

## Putting up the barricades

**By laying seige to foreign vessels and grabbing hostages, Spanish fishermen have declared war on the EU fishing policy**

**F**or Spanish fishermen, 16 July, the day of the feast of St. Carmen, their patron saint, was no occasion for festivities. Instead of celebrating, they declared war on European fishing policy, sending out a tidal wave of protest against tuna drift-nets.

On the high seas that day, they boarded and seized the French fishing vessel *La Gabrielle*, 700 km north of La Coruna, and escorted it back to the port of La Burela in Galicia in north-west Spain. Here it was held hostage by 300 Spanish tuna boats until 21 July, while officials from the European Union (EU) and the French and Spanish governments negotiated its release.

Five days later, the fishing guilds of Galicia, Cantabria, Asturias and the Basque Country laid seige to the key northern ports of Spain and Hendaye in France, trapping commercial shipping and thousands of tourists. The seige was lifted on 29 July, when the Spanish government promised to take action in the European Commission to see that 'illegal use of giant nets to catch tuna would be stopped'.

The northern coast of Spain has a very short continental shelf and for centuries, powerful Basque and Galician whale hunters have ventured as far as the Arctic sea and the Canadian Labrador coast. During the Franco regime, modernization of fleets took place.

Today Spanish fishworkers represent almost half of Europe's fishing force. To fish tuna, they operate huge 30-in boats equipped with pole-and-line. They move in large fleets, following fish shoals in their migration to the north. Each boat carries 25 to 30 fishworkers, who work from sunrise to sunset.

This type of operation yields very fresh fish which is carefully preserved. But it is limited to the daytime and, as scientists point out, young fish make up the bulk of the catch. With profitability low, these fishermen do not wish to be disturbed by any other gear in the same area, since they fear that the tuna shoals may get dislocated. Early this year, they had warned French and other European fishworkers to keep off their usual fishing grounds or face trouble.

French fishermen are far less numerous. In the 1970s, they abandoned pole-and-line fishing and, helped by technologists from the national institute for modernization of fisheries, IFREMER, they built smaller boats (12 to 20 m) and began to operate long drift-nets with only five fishworkers.

Soon the drift-nets earned a very bad reputation in the Pacific. Environmentalists campaigned actively against these 'curtains of death'. The call for a ban on drift-nets in the Pacific was echoed in the EU regulation of 1991 which limited the length to 2.5 km.

The French fishermen were temporarily exempted and could use 5-km nets for some time. But in 1994, they had to abide by the new rules. They protested saying that such short nets would never catch enough and that they would have to rely too much on the coastal demersal stocks of flat-fish already fully exploited. If they were no longer allowed to fish the Atlantic tuna, they would have to stop fishing altogether, they said.

### **French minister's support**

The French minister of fisheries promised his support and induced fishing boats to take aboard a spare net in case the legal one was damaged. Such signals caused a swift reaction and Spanish fishermen

were soon convinced that every drift-net at sea was above the legal dimension.

**C**lashes forced the French navy to accompany its national fishing boats and eventually impose fines on some of them. British warships had to patrol around their own drift-netters, thousands of miles from their home ports.

Essentially, the tuna war is all about technology and access rights. Tuna fishing in Spain uses a variety of hook-and-line techniques, including pole-and-lining. These techniques are claimed to be selective and environmentally sound, whereas drift-nets are overefficient and dolphin-unfriendly.

The technology factor gives Spain an opportunity to claim exclusive access to the tuna resources of the North Atlantic, as it is the only nation in the zone specializing in fishing without drift-nets.

The North Atlantic tuna fishery is outside the EEZ of the EU. It is a high-seas fishery and therefore would not seem to be subject to EU regulations.

However, all EU fishing vessels which operate there are subject to EU regulations. In theory, non-EU fishing vessels could fish in that area with any gear they choose. It is surprising not to hear of 'flags of convenience' vessels operating there.

Three main species of tuna are targeted in the North Atlantic: *Thunnus thynnus* (giant blue-fin), *Thunnus albacares* (yellow-fin) and *Thunnus alalunga* (albacore, long-fin or white tuna). In 1992, five thousand tonnes of tuna—about 20 per cent of the total catch—were caught by nets, while pole-and-line accounted for 18,000 tonnes or about 80 per cent.

Most studies have shown that, in the case of the Atlantic tuna fishery, the catch of dolphins and other whales is relatively low, compared to the 50-km 'Wall of Death' drift-nets used in the Pacific.

However, catches of shark can be significant. Dolphins are but one of the by-catch of drift-nets. In 1991, French drift-nets reportedly caught 19,000 blue

sharks, while drift-nets of all nations put together caught 2,000 dolphins.

Other 'non-target' species include other mammals, sea birds, sharks, bream, marlin (sword fish) and other fish. The by-catch also includes thresher, porbeagle and blue sharks. These fish produce very few young, and therefore have very slow reproductive rates.

Intensive fishing effort on sharks can quickly decimate their populations. Unluckily for them, sharks do not have the same friendly image as dolphins! Unlike most of the other by-catch like the bream and sword fish, which are often as valuable as the tuna, shark is generally discarded or wasted.

The tuna drift-net fishery could therefore have a significant impact on shark populations in the North Atlantic. This is not only lamentable for the sharks, but could also mean the loss of a potentially valuable fishery resource.

Also of concern is the wastage of tuna and other species caught by the drift-nets. Once caught, tuna and other fish like marlin die quickly and begin to rot. After a couple of hours in the net, the fish may get quite badly damaged. They are therefore discarded.

In the case of fish caught with lines, the quality is much better, as they are landed alive. Line-caught fish therefore receive a much higher price than net-caught fish and is destined mainly for the fresh market. Tuna caught in nets is an inferior product and goes mainly for canning.

In Spain, the fishing industry, particularly in the north, is an important source of employment and wealth creation in a country where unemployment averages 25 per cent. Spain is a recent entrant to the EU and will become a full member in 1996.

#### **European waters**

The Spanish fishing fleet accounts for about 60 per cent of the total EU fleet. Though its access to EU waters is currently restricted, Spain is looking to European waters for new fishing opportunities. Only in 1996 will it have equal access to the seas of other EU states. In the tuna fishery of Biscay on the southwest Irish

coast, Spain caught about 80 per cent of the fish landed in 1990. It is estimated that today the Spanish use six times the number of boats and four times the manpower to get three and a half times the catch of the French tuna fleet of around 300 to 400 vessels. Catches have dropped from 28,000 tonnes in 1987 to 18,100 tonnes in 1992.

**P**ast experience with Spanish fishing boats have made British fishermen bitter. The boats have been found fishing illegally, sometimes under flags of convenience. They were also found using hidden fish holds, catching and storing undersized fish, and exceeding quota limits. In July 1993, a film crew was badly beaten up while trying to film the landing of illegal fish.

British fishermen see the Spaniards as a threat to their resources and livelihoods, and are very suspicious of them. The EU recognizes that its fishing fleet has already developed well beyond capacity, and a programme to reduce fishing effort is being implemented. There is deep mistrust and fear that British fishing grounds will be sacrificed to appease Spain.

Suspicion has been further fuelled by Greenpeace's observations on Spanish fishing boats around the Straits of Gibraltar in August 1994. At least three of a group of 10 boats working about eight

miles off the Spanish coast were reportedly observed using nets larger than the regulation size of 2.5 km. Their sizes ranged from 3.4 km to 4.3 km.

Earlier, on 30 July, a Greenpeace ship arrived on the fishing ground and started measuring the drift-nets. The French navy protested and some gunshots narrowly missed the Greenpeace activists. The media gave wide coverage to these events. By 14 August, Greenpeace withdrew from the scene and started monitoring nets in the Mediterranean sea.

The policing action by Greenpeace dragged the conflict into the spotlight and demonstrated the weaknesses of the European control systems.

It became clear that, during periods of tension, national navies may not be the best instrument to check their own fishermen. The EU inspectors who are supposed to notify violations of the law have no power. The need for a European coastguard is obvious.

#### **Dialogue with ecologists**

A week later, at the Summer University of the French Green Party, fishermen accepted a dialogue with the ecologists of Greenpeace. They spoke about tuna stocks and pointed out that some modern gear, specifically the 'pelagic trawl', was much worse than the drift-net. This is a mid-water trawl pulled by two powerful



Spain

vessels. The introduction of this new gear in the early 1980s was patronized by IFREMER but today small-scale fishermen have only harsh words to denounce the very technologists of this institute who brought into France this highly destructive gear.

**T**he first ones were large enough, but the new ones feature openings of 30,000 sq m. It is said that a dozen Boeing 747s can enter the mouth of the latest trawl, the 'Gloria'. Tuna trawling is very successful and yields around 10 to 20 tonnes in one haul, but the fish is often smashed by the pressure inside the net.

On 17 August, 10 'pelagics' from Hendaye were attacked by the Basques because they started to trawl for tuna. One fish-worker was seriously wounded. Not surprisingly, a hot debate is now on to demand rules and regulations to control the existing units and stop the entry of new ones. The *pelagiques* are accused of destroying declining stocks traditionally fished by coastal boats.

