

News Round-up

Grim shrimps

In early November, 16 international scientists met in Sydney, Australia, to pool their knowledge of shrimp viral diseases and to advance research for diagnosis and prevention of these diseases. Meanwhile, the Environmental Defence Fund (EDF) of the US had released a new 200-page report entitled 'Murky Waters: Environmental effects of Aquaculture in the United States' [<http://www.edf.org/pubs/Reports/Aquaculture/>].

This report details alleged environmental degradation caused by aquaculture and discusses strategies and technologies available to address these concerns.

Hot Chile

According to economists from the Georgia State University and the University of South Florida, imports of fresh Atlantic salmon to the US from **Chile** directly support around 6,054 full-time US jobs and add almost \$110 million to the US economy. Indirectly, they contribute an additional 1,572 full-time jobs and another \$66 million income. Almost 93 per cent of imported Chilean salmon passes through the port of Miami, Florida. In November, the US Department of Commerce said that there was not enough

evidence to support the levy of additional duties on imports of Chilean farmed salmon.

Start conserving

The Fisheries Council of the **European Union** has agreed on new regulations to better protect juvenile fish. From 1 January 2000, the new regulations will require improved selectivity of fishing gear to reduce by-catch. They will also call for control measures to reduce fish discards, limit certain gear in areas where juvenile fish are abundant, and set minimum sizes for fish that may be caught or sold.

Held up

The trawler *Chernyayev*, from **Russia**, was released in November after its owner coughed up a US\$190,000 fine to settle a complaint concerning

illegal fishing in the Bering Sea. The trawler had been held in Kodiak, Alaska, since August 1997.

Arm in arm

Officials in **Japan** and **China** have signed a bilateral agreement on fisheries, which

establishes a jointly controlled zone in the East China Sea and agrees to discuss disputed area at a later time before delineating 200-mile economic zones. Fishing quotas will be mutually set, while enforcement authority will be exercised by the nation in whose waters the alleged violations occur.

But officials in **Taiwan** have expressed concern over this agreement. They feel it could exclude consideration of Taiwanese claims to certain areas.

Breaking the ice

Also agreeing to co-operate on fisheries are **Russia** and **Iceland** who have reached an agreement which provides a framework for negotiating reciprocal fishing rights in each other's waters, as well as purchase or lease of Russian Barents Sea fishing quotas by Icelandic fishermen.

The agreement encourages co-operation and establishment of international companies and projects.

Tribal loss

The US Supreme Court has refused to consider an appeal by the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe challenging State regulation of fishing by non-Indians and non-tribal members on private property and a narrow strip of Federal land along the Missouri

River, on Indian reservations in South

Dakota. However, the Lower Brule and Cheyenne River Sioux have negotiated agreements with the Corps of Engineers allowing the tribes to regulate fishing on Corps land along the Missouri River on their reservations.

Stop drifting

The Agriculture and Fisheries Ministry of **Italy** has announced the start of a voluntary reconversion plan for 3,500 Italian drift-net fishermen and 676 fishing vessels. A total of 400 billion lira in aid and compensation will be available for the programme.

Polishing a policy

The Asian Development Bank, based in Manila, the **Philippines**, has announced a new fisheries policy, which shifts the past emphasis on increasing production to a new focus on "equity, efficiency and sustainability."

The new policy seeks to encourage greater private sector involvement in fishery production and processing, while aiming to foster regional co-operation in developing policies for long-term sustainable fishery management.

Ancestral power

Five 'sea gypsies' (Sama Bajau) from the island of Roti near Timor in **Indonesia** who were detained for illegally fishing in Australian waters earlier in 1997, argued a unique test case in court in **Australia**, claiming that they had an ancestral

right to fish in Australian waters.

Their ancestors had fished in Australian waters for many centuries preceding European settlement, and, thus, they retain the right to continue this traditional fishery, they argued.

Penalized

The *Shin Chang 502*, a fishing vessel from **Korea**, was fined US\$100,000 and its catch, worth over US\$18,000 was forfeited, for fishing five times illegally within the US Exclusive Economic Zone near Palmyra and Jarvis Islands earlier in 1997.

Coral corralled

A High Court in **Britain** has rejected Greenpeace's request for a judicial investigation into the legality of granting petroleum exploration licences for waters north of Scotland where the slow-growing cold-water coral *Lophelia pertusa* is found. The

court said that the lawsuit had not been filed in a timely manner.

Greenpeace announced that it would lodge an official complaint with the European Commission that issuing these licences would breach the European Habitats Directive.

Healthy, for sure

Caritas Christi, a health care organization affiliated with the Archdiocese of Boston, the US, was awarded a US\$1.9 million federal grant to finance a programme to assist New England commercial fishermen in obtaining health insurance.

The grant funds were provided as part of a federal effort to assist New England fisheries.

Federal funds will supplement State funding for this programme.

Cyanide fishing

The World Resources Institute has released a new report, entitled "Sullied Seas" Strategies for Combating Cyanide Fishing in Southeast Asia and Beyond, which documents efforts to launch a Cyanide Fishing Reform Programme by the **Philippines** government.

Mexicoil

Blue Tide, the Mexican Centre for Environmental Law, and Greenpeace of **Mexico** have jointly announced that they have filed a lawsuit against the government

oil monopoly, Petroleos Mexicanos, for pollution damages to mangrove swamp and estuary at Laguna del Pom, off Campeche sound.

The damages have arisen from petroleum

exploration and development. Claim these two groups.

They are also seeking to halt construction of a nitrogen compressing plant in Ciudad del Carmen that would inject gas underground to increase petroleum production.

FAO meet

Between 8 and 11 December 1997, the FAO held a technical consultation on policies for sustainable shrimp culture. Conducted at FAO's regional office in Bangkok, **Thailand**, the consultation was attended by government delegations from important shrimp producing and consuming countries of the Asian and American regions, and observers from several multilateral and inter-governmental agencies as well as important international NGOs representing industry, environment and rural development.

The consultation produced a consensus that sustainable shrimp culture is a desirable and achievable goal. But reaching it will depend on effective government

policy and regulatory actions as well as the co-operation of industry in utilizing sound technology in its planning, development and operations.

Hell Nino

Officials in **Peru**, encouraged by a growing abundance of anchovy, have announced the lifting of a ban on anchovy fishing, in effect since March 1997 due to El Niño conditions.

Meanwhile, US Fish and Wildlife Service scientists reported that hundreds of thousands of Alaska seabirds (primarily short-tailed shearwaters, black-legged kittiwakes and murre) from the Gulf of Alaska to the Chukchi Sea, died this summer., possibly from

starvation due to the effects of El Niño on the marine ecosystem.

Soft TEDS

The Marine Fisheries Commission of Florida. US has proposed new regulation which requires Florida shrimpers to employ either of two federally certified turtle excluder devices (TEDS) to reduce by-catch of fish in shrimp trawls by half.

Some shrimpers contested this proposed rule, believing that other 'soft' TEDS are more effective.