386	96,235

* 1996 figures
* 1998 figures
Source: European Commission, Directorate General for Fisheries, Socio-Economic Studies (2000) (figures do not include associated industries such as selling and the repair of craft).

lands, northern France, Finland and Belgium.

3.2 Social problems

Table 3 gives figures on employment in the fisheries sector. Fishing itself accounts for the highest share of employment. Processing of fish products provides employment for more than 96,000 people. Aquaculture provides a further 56,000 jobs, 80% in the marine aquaculture sector, concentrated above all in bivalve mollusc breeding. With respect to the sea fishing and fish processing sectors, the inland water fishing sector has limited importance, accounting for more than 9,000 jobs.

Spain has the largest number of fishermen (about a quarter of the EU total), followed by Italy (17%) and Greece (16%). Portugal, France and the United Kingdom also have a relatively high number of workers employed in the fish sector. Ireland, Denmark, Belgium, Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands have fewer than 7,000 fishermen each.

Aware that reduction in the fleet and restructuring of the sector will have an impact on jobs, the Commission proposes to re-programme the aid currently allocated by the FIG in support of fleet renewal and modernisation

⁶ The socio-economic measures in the FIG include additional funds for the promotion of initiatives aimed at implementing specific programmes to restructure activities in the presence of serious situations of productive and/or environmental crisis.

of the fleet during the period 2003-2006. This will free contributions, above all in socio-economic measures⁶ (about €460.6 million), which could be used to help fishermen restructure their activity according to the member state and particular situation of difficulty. For this purpose, Community funds will be available:

- for co-financing national early retirement schemes;
- for providing individual compensation for fishermen who definitively withdraw their craft;
- for providing aid to fishermen to restructure and diversify their activity;
- to allow member states to launch complementary social measures (financed at local level) in favour of the temporary interruption of fishing activities as part of water resource protection plans.

As in the agricultural sector, the "multi-job" concept is also gaining ground in the fishing sector, with the introduction of a number of innovative proposals aimed at providing a response to the need to diversify fishing activities. Italian initiatives, such as fishing or fish-

based tourism, are part of a series of proposals aimed at defining a more organic policy for the sea and more decisive use and development of its potential resources. Giving the economic crisis affecting coastal fishing for some time now, the development of fish-associated tourism represents first and foremost a source of additional income and a way of better conserving fish resources and improving knowledge of the sea, fish species and coastal environments.

3.3 Conservation and management of fish stocks

A number of important issues emerge from this aspect, in part due to the effects of the short-term measures adopted, resulting in excessive pressure on stocks and the consequent degradation of the marine environment. As part of the new CFP, the Commission thus proposes to adopt long term fish stock management plans based on in-depth scientific studies. Such a strategy should enable fishermen to plan their fishing activities appropriately.

To guarantee conservation of fish resources in the Mediterranean, one of the next objectives to be achieved through the reform is the extension of protected marine areas. It is also proposed to adopt Community measures in favour of strongly migratory species, together with initiatives to reinforce cooperation with international partners to promote implementation of management measures at pan-Mediterranean level.

Fig. 1 EU Catches 1999 (tons)