Moreover, rocky bottoms which were unfit for bottom trawls and were the preserve of small-scale fishermen who could lay traps, longlines and bottom-set nets, are now exploited by the mid-water trawls. They have the advantage of being able to adjust the depth of the net with great accuracy. No stock seems out of their reach now!

There have also been other recent incidents of Spanish vessels with nets up to six km. long, being sent back to port. It is believed that Spain banned drift-nets in 1990. Cornish fishermen complain that, nonetheless, the Spanish authorities turn a blind eye to what is happening in its own waters, though they cry 'foul' when it comes to international waters. There is genuine concern amongst British fishermen that the Spanish government is doing nothing to enforce fishing regulations.

Spain's fish war is part of the current dispute in Europe over tuna fishing on the high seas. It also highlights the context in which they occur, namely, recent UN and EU fisheries regulations. Community ownership and management has been subsumed by state and regional

management. Through quota systems and joint venture agreements, commercial interests are able to buy up marine resources. This has grave implications for traditional livelihoods and food production systems which are sustained by marine resources.

The UN General Assembly Resolution No. 44/225, adopted by consensus in December 1989, established the so-called 'driftnet ban'. It asked for an immediate halt to the expansion of large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing in all regions of the high seas, and a moratorium by 30 June 1992 on such fishing in all ocean regions, except where effective conservation and management measures have been implemented.

The recommendation contained in the resolution refers to a moratorium, that is, an agreed suspension of activity, on large-scale pelagic drift-nets (which can reach up to 30 miles or 48 km). However, it says this 'will not be imposed in a region or, if implemented, can be lifted, should effective conservation and management measures be taken ...'. Hence, the UN Resolution is not a ban. It only recommends a moratorium under certain conditions.

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) supports this resolution but has not specifically demanded a drift-net ban. Despite the claims of environmental organizations, neither any UN body (including the FAO) nor the International Whaling Commission has called for a world-wide blanket ban on drift-net fishing. Hence, to call this resolution a ban is incorrect.

#### **Legal length**

The current EU regulations which seek to restrict the use of tuna drift-nets were formulated as a result of the UN Resolution No 44/225, to which all EU member states are signatories. The legal length for high-seas drift-nets, introduced in January 1994, is 2.5 km. This also means that any EU vessel found carrying more than 2.5 km of net is breaking the law. Many French boats have been carrying 5 km., claiming that the second 2.5 km is spare', and a precaution against losing the other 2.5 km. It is, however, an illegal

practice. It is being argued by British fishermen that the steps they have taken to introduce 'dolphin doors' into their nets represent effective conservation and management measures.

**R**egardless of all this, focus on the current EU limit of 2.5 km is a bit of a red herring. The EU plans to phase out, by 1997, 'all drift-net fishing activities causing ecological difficulties, including nets of less than 2.5 km.' However, 'ecological difficulties' are not defined. This leaves the door wide open to debate and conflict.

The EU is now proposing that a scientific study into drift-nets should be carried out by member states whose fishermen use them. It is likely that salmon drift-nets will also come under scrutiny, and possibly be banned. These nets are over 20 km long and are exempted from current high-seas drift-net regulations. These incidents seem to indicate that technology is at stake. The gill-net may be a good gear as a passive one, with big meshes which are selective and let small fish pass through. But there are also giant gill-nets drifting away without any control. For fishing enterprises, the alternative may well be to abandon the gill-nets and go for fine-mesh purse-seines or, worse, mid-water trawls.

The defence of the traditional way of life of the Spanish fishermen and their

labour-intensive technologies may be respectable, but how long can they hold out against the forces of economics and the global market? Their fight has so far been rather successful because of the close links in the community, as reflected by their *confradías*, where owners and workers are all members and knit by a very active nationalist spirit. Further, everyone seems to agree that the decision to label tuna caught by hook is a very good one. Yet, low salaries and poor productivity could still prove stumbling blocks. Some observers wonder whether the depiction of the French villain as a powerful foreign enemy is actually hiding the internal social contradictions of the Spanish fisheries sector.

The battle for fish will not be resolved by unilateral actions of fishermen, or by non-consultative regulations formulated by bureaucrats in capital cities far from the sea. International conferences which proclaim lofty ideals, but continue to exclude the participation of fisherfolk are also unlikely to alleviate the situation. ♣

This article is based on reports for Brian O'Riordan in the UK and Pierre Gillet in Belgium

## A long way to go

**To raise consciousness on women's problems is not an easy task, as a recent meeting in Spain found out**

**W**omen's associations from France, Portugal, Andalucia, the Basque country and Galicia met in Vigo, Spain on 25 and 30 April at an international meeting on the theme 'Support and Responsibility'.

The women resolved to implement an awareness-raising project for the wives of fishermen. They unanimously agreed on the need for more information on their rights and the necessity to raise awareness in society at large about their problems. But they realized that they needed considerable time to get the different participating countries to compile information for this project.

The discussions between fishermen and their wives on their aspirations as maritime professionals elicited different responses in different countries.

In France, the priority was to get better prices for their fish, while in other countries the women demanded superior working conditions, higher wages and safety at sea.

At the meeting, the women condemned the lack of collective action and, most of all, the fear of losing one's job because of protesting against the boatowners. They also expressed concern at the disenchantment and disillusionment spreading among the young people working at sea.

To help meet their aspirations, they relied mainly on women's associations in Galicia and Andalucia, and the Apostolate of the Sea in France. They have also set up unions in the Basque country.

Astonishingly, although a request for consultation was broadcast over the external service of Radio Spain, not a

single response was received from seagoing fishermen. The association Rosa dos Ventos draws attention to this negative attitude, which results not only from the fishermen's fears but also from the obstructive behaviour of their bosses and the captains, who are only concerned with being in the good books of the boatowners.

The wives of fishermen from the Basque country are working with their husbands to help overcome their disenchantment and disillusionment. They are also striving to establish labour laws and collective bargaining rights.

During the recent 'fish war' between Spain/EU and Canada, the women agreed to encourage reflection among fishermen on fishing grounds and the need to respect them. The international meeting at Vigo also expressed its support to the Spanish fishing fleet by participating in the demonstration held in Santiago de Compostela to protest the agreement with Canada.

This piece is by Ana Roman Rodriguez of Rosa dos Ventos, Spain

## Fisheries management

## Going by the book

### A recent book on Catalunyan fisheries provides concrete proposals for a rational fisheries policy

June 1996 saw the publication in Barcelona of the book entitled *La pesca en el siglo XXI: Propuestas para unagestion pesquera racional en Catalunya* (Fishing in the 21st Century: Proposals for Rational Fisheries Management in Catalunya). Written at the initiative of the workers union, this investigative work adopts a multidisciplinary focus to tackle the problems of the fishing sector in this region. The authors belong to diverse fields, all closely related to fishing: Miguel Irazola is a fisherman; Antoni Luchetti, an economist and politician; Antonio Ocana, a journalist and sociologist; Juan Manual Tapia, a trade unionist; and Jordi Leonart and Sergi Tudela, fisheries biologists.

Their combined effort, through many interviews and sessions with those who actually work in fisheries, allowed precise and realistic proposals to be formulated for a rational and sustainable management of the resources, based on the biological and ecological aspects of the exploited species. The objective was to increase the welfare of fishing-dependent people by improving working and marketing conditions.

Catalunya is an autonomous region in northwestern Spain, beside the Mediterranean. According to 1995 data, the Catalunyan fleet comprises around 1,400 vessels, of which 54 per cent are artisanal or small-scale, 28 per cent, trawlers, 11 per cent, purse-seiners and five per cent, longliners.

The entire fleet fishes in the coastal, waters and returns each day to the base ports. The volume of landings of the fleet in 1993 was 55,000 tonnes, around 40 per cent of the total landings for the Spanish Mediterranean coast. Although the fishing sector has just 5,500 workers and

provides direct employment to only 0.3 per cent of Catalans, its social and traditional significance in certain places and regions is very high. At the same time, the high consumption of fish in Catalunya (25.4 kg per person per year), together with the preference for fresh, high-quality fish, generates a huge demand which can not be met by local production.

This would suggest a favourable situation for the Catalan fishing sector to grow. The reality, however, is quite different. In the first place, the resources are generally seriously overexploited and the fisheries are not managed rationally by the various administrations (European, Spanish and Catalan). In effect, there is no adaptive management system, that is, no routine follow-up is carried out of the state of the fisheries in order to find out how it responds to management measures and to then suggest changes.

At the same time, established management measures are not founded on the existing knowledge of the biology of various species. They are frequently ambiguous or legislatively inconsistent and, more importantly, most of the time they are not carried out. The process of marketing of the fish products does not favour the fishermen but the middlemen. Also, the existing labour system is biased against the crew in favour of the owner.

#### Working groups

In order to tackle this problem in the most optimum way, the authors formed two working groups. One looked into the biological and economic aspects, while the other considered the labour and social aspects. Both groups, however, worked closely together with the aim of coming up with harmonious and explicit proposals that would provide solutions. The first issue agreed to be tackled was the



conservation of exploited species, given that the continuity of the sector depended upon their survival.

**T**his could be achieved only through an appropriate management oriented towards the sustainability of fishing in the long term. Although Catalan fisheries, with a few exceptions, are to a greater or lesser extent multi-species, the analysis of the fisheries biologists centred on two principal species landed in Catalunya—anchovies and hake—because it was felt that these adequately represented the larger problems facing fishing in the country.

Anchovies are the main catch of the Catalan purse-seiner fleet, made up of 160 vessels. In 1995 this was the species most caught. The anchovy is a short-lived, small pelagic. It reproduces the year it is born and is susceptible to strong annual population fluctuations. This natural tendency implies that overfishing could lead to the collapse of the fishery. Therefore, the studies concluded, the management of this species should take into account its biology, and a precautionary approach should be adopted as a matter of course.

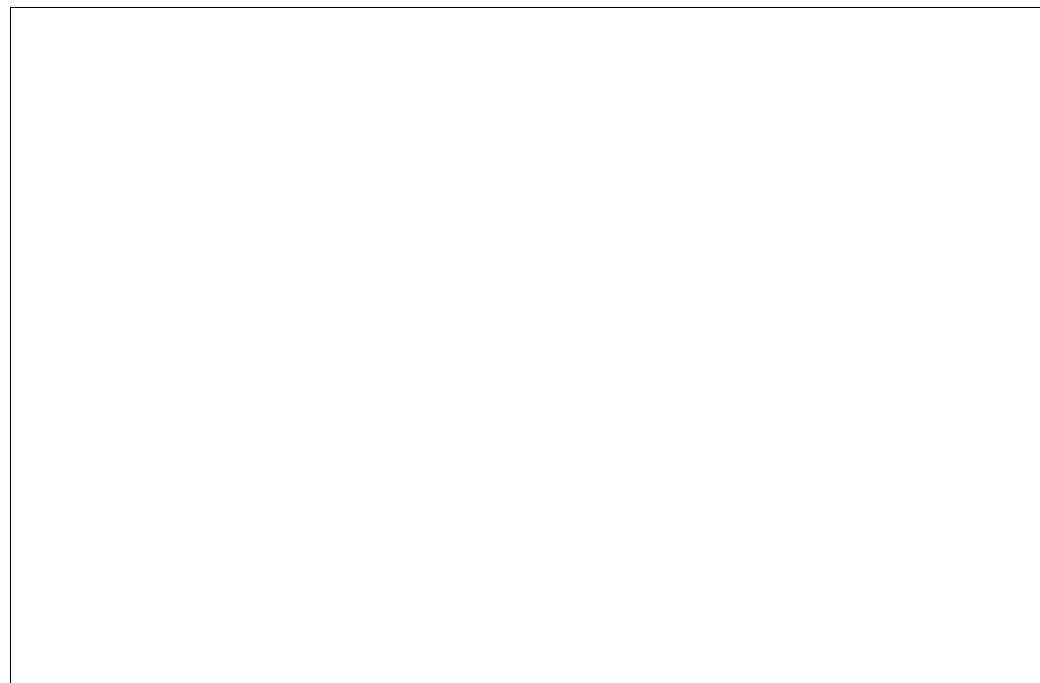
The pressure on this resource grew strongly during the 1980s as a result of the migration to the Catalan coast of part of the south Spanish fleet, following the

collapse of the, anchovy fishery in that area. This caused the Catalan fishery to change from being seasonal and targeting only adult species to operating nearly all year round and catching large amounts of juveniles, despite the fact that they are theoretically protected by law.

Given that the key to conservation of the stock is maximizing the possibility of reproduction to ensure the following year's recruitment to the fishery, the authors of the study recommend that the intensive capture of immature fish should be eliminated. To do so, they proposed that, in the first place, the administration should effectively enforce the technical measures stated in the current legislation, namely, that the minimum capture size be raised to that at sexual maturity (12 cm) and that a subsidized closed season be put into operation during the autumn and winter months in order to avoid the capture of juveniles.

#### **Less selective**

The study also points out that purse-seining should be favoured over bottom-trawling which is much less selective with respect to size. Finally, it advocates the continuation of the prohibition of pelagic trawling, used by the fishermen in the south of France, whose over efficiency threatens the conservation of the resource. The most recent data point to an alarming decrease



in recruitment to the stock so much so that the scientists fear a real collapse of the fishery.

**I**f this happens, the fall in fishing income would generate serious social problems because the purse-seiners, with, on average, 10 crew members per boat, employ 55 per cent of the workers in the Catalan fisheries sector. The foreseeable rise in the catches of sardines, more abundant than the anchovy but in less demand in the market, would probably not solve the problem.

As far as hake is concerned, this is one of the main species—in value terms—caught by the Catalan trawl fleet of about 400 vessels. It is also caught by longline, particularly in the north of Catalunya (in the Golfo de Leon). In terms of income generated, hake ranked third among all the species caught in 1995. In contrast to the anchovy, hake is a long-living species that suffers from increasing overfishing. This means that, apart from the excess effort applied to the resource, the fish are being caught in sizes well below those that would allow for a much larger overall output. The trawl fleet is largely responsible for this situation. In effect, most of the fish caught thus are below the minimum legal size (20 cm) which itself is much smaller than the size at sexual maturity (more than 30 cm).

At this level, there is a serious inconsistency in the law because the minimum size of 20 cm, quite apart from not being founded on the biological characteristics of the species, is totally incompatible with the mesh size authorized for trawling (40 mm) with which smaller fish are always caught. Most of the fish caught by longlines are, however, bigger than the size at sexual maturity, since this method is more selective than trawling.

In order to evaluate the efficiency of variations in the means of exploiting the resource, computer simulations were carried out based on real data in the fishery. The results showed that, by combining different methods, such as a decrease in fishing effort of around 20 per cent (one fewer fishing day per week), the modification of the trawl-net to comply with legislation on minimum sizes, and a

reduction of effort in trawling, together with an increase of effort in longlining, the biomass of the stock and the output of the fishery increased significantly in all cases.

However, in all the scenarios considered, the sector would have to pass through a crisis period of a number of years before the improvement became apparent. Thus, for example, the reduction in effort and the increase in the trawl mesh size provoke a medium-term increase in the biomass of the hake by around 140 per cent, and a rise in the output of the trawl and the longline by 50 per cent and 200 per cent respectively. Nonetheless, in general, the output during the first three years is significantly worse. As a result, during this period, government aid would be imperative.

Biological and economic studies show that it is possible to rationally manage the fishery that it is ecologically necessary and economically profitable, and that the only thing needed to achieve it is a political will on the part of the administration. Timely action in the short term should give way to a long-term management approach based on the continuous monitoring of the fisheries—an approach which foresees the elimination of excess fishing effort, the development of more selective gear and the subsidization of closed areas and periods of crisis. The incorporation, with full rights, of the Mediterranean fisheries into the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union continues to be an important topic in Brussels. But, until that happens, local administrations should seriously assume their responsibilities and respond to the sector's problems.

#### **Fishery management**

As the conclusions that have emerged from the study have shown, together with the improvement in the bio-economic management of the fishery, other organizational and labour aspects need to be urgently revised. In Catalunya, fishermen and vessel owners are organized into 'brotherhoods'. These are civil law bodies that have their roots in the guilds of the Middle Ages and enjoy a territory with exclusive rights given to them. They act as consultative and collaborative administrative bodies, carrying out and controlling the application of their directives and

independently establishing regulations and technical measures on the different fisheries (fishing hours, gear, etc.), which their members are bound to honour.

**U**nfortunately, they are also known for their considerable intransigence and are frequently controlled by the most influential vessel owners (normally from the trawling sector). The result is that some fishermen get marginalized. Another very important aspect is that they are also involved in the marketing of fish products through auctions in a fish market managed by each brotherhood.

The role of the owners, however, is limited to fishing as much as possible, sending the catch to the market and accepting with resignation the prices set by the whims of the market. This means that the role of the producers is totally passive, as they play no part in the marketing function, thus allowing the numerous middlemen to obtain important benefits at their cost.

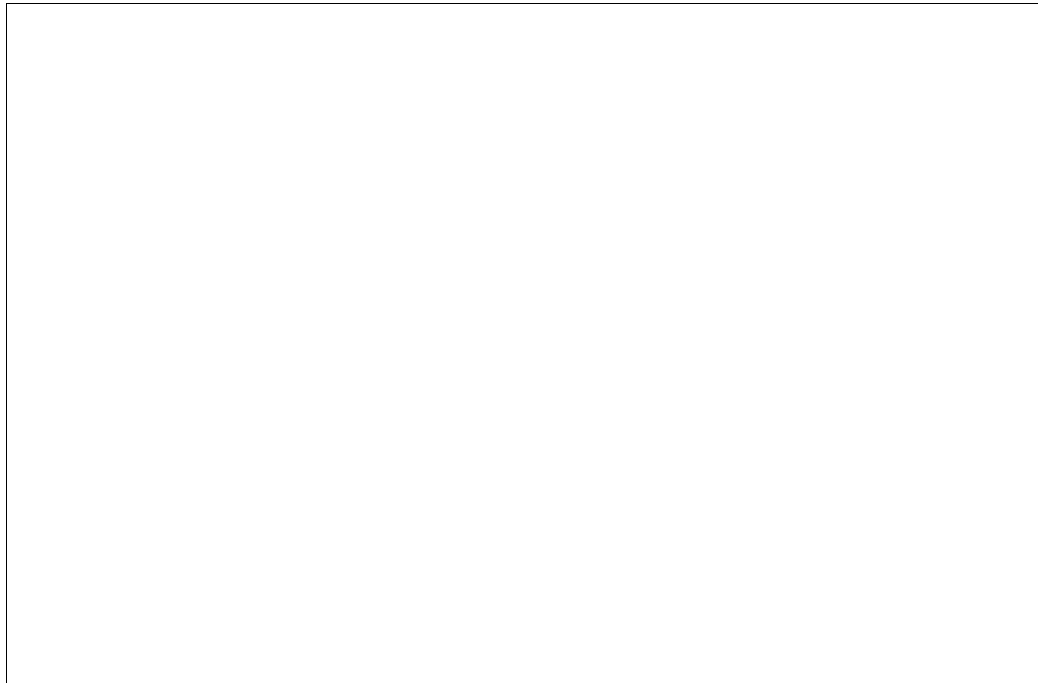
Even though the brotherhoods would be the ideal bodies to oversee the necessary change in the marketing practices of the sector, the rigidity of their structures and their manipulation by certain groups of fishermen, to the detriment of others, could present obstacles. Working relations between the skipper (who, in Catalunya, is often the vessel owner) and

the crew is another important aspect that, in the opinion of the authors of the study, should be improved urgently. This system of working, called 'by the share', constitutes a notable exception in the context of current labour law in Spain.