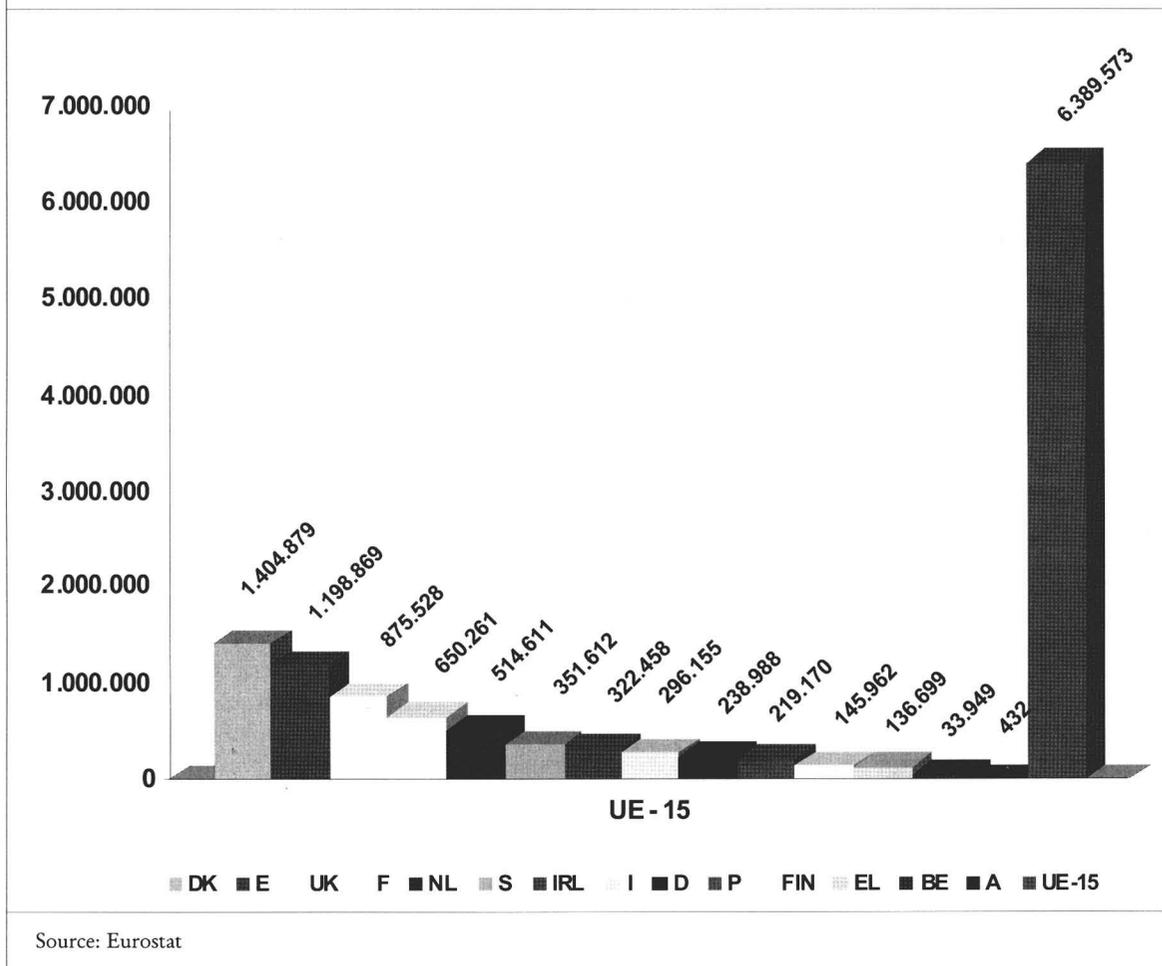


Figure 1 provides figures on the catches of the fleets in each member state. For the most part, these take place in the fishing zones nearest to the EU. About 50% consists of small pelagic fish such as herrings, sardines, anchovies, mackerel etc. largely used for industrial purposes. Other species such as cod and larger pelagic fish, although they represent less than 10% of total catches, are nevertheless important from an economic point of view.

3.4 The role of aquaculture

Aquaculture represents a valid alternative source of employment in many coastal areas of the EU and also provides supplies of fish products.

The aquaculture sector represents an important part of the community fish industry, with a production of 1.4 million tons in 1999 (940,000 in 1990). In 1997, the EU supplied 4% of world production in the aquaculture sector and 8% in the sea aquaculture sector. In terms of quantity, the main producer is Spain (321,143 tons), followed by France (267,638 tons), Italy (249,368 tons) and the United Kingdom (154,800 tons). In terms of value, France is

in first place followed by the United Kingdom with values of €565 million and €449 million respectively.

About three quarters of the quantity produced by sea aquaculture in the EU is accounted for by bivalve molluscs, largely produced in Spanish Galicia (mussels), the west coast of France (oysters) and the north east coast of Italy (clams).

As well as bivalve molluscs, the main species of sea fish produced are salmon, bass and gilt-head sea bream with total production reaching 230,000 tons. Freshwater aquaculture is very widespread and present in all member states, with more than 255,000 tons produced

in 1999. The main species produced are trout, carp and eel. Italy and Germany produce 22.4% and 14.5% respectively of the EU total in terms of value.

The proposal for reform aims to reinforce the role of aquaculture through the adoption of measures including improved scientific research and definition of new environmental and health regulations and standards. In future, measures in favour of the sector should also include training, monitoring and control, research and development, the treatment of waste products etc.

3.5 Other aspects of the new policy

As regards the control and monitoring measures to be respected within the European Union regulated by the CFP, in the past their application varied considerably from member state to member state, with the result that control and monitoring were not effective and led to discontentment among fishermen.