Of the income received from the sale of fish, and after maintenance costs and social security contributions of the fishermen (among other things) have been deducted, the owner keeps 40 or 50 per cent and the rest is shared among the crew. This system is unfair to the workers, and the authors believe that it should be substituted by a mixed system that provides a minimum level of income security through a basic salary that can be complemented by a strong variable component directly related to the catch.

#### **No unions**


Also, the virtual absence of unions in fishing allows for harsh situations. This absence is explained by the existence in governing bodies of the brotherhoods of the so-called 'social section', made up of fishermen and workers, and the economic section' made up of skippers and owners. In this way, the hours worked are normally 40 to 55 per week, and, in some sectors (trawling and longlining), can exceed 60. These figures contrast with the average hours in other sectors in Spain—38.7 hours in construction, 36.3 in industry, and 36.2 in the service sector.



The study was largely based on interviews with more than 200 workers in the industry and was carried out in the ports. The process allowed for the expression of views of owners and crew on the problems put forward. It also served to highlight the needs of the sector in various areas, especially with regard to professional training.

The final report was presented at meetings during the summer of 1996 in Barcelona and in other fishing locations in Catalunya. Fishermen, scientists, members of the administration and the media, attended. Towards the end of September, the purse-seiners of Barcelona protested under the slogan 'Closed seasons-yes, juveniles-no' to urge the autonomous government to establish a subsidized closed season during the winter in order to avoid the inevitable capture of juvenile fish and thus conserve the resource. These protests were supported by the workers' unions and their claims were based on the conclusions reached in the study.

Although the authorities ignored these protests, the impact of the study reached the Catalan parliament and at the end of March 1997 the authors were required to appear before a parliamentary committee made up of deputies of the principal parties in Spain. Hopefully, the battle of all those fighting for a fisheries management that respects the

environment and improves the living conditions of the workers will be won in the not-too-distant future. 

This article, written by Sergi Tudela, marine biologist, Instituto de Ciencias del Mar de Barcelona and co-author of the book mentioned above, was translated by Elizabeth Bennett, MSc Fisheries Management student, University of Portsmouth, England

## The Cedeira Charter

**Inshore fishermen from the Cantabrian sea off Spain seek to unite under the banner of a new charter**

**T**he Spanish fishing sector, generally portrayed as the 'bad boy of Europe', wears another face. Statistics show that one in four fishermen in Europe are Spanish. There are some 71,000 registered fishermen in Spain, out of a European total of 280,000. These fishermen are said to be highly dependent on fishing in other nation's waters—be it in other European countries' waters or off the coasts of Africa, Argentina, Chile, etc.

The Spanish fishing companies who employ them also have a bad reputation for disregarding regulations, such as quota and size limits, and territorial boundaries, and for ravaging distant-water fishing grounds. Last but not least, the Spanish are big consumers of fish, with a high demand for small (immature) fish for many traditional dishes. Their market exerts strong pressures on the fishing sector to both overfish and target undersized fish.

However, looked at in another way, the same statistics paint a rather different picture of Spain. They also show that one in six European fishermen are from the Spanish small-scale inshore sector, operating small craft and fishing within 12 miles of the Spanish coast. For these fishermen and the communities where they live, how to manage fishery resources in a sustainable way has become a major concern.

The area around the Bay of Biscay, one of the most important fishing areas in Europe, is the mainstay of the inshore artisanal fisheries in both Spain and France. However, overfishing caused by overinvestment, surplus capacity and environmentally destructive fishing methods is affecting the prospects of present and future coastal populations in France and Spain.

To discuss these issues, in March this year, in the small Coruñan port of Cedeira, representatives of some of the most important *cofradías* (traditional fishermen's organizations) in Cantabrico (Saint Jean de Luz, Hondarribia, Lastres, Cedeira and Ares) met with representatives from the local, national and EU authorities, and with the environmental organization, Greenpeace. The 'First Meeting of Inshore Fishermen from the North-West Cantabrian Fishing Grounds' was, in many ways, a watershed, and raised a number of highly important issues.

To begin with, it highlighted the fact that, from all aspects, the situation on the fishing grounds is extremely serious—"the worst in its history"—and that drastic measures must be taken to guarantee resource recovery and to establish sustainable levels of fishing.

In the second place, there is the no less urgent task of defining, once and for all, a fisheries policy with clear lines of responsibility, which includes:

- support directed to the artisanal fishery—the most important sector from a social and economic perspective—using the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIG—see Box 2), specifically redirected for this purpose. (In the past, only a relatively small part of this was earmarked for inshore artisanal fisheries); and
- a debate on which fishing gear are appropriate for the narrow shelf area and multispecies fishery.

### **Doubts expressed**

Antonio López Cribeiro, a biologist from the Cedeira *cofradía*, wondered whether

## Small-scale fisheries in Galicia

In Galicia the fishers of the *Xunta* (autonomous government of Galicia) are classified into three main groups:

- bivalve shellfishers (*marisqueos*), gathering in the inter-tidal zone or by boat;
- inshore fishers (*pesca de bajura*); and
- offshore fishers (in EEZ and distant waters).

According to the 1994 census, there are 8,811 legally registered vessels and 28,014 fishers in Galicia. In practice, there are many engaged in fishing on a part-time basis. For example, there

are over 8,000 women shellfish gatherers (*mariscadoras*), and many (unregistered) people who supplement their incomes seasonally (retired persons, taxi drivers, shopkeepers, unemployed persons, etc.). There are also many people who fish illegally.

In Galicia, the inshore sector employs about 70 per cent of the full-time fishers (i.e. some 5,600 people), operating around 4,300 vessels less than 9 metres in length. The inshore sector comprises a fleet that fishes on the continental shelf (demersal and pelagic fisheries), and a fleet that operates in the coastal embayments (*rías*), shallow oceanic areas.

—by Juan Friere and Antonio Garcia-Allut 2000

fisheries activities should be undertaken by “a few large efficient units, or based on a model of fishing which allows for the fair distribution of resource wealth amongst the coastal populations, and which is environmentally sustainable.” Esteban Olaizola, president of the Hondarribia *cofradia*, put it more graphically: “There are no clear policies, we are like sailing boats having to take whatever wind blows our way”.

**T**he Cedeira Charter, adopted and signed by all those present at the meeting, has subsequently received the backing of 50 *cofradias* and the Galician Environmental Federation. The document (summarized in Box 3) brings together a number of key issues.

First and foremost, it has brought together a large number and wide variety of geographically dispersed *cofradias*, who recognize that they share a common problem caused by excessive fishing effort, increasing efficiency in fishing gear and vessel technology, poor gear selectivity, and the environmental impact caused by their activities. Historically, one of the greatest problems that has afflicted the sector has been the lack of unity and organization. This meeting was thus seen as an important first step in addressing this issue.

From this perspective, the proposal made by Robert Alvarez from the Basque NGO, Itsas Geroa (‘The Future of the Sea’), to

establish a permanent Cedeira Charter Round Table, is highly important. Such a Round Table should be capable of taking forward the negotiation and implementation of the issues raised by the Charter. It should also represent the group of *cofradias* with the administration and with regard to the international dimensions that must be taken into account when dealing with these issues.

Secondly, the fishermen themselves proposed, and agreed on, measures to restrict their own activities, including a revision of mesh size and minimal landing sizes according to biological criteria, the establishment of seasonally closed areas, and the need for strict vigilance and control on the landings of all of the fleets. “The philosophy of the current document is based exclusively on the urgent need to adopt appropriate measures to allow the sea to recover, for all of us in the different sectors and in the fisheries administration to assume our share of the blame, and to be ready to work together in this new millennium to transform our predatory approach into a more responsible attitude towards the sea, with its resource wealth, and the marine ecosystem with its rich biodiversity,” states a letter to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

### Ecological lesson

In this regard, a lesson in ecological economics was given to the whole meeting during the intervention made by Esteban Olaizola: “We do not believe that

## Financial instrument for fisheries guidance

Many aspects of the European Common Fisheries Policy, which provides the framework for all aspects of European fisheries both within and outside European waters, are currently under review. Two aspects are particularly important for the European inshore fisheries:

- the decision on how fisheries will be managed and regulated in the 6-12 mile zone after 2002, and
- the decision on how European structural funds (through the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance—FIFG) will be used to restructure the European fishing sector.

Since the early 1980s, a series of Multi-Annual Guidance Programmes (MAGPs) have been the main tools used for managing the structural aspects of the European fishing fleet. In essence, the main, but rather conflicting, objectives of these MAGPs are to maintain a modern, efficient fishing fleet, while keeping the fleet capacity in line with the stocks available.

The FIFG is derived from the European Structural Funds, which were originally intended for supporting economic development

in Europe's remote, less well-developed regions.

Over the last two decades, the lion's share of FIFG has been allocated mainly to a fleet modernization programme based on a 'scrap and build' policy, which has represented more than half the budget of the Common Fisheries Policy. The misuse of these FIFG subsidies has been one of the main factors contributing to the alarming situation today, where the European fishing fleet shows at least 40 per cent overcapacity for the stocks available. It has also led a situation of smaller-sized fleets and lower employment, but a greater catching capacity and a greater concentration of wealth in the sector.

Only a very small proportion has been allocated to the small-scale sector (about 10 per cent), mainly through the PESCA initiative (which has now ended). PESCA was adopted in 1994 to solve the socio-economic problems of restructuring. Monies were made available for such measures as improving the professional qualifications of fishermen, diversification of activities in coastal areas (tourism, aquaculture, etc.), providing medical assistance vessels for the deep-sea fleet, etc.

it is the fishermen who are the producers, it is not like that at all... it is the fishes themselves. We may or may not have a future, depending on how we harvest this production”.

**I**n this, as in so many other areas, conventional economics, let alone fisheries economics, has not been able to address this relationship between production and the ecosystem. It is on this vision that the artisanal fishery must build its credibility, “although, in all probability, our grandfathers did not know about ecology... they were as much fishermen as us,” Esteban added.

The interventions received the agreement of all those present. Fernando Braña, representing the *cofradia* of Lastres (Asturias), called attention to the need to phase out destructive gear like bobbin (rock-hopper) trawls, and the issue of modernization of other gear. Citing the case of the increasing size of trawl doors, he observed that “with such high vertical

openings, these gear could almost be considered as pelagic”. He further stated that “we are not against modernization in areas such as safety, but very much against such innovations in gear design,” adding that “before, we used to live with traditional trawls”.

On the subject of bobbin trawls, which allow trawlers to work in rocky areas, Braña showed his anger: “We no longer haul up live coral as before, we only haul it up dead. How is dead ground supposed to produce?”

### Fleet modernization

Félix Cudillero, representing the *cofradia* of Ares, another small Coruñan town, highlighted fleet modernization as a key issue: “We can't think why FIFG monies have been used to renew the trawler fleet in such a fundamental way, when they were created for entirely different purposes.” He went on to add that “although the number of trawlers has decreased, the catching capacity of the

## The Cedeira Charter in brief

### 1. Proposals for demersal fishing:

Three main issues were highlighted:

- the need for an immediate halt on the capture of juveniles;
- the need to regulate the capture of adults; and
- the need to conserve the ecosystem.

To address these issues, we demand:

1.1. An immediate halt to the use of 'rock-hopper bobbin trawls' and semi-pelagic pair trawling. The inshore fishery has no problems with the use of traditional trawling methods, such as those which have been used for over three centuries, and which have always shared in the fishery and complied with the rules.

1.2. The immediate implementation of the regulation which alters the closed season for bottom-trawling on the northwest Cantabrian fishing grounds.

1.3. Review of the minimum size restrictions for target species. It defies logic for species such as hake to have the minimum size restrictions

set below the size at maturity. We demand that biological criteria be applied when setting these limits.

1.4. Review of mesh size regulations. We demand that mesh sizes below 70 mm be banned in bottom trawls fishing in waters less than 200 metres deep, and are permanently banned from use in the 12-mile zone (territorial sea).

1.5. Standardization of weekly rest periods. A rest period of 48-hour duration should be applied which, as a general rule, corresponds to the weekend. This will promote better fisheries management and the well-being of the fishing families. Under special conditions, fishery plans which fulfil the required proportion of two days rest for every seven may be considered.

1.6. Monitoring and control of all the fleets. We demand a permanent increase in the monitoring and control of fish landings, and at all stages in the marketing chain.

### 2. Proposals for pelagic fishing:

Although there is an alarming reduction in profitability in the fisheries of the Bay of Biscay, Cantabrica and Galicia, the use of pelagic trawls

fleet is much greater. But we must all take our share of the blame and be ready to work to change things.”

**T**he charter also emphasizes the need to develop sustainable fisheries through systems of management that are not based only on the quantitative aspects of the resource. As a basic prerequisite for restoring stocks, there is also a need to conserve a healthy ecosystem.

From this arises the need for a clearly defined fisheries policy, which deals with the artisanal sector from the perspective of its structural characteristics: “The proposals have been formulated by the inshore fishery which, from a social and economic perspective, represents no less than the most important sector of the national fleet, comprising an activity essential to the economy of all small fishing ports. Consisting of fisheries limited in size by our narrow continental

shelf, it is the very antithesis of industrial fishing, and is organized through a structure of family businesses, which is the reason why we are motivated to involve ourselves in the prosecution of a sustainable model of fishing for the sake of both the fishermen of today and for generations to come.”

It is important to place the Cedeira Charter in context. Last summer, the specialized press reported the Fisheries Minister's intention, for the coming season, to modify the areas seasonally closed to trawling “as a measure aimed at improving the protection of juvenile hake, given the highly precarious state of stocks, and the dangers of fishery collapse.”

#### Seasonal closure

The measures, which entered into force on 1 January 2000, were supposed to widen the seasonally closed fishing area around La Coruña—the main recruitment area—and to create a new area around



and Naveran (high vertical opening) trawls continues to destroy such important species as anchovy, sardine and Northern bonito.

We, therefore, demand:

- the total ban on drift nets in EU waters;
- the adoption of a moratorium on the use of pelagic and high vertical opening (Naveran) trawls in the community waters of the Bay of Biscay and South of the 46th parallel;
- the control of discards made in these zones by independent observers; and
- the adoption of measures which specifically avoid the capture of immature fish.

3. Other proposals:

3.1. Closed seasons (biological rest periods) subsidized by the authorities. No component of the fisheries sector should have to bear the costs created by decades of acquiescence and inertia, and vessels affected by protection measures such as biological and seasonal closures should be able to access compensation from public funds.

3.2. The new FIG 2000-2006 should be used to strengthen the inshore fishery. Although

thousands of millions of pesetas (hundreds of millions of dollars) have been spent, the crisis has worsened and the Spanish Atlantic fishery is now in the most critical phase in its history.

We, therefore, demand that the new FIG be used to rehabilitate the sea, and be directed towards specific objectives:

- halt overexploitation of fishery populations by subsidizing fishery closures (biological rests and other closures) that the scientists consider necessary;
- bring the capacity of the fleet into line with the resources available, with the priority of removing permanently those vessels which are most destructive;
- renew and strengthen the fleet practising selective fishing, which is environmentally sensitive and avoids catching immature fish; and
- elaborate the measures and services necessary to guarantee the strict compliance with the protection measures adopted.

Agreed in the port of Cedeira, La Coruña, March 4th 2000.

Cedeira, along with the removal of the closed area around Muros, where the concentration of juveniles is not so high and where the closure has not been very effective. The seasonal closure of this area was to be extended from three to six months, from 1 September to 31 March.

**T**he response of the trawler sector was twofold: (a) a basic call for any closure to be applied equally to everyone. "The impact of this fishery regulation could be classified as persecution against this fishing method (trawling) which, it seems, is being made a scapegoat for all that is wrong," was a typical response; and (b) a call for more scientific research.

As regards the latter demand, scientific opinion is unanimous. The same recommendations have been made for over 20 years. Given that recruitment is relatively independent of the size of the breeding stock and given the habits of

juvenile hake to accumulate in groups in muddy, trawlable areas, "this situation can only be improved through reductions in fishing effort and through technical conservation measures, like the increase in mesh size, and the establishment of closures in those areas and seasons where there are the greatest concentrations of juveniles."

The trawl is the main gear catching juvenile hake and, if any fishery closures are made to protect the breeding stock that will affect all the other gear, it seems that this would have to involve defining distinct zones during distinct periods. There are other measures, such as increasing mesh size (one of the points raised in the Cedeira Charter), which could also be used for this goal.

#### **Multi-species catch**

In the case of trawling, increases in mesh size would not take into account the multi-species nature of the catch and the

fact that hake is not the main species caught. (Mackerel, scad, blue whiting, monkfish and ray are also caught.) Above all, we are faced with the need to define, once and for all, the kinds of fishing gear that are compatible with our fishing opportunities, under what conditions and under what levels of fishing.

Once this is decided—and we are talking about a political decision of some magnitude, where it will be difficult to reach an agreement that will keep both sides happy—it will be necessary to find ways of achieving the objectives of sustainability proposed. The new FIG 2000-2006 should play a major role in solving these problems, created by so many years of irresponsible fisheries policies.