As part of the new Common Fisheries Policy, the Commission therefore proposes to set up an EU inspectorate, pooling the resources and vessels available at community

and national level in order to guarantee monitoring and control.

The CFP also aims to guarantee sustainable fishing outside community waters. Part of the community fleet operates in high sea or in the waters of third countries with which the EU has signed fisheries agreements. The reform package defines a new integrated framework demonstrating the EU's commitment to responsible fishing.

The Commission proposes to improve political dialogue with developing countries with the aim of helping them define a fisheries policy to safeguard the quality, diversity and availability of fish resources in the interests of food safety, the reduction of poverty and sustainable development. In this context, the proposed reform of the CFP includes an action plan aimed at:

- reinforcing and completing the international legal framework;
- improving assessment of stocks available to EU fishermen outside Community waters and drawing up more effective new partnership agreements with the third countries concerned;
- reforming the EU framework for controlling and monitoring fishing activities outside Community waters.

Finally, to improve involvement of those working in the fish sector in CFP processes, the Commission proposes to set up regional advisory councils to bring together all operators at regional and local level.

4. The CFP and Mediterranean fishing: observations

The above-described proposals for reform do not fully satisfy the needs of that part of the fishing sector operating in the Mediterranean area. Italy, in common with other countries, regrets the lack of consideration given to the specific characteristics and needs of the Mediterranean fishing sector with respect to that operating in northern Europe.

According to the prevalent opinions of professional associations in Italy and other Mediterranean countries, the tools used by the new CFP seem to favour north European fishing to the detriment of Mediterranean fishing whose specific characteristics call for alternative measures. The scientific support provided by the Commission does not yet seem to be sufficient to enable this complex reality with its rich diversity requiring protection to be adequately considered. In particular, there is a lack of data on the size of fish stocks per individual species and per fishing zone in relation to the existing fishing effort and characteristics of the vessel. The intention seems to be to extend solutions developed for other situations to the Mediterranean area. In support of this hypothesis, figures pu-

blished by the FAO on the international situation in the aquaculture and fisheries sector show a generalised trend for biological resources to decline, but when the Mediterranean situation is analysed, the situation is much more encouraging than elsewhere. According to the FAO document: "The Mediterranean Sea is one of the few marine areas in the world where production increases regularly throughout the entire time series and considering the majority of the resources analysed" (FAO, 2000).

The history, culture and traditions of the Mediterranean represent such deeply-rooted values that they deserve close attention in order to identify tools capable of achieving certain objectives – to rationalise management of resources requires concerted methods accepted by all to avoid the anthropological expropriation of the life and traditions of the fishermen. There therefore seems to be justification for the concerns of sector associations who maintain that a vision of non-industrial fishing as a marginal activity heavily penalises deeply socially, culturally and economically rooted Mediterranean realities.

Given the validity of the principles and objectives set out, the tools adopted by the new CFP (as is the case with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)) do not seem adequate for the importance of the sector. Just as in the common agricultural policy, there is an ever more urgent need for different policies and measures for northern European countries and countries in the Mediterranean area, so in the new common fisheries policy, the specific characteristics of Mediterranean areas must emerge forcibly.

Fishing in Europe's seas is characterised by considerable environmental complexity and diversity. Concepts such as coastal fishing within the three mile limit or offshore fishing are very different when considering the Adriatic Sea, Atlantic Ocean or North Sea and the Green Paper on Fishing does not yet seem to give this fact adequate consideration. The Community's strategic plan aimed at reducing pressure on stocks and fishing capacity by reducing the number of fishermen thus arouses doubt and perplexity. In fact, as the European Commission itself states, in the majority of areas where the economy is based on fish, the possible supplementary activities are few. In other words, the dependence is more accentuated in areas where there is a general problem of economic development and in which efforts to diversify economic activities must therefore be concentrated.

In our humble opinion, fishing and aquaculture can have an extremely important role to play in local development and can potentially be associated with one or more forces driving the local economy. In Italy for example, the national framework legislation in the fish sector⁷ seems to reinforce this opinion, proposing measures aimed at safeguarding and developing local food traditions and typical, organic

⁷ Decree Law no. 226 of 18 May 2001.

and high quality products, the traceability of the production chain and promotion of associated activities such as fishing and fish tourism, activities which – given the particular cultural and historical characteristics of the Mediterranean areas – have enormous development potential.