The Greenpeace representative, Arnau Mateu, proposed several criteria that could be used to guide the process of eliminating the excess capacity (fishing effort) and that would help to transform the use of fishing gear towards achieving sustainable fishing that respects the ecosystem. More important than the need to reduce global fishing effort, the priority of the hour must be to eliminate those fishing gear which cause the greatest damage to the marine environment as well as those which cause the greatest social impact. This would involve applying criteria such as:

- the levels of bycatch and discards of non-commercial species. (The Spanish Oceanographic Institute warns in their report that discards of hake in the size range 8-25 cm could be more than 30 million individuals per trawl.)
- the damage caused to the marine ecosystem—for example, alterations produced in the benthos (which has reached extreme levels with the introduction of new fishing gear like the bobbin trawl).
- the impact on key species in the food chain (an aspect which has hardly been studied).
- the quality of the product which arrives on the market (Fernando Gonzalez Laxe, president of the Fisheries Committee of the EU, placed particular emphasis on this aspect. As well as mentioning the need to establish protected areas from fishing activities, he highlighted the possibilities for ecolabelling and the need to influence outlets not to sell immature fish).
- employment generated (one of the characteristics of the artisanal sector, which, in Galicia, has more than 8,000).

**D**espite continued calls from the inshore sector, the fisheries closure proposed by the Ministry of Fisheries has never been implemented. It remains to be seen whether it will be implemented in September. The organizations party to the Cedeira Charter are particularly concerned that the lack of political will to deal with this chronic fisheries problem will mean the continued demise of the fishery.

The Ministry of Fisheries, for its part, has continued to promise that it would apply the restrictive regulations needed to ensure the recovery of stocks in the Cantabrian Sea. It has also been trying to get the trawler and artisanal fleets to agree on the new measures to be adopted. According to the ministry, they should submit their own proposals once its scientific report has been made available. But what about the precautionary principle, which places burden of proof on the authorities and the fishing industry to show that fishing activities are not damaging the resource? And why must we wait for new reports before acting, when, for so many years, all the reports have been saying exactly the same things?

These issues were discussed at a meeting organized by the Ministry of Fisheries with representatives of the inshore and trawling sectors. In a subsequent statement, Samuel Juarez, General Secretary of Fisheries, announced: "There is general agreement that measures must be taken to allow the fishery to recover. But not that some areas should be reserved only for certain fleets or that some gear should be banned from the fishing grounds, because the fishing grounds are unique and belong to everybody."

This outcome was not unexpected, and was the main reason why the cofradia of Cedeira, which called for the Charter, boycotted the meeting. The closing remarks of the Fisheries Chancellor of the Galician *Xunta* certainly came as no surprise, when he announced that "there are neither good nor bad fishing gear; it depends on how they are used" and that "we must be prepared to tighten our belts."

Finally, at least we have the opportunity to continue working on the Charter which provides an opportunity for the artisanal sector to push their demands forward on a joint platform. We are waiting expectantly to see how this conflict evolves.

Spain

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## A sea of women

### A conference in Spain sought to place on centre stage women's role and status in fisheries and aquaculture

**W**hat the organizers had envisioned came true. The international AKTEA Conference, "Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture: Lessons from the Past, Current Actions and Dreams for the Future" (<http://conference.fishwomen.org>), which took place during 10-13 November 2004 in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, was a true meeting place for women working in fisheries and aquaculture from all over the world to exchange experiences, ideas and strategies.

It was also a unique opportunity for the women to meet with researchers from different disciplines of social sciences working on women-in-fisheries-related issues, and for the researchers themselves to expose and discuss their work.

The initiative for the international conference came from the researchers of the programme "FEMMES". This programme aims to promote networking of women's associations in fisheries and aquaculture in Europe. It is funded by the European Commission under the 5th Framework Programme for Research. Under the FEMMES programme, three workshops were held for fisherwomen from European countries, where active networking took place. An international conference was seen as a challenging opportunity to extend the networking and association linkages from Europe to other parts of the world as well.

The success of the conference was evident, in the first place, by the number and diversity of participants, who came from all over the globe, from the top—Norway—to the southern tip of Mozambique and from the coast of Chile in the far west to the coast of the Philippines in the far east. There were

more than 170 participants—fisherwomen, shellfish gatherers, fish processors, fish sellers and researchers, administrators, social workers and women organizers.

For three days, the participants exchanged experiences and reflections about current developments, and the changes needed for the future. To allow everyone an opportunity for expression, the conference was organized into different types of events. There were plenary sessions with oral presentations, discussion forums in smaller groups on invited subjects, and also a poster exhibition where women could show their work, experiences and ambitions in a visual way.

During the plenary sessions and forums, the researchers could test their theories against the reality of the women working day-to-day in fisheries, while the fisherwomen were offered analytical tools to put their personal and local experiences into a broader and systematic framework. They could also familiarize themselves with concepts like production and reproduction, participation and organization, privatization and globalization, diversification and coastal resource management.

Due to the diversity in culture and fishery, the topics also varied widely. Nonetheless, there were many similarities in the issues raised by the women.

#### **Invisible roles**

A major concern shared was the 'invisibility' of women's roles in fisheries, leading to their exclusion from decision-making processes, and lack of access to (shell)fish resources, information, formal training, credit, social insurance and welfare benefits, and so on.

**M**any of women's traditional activities, like net mending or repair, are disappearing. Many women work for the family enterprise without remuneration. Women's enterprises are mostly small-scale and have to compete with large-scale (often international) corporations and chains. The burden of crises often falls on the shoulders of women of fishery households, forcing them to take up longer working days, a wider range of income-generating activities and harmful working conditions.

While discussing their situation, women also clearly expressed their concerns about the degradation of the resources and the threats faced by their communities. All over the world, traditional fisher communities experience the negative effects of globalization, such as the intrusion of mass tourism in coastal areas, the reinforcement of sanitary standards for fish products that favour the large-scale (international) companies over the small-scale producers, and also the centralization of fishery management promoting the expansion of capital-intensive modernization and privatization of fishing rights through the introduction of transferable quotas.

The share of the fish stocks for traditional fisher communities is becoming smaller and smaller, and the social consequences

are adverse. Traditional fisher communities in Europe and North America also struggle with the problem of declining incomes, unemployment and depopulation, even as the fishing capacity has increased enormously. And in countries around Lake Victoria in east Africa, the traditional fisher communities are left with only the bones of the Nile perch for personal consumption, as the entire fillet of the fish is exported to the European market.

Where, in earlier times, capture, processing and trade were integrated activities of a local community, today more and more quantities of fish caught in one part of the world are processed in another part and consumed in yet another part. Local communities are increasingly losing control over the management of their resources and the price and quality of their product. It was felt that a link should be seen between the marginalization of traditional fisher communities and the marginalisation of women in fisheries, between the lack of recognition of traditional or artisanal fisheries as a *way of life* and the lack of recognition of the productive as well as reproductive roles of women in fisheries.

#### **Women's role**

The forums gave an opportunity to explore in greater depth the issues of particular concern for women's role and status in fisheries and aquaculture. These

dealt with the legal recognition of women's work; their productive and reproductive roles; access to decisionmaking and economic resources; working conditions and safety at sea and on shore; networking among women's organizations; strategies for resource management; diversification; and tourism.

**T**he forum on "The Legal Recognition of Women's Work" discussed the importance of the formal status of women for accessing decisionmaking and resources such as credit, training, information and also social welfare.

Surprisingly, in the eyes of some, it was seen that in some countries of the South, women working in fisheries are better recognized and better organized than their sister-colleagues in the North.

In Senegal, for instance, women fish vendors are officially recognized and do have access to micro-credit schemes and professional organizations. And in the Philippines, an Act providing for the Magna Carta for Women was passed by the House of Representatives in 2003, by which women directly engaged in municipal and coastal fishing are accorded equal access to the use and management of marine resources, and enjoy all the rights and benefits accruing to stakeholders in the fishing and aquaculture industry.

In contrast, the only status Italian or Dutch women who work in the family fishing enterprise have, is that of wife of the fisherman, without an interest of her own, and her work is primarily seen as ancillary and a sort of extension of her domestic activities. Since 1986, there has existed a special European Union (EU) Directive (86/613) regarding the application of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in a self-employed activity, which applies to situations where spouses are not employees or partners, and where they habitually, under the conditions laid down by national law, participate in the activities of the self-employed worker and perform the same tasks or ancillary tasks.

However, practically no member State of the EU has integrated the Directive in its

national laws. In France, the status of collaborating spouse is recognized in the Fishery Law of 1997, and she now has the right to represent the family enterprise, be elected to the boards of fishermen's organizations and also to join a social security scheme. But the French legal status has many limitations still, in particular for the spouses of the small-scale sector and the crew. In Portugal, the collaborating spouse has, since 1999, been partially legally recognized. Women must be registered as crew members even if they do not go out to sea.

The conference forum on "Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture: Productive and Reproductive Roles" discussed the difference of women's role in small-scale and large-scale industrialized fisheries.

In small-scale fisheries, people are usually self-employed, and production and reproduction are directly linked and overlapping. In industrialized fisheries, production and reproduction are separated as people have become wage-workers.