5. Safeguarding Mediterranean fishing: observations and proposals

According to the political orientation in certain Mediterranean countries, the problems of the Mediterranean require the adoption of ad hoc measures. Valid and effective alternatives to the forced reduction of the fleet should take account of all possible means of developing the biomass from the promotion of protected marine areas and responsible fishing to measures to safeguard and restore the environment, the creation of nursery and repopulation areas and rationalisation of fishing systems.

Support for initiatives aimed at making the most of fish resources by focussing on quality in the interests of consumer protection could also make a contribution. In this context, it is proposed that those whose fishing activities can be considered "sustainable" in relation to the available resources and environment should be given preference in the context of measures admissible for aid.

As is the case in the agricultural sector, the productive structure in the fish sector is heavily fragmented and consists of small largely family-owned companies. One of the options available could thus be development of production compatible with environmental sustainability, the fishing techniques adopted and the quality and quantity of catches, in respect of current consumer requirements. The idea – already proposed – of a rationalisation of non-industrial fishing systems, rigorously defining fishing times, criteria, methods and areas could thus without doubt be valid and represent a concrete example of environmental sustainability. This would, in fact, enable thousands of small companies to continue to exist without upsetting the environmental balance.

Helped by the tools provided by national and Community regulations, producer associations could also establish forms of integration – other than consortiums – to promote and fully exploit the availability of quality products.

A further contribution to safeguarding the economies of numerous coastal zones in the Mediterranean could also come from the development of tourism associated with the fish sector – from gastronomy to accommodation and services – complementary activities which without doubt represent a dependable source of income.

However, no measure is likely to be effective unless the contradictions and conflicts existing in the Mediterranean area are resolved first. A remedy must therefore be found

for the difficult coexistence of Community and non-Community fleets in the same zones, some operating without any form of restriction, to avoid repercussions on a social and economic level.

A number of sector organisations suggest that programming of the FIG 2000-2006 should not be subject to the penalising revisions proposed by the Green Paper and that aid for modernisation and construction of fishing vessels be maintained even after 2006, in correspondence to the withdrawal of a higher capacity in terms of tonnage and power. They propose raising the upper limit for aid for decommissioning a vessel operating on sensitive resources, the provision of incentives for reducing the fishing effort (temporary suspension of fishing, fish tourism, incentives for those adopting sustainable practices) and the evaluation of technological progress for each individual fishing system by monitoring (including quantitatively) the actual increase in fishing capacity. They once again call for a Community policy which takes Mediterranean realities into consideration and pays particular attention to the characteristics of the vessel, the actual state of stocks and the need to harmonise management with third countries.

Italian sector associations are in agreement with the proposal to involve operators in resource management, in the hope that this will lead to fishermen adopting a more responsible attitude towards resource management, with delegation of functions and self-management of fishing systems or areas. It is felt that a considerable contribution towards achieving this could come from producers' organisations. Given the role assigned them by Community legislation, these could work towards reorganisation and integrated and in some ways innovative management of the fish sector in respect of resources, the environment and the man-sea balance.

As regards the social aid proposed by the CFP reform, it is felt that this would not be easy to apply in the Mediterranean area. For example, in Italy, on the basis of the legislation currently in force, early retirement would be difficult to apply and retraining outside the sector is still largely impracticable. In certain areas where the level of unemployment is high, there is, in fact, a shortage of alternative jobs. Even in a number of areas classified as target 2 zones, the possibilities for retraining are extremely limited. As far as aquaculture is concerned, the new CFP talks of new priorities, listing numerous problems (largely concerned with hygiene and health), and of environmental sustainability.

This approach should also consider promotion of responsible aquaculture, development of methods aimed at quality certified production, the traceability of fish products produced via aquaculture and innovation in the sector through the encouragement of new technologies to enable commercially interesting fish species to be raised.

Given the orientation prevalent among sector organisations, the intention to review support for structural investment on unfavourable terms cannot be considered acceptable. If anything, it is felt that the level of aid could be modified in relation to the coherence of the initiatives to the model of responsible aquaculture.

If the intention is genuinely to reinforce fish farming, whether to supplement the income of operators or in support of a reduction in the fishing effort, a tool to provide credit on favourable terms to member producers must be developed. Otherwise aquaculture will remain the privilege of corporate enterprises, the only ones economically and financially capable of coping with the first few years of activity before full production can begin.

Development of a Common Fisheries Policy by the various EU member states is becoming a complex and particularly delicate operation, requiring in-depth analysis of economic, political and social events whose interrelation demands knowledge and objective interpretation of the facts, including on a local level.

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