The dilemma in small-scale fisheries is that the woman's position is defined according to her role in reproduction. A woman is seen as the husband's wife and as a caretaker. Women lack legal status and are invisible when it comes to their role in production. The dilemma in industrialized fisheries is that people have lost control, both over natural resources and their own labour.

Two forums covered the issue of woman's access to decisionmaking. In the first forum, "Women's Participation in Fishermen's Organizations", it was felt that women should not wait to be invited by men or politicians to participate in debate and decisionmaking concerning fisheries. They should rather decide on their own. "Men know how to use women's timidity", it was felt, and the consequence is that women are kept outside the decision-making process.

#### **Organization**

It was also noticed that organized women have better chances for recognition than women who are not organized. This was also the case where women had the benefit

of support of government workers or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It was also felt that women should lobby more with politicians and administrators.

**A**nother forum, “Women’s Organizations in Fisheries”, created a general feeling among all that the ongoing organization of women in fisheries and aquaculture has not only been empowering but has also been vital in gaining visibility, access to rights and the valorization of fishing communities. To mention a few successful women’s organizations: Penelope (Italy), Fishermen’s Wives Support Group and Mna na Mara (Ireland), Katosi Women Fisher’s Association (Uganda) and VinVis (Netherlands).

Important facilitating factors in creating sustainable organizations were seen to be a solid foundation and good participation. For a solid foundation, the members should have a feeling of ownership in the organization. It is very important that they are clear about common interests and needs as well have a focused goal. Communication and participation are important, which demand regular meetings. Active interaction between members is also necessary because it permits the establishment of reciprocity, mutuality and solidarity relations amongst them. Outside support and assistance were also seen as important. As major constraints for women’s organizations were seen the existence of too many diverse interests and also the lack of self-confidence and organization skills.

The forum on “Networking Women’s Organizations: Strategies, Opportunities and Constraints”, highlighted various networking efforts of women’s organizations, both at the national and regional levels. Networks have been initiated by various actors: women’s organizations of fishing communities themselves, NGOs, research programmes, governments and regional governmental bodies. Some of those networks were present at the forum: the Nordic Network for Coastal and Fisher Women (Scandinavia), the Task Force of Women in Fisheries (Philippines), Federation 2FM (France), Federation of Net Menders

(Galicia), AREAL, the federation of shellfish gatherers (Galicia), and the National Women’s Fisheries Network (Chile). Although networks have a larger focus and orientation than individual organizations, their success depends much the same on the facilitating factors mentioned above.

The forum on “Working Conditions and Safety at Sea and Ashore” discussed various issues. Firstly, the issue of safety on the boats was discussed. Women felt that men’s attitude towards safety matters is more driven by machismo than by the need for family security. For this reason, it was felt that women face problems in convincing the men to use safety equipment.

Some of the participants (from Portugal, Spain and France) felt that the European fishing fleet need improved safety measures, and they underlined the importance of financing the construction of new vessels with the necessary safety standards.

Deteriorating working conditions were seen as another reason for accidents at sea. These resulted from the decrease in the number of crew on board the vessels, and the longer working hours, enforced because boatowners need to economize to meet with rising investments, decreasing fish prices and higher debts. Alcohol and drug consumption on board boats were also seen as responsible for accidents. Some of the forum participants (from Canada, Ireland and Norway) felt that increasing the cost of insurance may encourage more safety practices, but also place a burden on small businesses and fishing enterprises.

It was furthermore discussed that women should demand the recognition of occupational illnesses of not only men but also women working at sea, shellfish gatherers, fish sellers, etc. In Canada, shellfish processing workers are struggling with occupational asthma and with cumulative trauma disorders (like carpal tunnel syndrome).

#### **Attractive forum**

The forum on “Access of Women to Economic Resources: Small-scale Enterprise Management, Diversification

and Micro-credit” attracted women from the South and North, and they spoke about their own experiences in these domains. The common characteristic that emerged from this exchange was that of women’s capacity to adjust to all situations by opting for new economic initiatives.

**E**xamples from Tanzania and Chile showed how the depletion of resources and the scarcity of fish at local markets pushed women to initiate new activities. Women fish processors from around Lake Victoria adapted their work several times by finding new raw materials to process.

Nile Perch, the main species of the lake, is nowadays exported to Northern countries, and local women have lost access to this resource. In the beginning, they changed to processing the other parts of the fish that were discarded by the foreign processing factories that had been established in their country. But today, even these once valueless parts of the fish are exported to other markets, and the women have had to adapt again to the scarcity of raw materials by changing to processing the fish bones.

Women from Chile worked in the past in activities linked to artisanal fisheries but nowadays have to find new activities due to depletion of the fish stocks. Today, they are involved in activities related to

tourism. From fisherwomen, they became diving suit producers.

Today, diversification of fishing household activities is becoming more and more a necessity to improve the household income. Processed fish fetches better prices than raw fish. Senegalese women play an important role on the shore by selling fish (directly or to a fishmonger) and processing (smoking) fish.

Today, they also produce other products such as fish oil. A woman from Ireland narrated how she started to process the wild salmon caught by her husband and later expanded her business by buying from other fishers as well. French shellfish women from the Mediterranean explained how they promote their products by participating in European gastronomic fairs, where they sell oysters and mussels to the visitors.

#### **Financial constraints**

All participants said that they faced financial constraints not only in starting their business activities but also when they wanted to expand. Banks do not easily open their doors to women small-scale producers. European women have access to public funds to start a business, but they felt that it is not easy to bridge the first few years, which was the time to establish and consolidate a customer base.



## An agenda for action

The keynote speakers at the conference were Barbara Neis (Safety Net and Department of Sociology, St. Johns Memorial University, Canada), Nalini Nayak (ICSF, India) and Katia Frangoudes (CEDEM, University of West Brittany, France).

Barbara Neis spoke about "The Local Consequences of Neoliberal Globalization for Women in Fisheries". She explained how the concentration of capital and control of resources by big corporations resulted in quick shifts of production and investments all over the world. Forty per cent of fish products are traded globally. The introduction of quota systems has facilitated this process. Local fishing communities are confronted with degradation of resources and economic decline. The relations between men and women within fisheries communities have also changed. In her presentation, Barbara Neis used data from the forthcoming book *Changing Tides: Gender, Fisheries and Globalization*, edited by her, Nalini Nayak, Cristina Maneschy and others.

Nalini Nayak spoke about "Challenges to Women in Fisheries in the Globalized World". She explained globalization as the historical process of concentration of resources in the

hands of a few powerful forces and the loss of autonomy for large populations of primary producers, consumers, local communities, governments and States. This process led to great social disparities, conflicts and 'natural' calamities in the world.

For the Northern fisheries, globalization meant a change from open access to the resources to a licensed (controlled) entry. This resulted in the introduction of quotas, including individual transferable quotas (ITQs), professionalism and capitalization of the fishery sector, and the strong role of the State in regulation. Women were pushed into wage-work, under usually bad working conditions or became free labour as a buffer to rising costs.

For the Southern fisheries, however, globalization meant a transition from fishing in the wild to aquaculture. The main fish production is now for export, which has resulted in less fish being available for local consumption. Women are ousted from local post-harvesting activities. Fisheries agreements between countries of the North and countries of the South gave further access to the North to resources in the South, resulting in a depletion of local fish resources and reduced access to resources for the local population. The

**S**outhern women have developed interesting saving schemes, which give them access to credit, and the European participants learnt a lot from these Southern experiences. African women make use of traditional saving systems, which enable them to get micro-credit.

An example of such a traditional saving and credit scheme is the *tontine* system used by Senegalese women. Their capacities to manage and reimburse credit convinced NGOs to support their initiatives.

Nevertheless, the African women felt that the micro-credit was insufficient to expand their businesses, and their activities remained marginal.

The forum on "Fisheries and Coastal Resources Management: Women's Role and Perspectives" discussed the impact of tourism on coastal communities.

Development of tourism brings opportunities, but also threats to local fishing communities.

Tourism can cause displacement of locals, reduction of fishing grounds, danger to the resources (from sport fishers and scuba divers), and bring unwanted values and practices into the community, such as drug abuse and prostitution. Tourism can also have a positive impact for coastal communities by creating new sources of income. The forum revealed that it is often women who initiate tourism-related activities like restaurants, guided tours, and so on.

### Planning process

To guarantee that the local population benefits from tourism, it is important that its development be controlled by the local community and that the locals are involved in the planning process as well as in the implementation of tourism projects. However, it was also felt that

liberalization of trade encourages fish-processing industries to shift from the North to the South, accessing the growing availability of cheap wage labour in the South.

For Nalini, the challenges for women in fisheries are to change the present global developments, by putting life and livelihood at the centre stage. She also feels that women have a major role to play in reconstructing relations among people.

Katia Frangoudes presented to the participants the draft version of the "Agenda for Actions in Favour of Women in Aquaculture and Fisheries in Europe". This agenda was the result of two years' work under the FEMME programme.

The agenda is addressed to national and European decisionmakers, urging them to promote women's issues and concerns in the European fisheries. The main demands are summarized below:

1. Recognize the contribution of women to family-based fishing and aquaculture enterprises (management, accounting, etc.) by according them official status.
2. Allow the women involved in production to have access to a professional status.

3. Favour the initiatives for diversification of the family income by allowing women access to micro-credit and training.
4. Recognize the value of professions linked to fisheries often taken on by women: mending, marketing of fish, etc.
5. Abolish all types of discrimination between men and women concerning access to jobs and resources.
6. Recognize and maintain the access of women to representation in public decision-making bodies and professional organizations.
7. Improve women's access to training devices, and create ways of giving value to their professional attainments.
8. Support the organizations of women and their actions.
9. Improve the working and safety conditions on board vessels.
10. Agree to specifically attend to the needs of crew's wives (in issues like difficulties in training, isolation, working conditions, safety on board, etc.).

tourism as a diversification activity in fisheries is only viable for the small-scale inshore sector and not really an option for the bigger seagoing fishing sector.

**W**orldwide (in Europe too), fisheries and aquaculture are still dominated by family- and artisanal-based organizations. Though the role of women is important for the enterprise and also for the survival of the household, most of the time it remains informal and rarely recognized.

Women also practically do not participate in fisheries' representative bodies and, in general, they are not included in the fisheries policies of the State.

When fisheries or aquaculture faces crises, though, it is the women who are generally spoken to first to undertake new initiatives in diversification or to take up jobs outside the sector to secure the family income. Women have also initiated public

campaigns in defence of their local communities. By getting involved in either local or national actions, fisherwomen appeared in the public debate. They resisted developments that brought great technological and economic changes, but kept labour conditions backward and led to social and economic insecurity and also to the degradation of marine resources.

In the last decade, women of European fisher communities have intensified their activities by building organizations and promoting their interests. Women, more and more, have become aware enough to assert their position as women workers of the sea, and not as 'wife of so-and-so'.

#### **Not just housework**

All participants of the conference agreed that their work in fisheries should be regarded as such, and not just as an extension of housework. Women often have responsible tasks in the management

of the enterprise and, in all cases, they are responsible for the family budget. Therefore, they feel that they must get the opportunity to express and promote their ideas.

**W**omen of fishing communities in Europe—as also in other parts of the world—believe that they are part of the fisheries and aquaculture sector, and they want to participate at the same level as men in the public debate concerning the future of fisheries. They also put forward claims for the recognition of their roles, and resist further marginalization. They demand access to decisionmaking, formal education, training and inputs for new economic activities.

In a few places, they have succeeded in bringing these claims even to the highest political levels, which, in some cases, did lead to a legal recognition of their roles. In some countries, women's organizations are accepted by men's organizations, but, in others, they are still ignored. Women often are not seen as equal to men, and this makes them reluctant to express their opinion, needs and ideas. All participants at the conference believed that a better organization of women at the national, regional and even global levels should contribute to the improvement of their position. This conference was one more step forwards in this direction, and, from the positive and energetic participation at the conference, we can certainly expect more steps to follow. ♣

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# Becoming Proactive Agents

**Galicia, in the northwest of Spain, has initiated a bottom-up implementation and shared governance scheme for marine protected areas for small-scale fisheries management**

In the northeast Atlantic coastal waters of Galicia, in northwest Spain, the bottom-up implementation of marine protected areas (MPAs), as a means to promote the sustainable co-management of small-scale fisheries alongside biodiversity conservation, was initiated in 2003, with the implementation of the Os Miñarzos MPA in Lira.

As elsewhere in the world, the future of small-scale fisheries in Galicia is uncertain and threatened by a range of interdependent factors such as the progressive decline of fishery resources due to overfishing, illegal fishing, environmental degradation and habitat loss; the increasingly fragile economic viability of small-scale fishing enterprises; fish marketing issues; abandonment of artisanal fishing activities; and the loss of local fishing cultural heritage (like traditions, architecture, boats, fishing arts, jobs and ecological knowledge). Considering the great social, economic and cultural importance of small-scale fisheries in Galicia—which in 2004 had 5,565 fishing vessels (of which 4,671 were less than 12 m in length) and 25,756 registered fishermen, out of a population of 2,750,985—it is crucial to address and revert such trends. To effectively accomplish this task, Galician fishermen must see themselves—and be seen by society and by the relevant authorities—as legitimate partners in every stage of decisionmaking related to fishery resource management, which must incorporate their needs and priorities, and value and fully utilize their experiences and ecological knowledge systems through the shared

governance of marine and coastal resources.

In this context, for small-scale fisheries management purposes, MPAs can provide an effective framework to empower resource users through shared governance arrangements, improve their quality of life, generate new socioeconomic opportunities through tourism and recreation, recognize their ecological knowledge and cultural identity, and contribute to the sustainability of small-scale fisheries and natural resources. The bottom-up

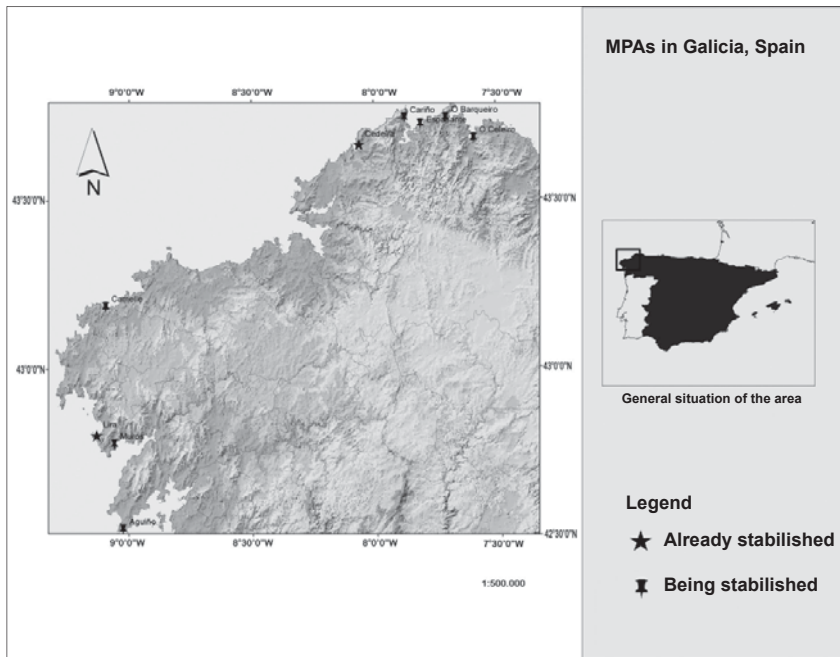
**...for small-scale fisheries management purposes MPAs can provide an effective framework to empower resource users through shared governance arrangements...**

approach arose as an alternative to the conventional top-down fisheries policies of local authorities, which failed to deliver sustainability, encouraged non-compliance among resource users, and invested substantial resources in inefficient enforcement mechanisms.

## Local fishermen's organizations

In Galicia, the implementation of MPAs for small-scale fisheries management is a process led by local fishermen's organizations. It started with a proposal by the *Cofradía de Pescadores de Lira*, based on fishermen's detailed and function-oriented knowledge about the marine ecosystems and species that they exploit. (*Cofradía* is the Spanish term for fishermen's guilds, which are traditional organizations that include all the fishermen working

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MPAs for small-scale fisheries management purposes already established or being established in Galicia

by five other initiatives—Aguíño; Muros; Camelle; Cedeira, Cariño, Espasante and O Barqueiro; and O Celeiro—all of which are currently in the design stage, including one (Cedeira, Cariño, Espasante and O Barqueiro) that is being carried out by four fishermen’s organizations working together (see figure).

The MPAs for small-scale fisheries management purposes being implemented in Galicia (locally known as *Reservas Marinas de Interés Pesquero*) correspond to Category VI (“Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources”) of the IUCN classification. They aim to promote the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources by balancing the social and economic needs of human communities with the maintenance of healthy and biodiverse ecosystems. Thus, these MPAs are designed and planned to preserve and restore areas of significant importance as spawning, nursery and feeding grounds for commercially valuable fish and shellfish species; promote sustainable and responsible fishing practices; generate livelihood diversification opportunities and value-addition strategies; encourage scientific research, environmental education, public awareness and recreational opportunities; and implement participatory and inclusive fishery resources management mechanisms based on socioeconomic and environmental sustainability criteria.

The bottom-up implementation of an MPA for small-scale fisheries management purposes in Galicia comprises several methodological phases, all of which are underlined by the fundamental principles of participation, legitimacy, representativeness, shared governance, and the use of traditional ecological knowledge systems.

**Transparent process**

Additionally, these processes demand the use of transparent and efficient communication and information mechanisms. Therefore, to initiate such a process, it is essential to legitimate it within the fishermen’s organization itself, ultimately by voting for it; to

in a certain geographical area, and have a democratic structure with two representative groups—of owners and crew—who elect an equal number of members to the executive bodies of the organizations.) The formulation of this proposal started in 2003, four years before its promulgation in 2007, technically supported by the *Fundación Lonxanet para la Pesca Sostenible*. It subsequently received the necessary financial and legal support from the Autonomous Government of Galicia (‘Xunta de Galicia’) for its implementation.

**The bottom-up implementation of an MPA for small-scale fisheries management purposes in Galicia comprises several methodological phases.**

The creation of the Os Miñarzos MPA in Lira generated important methodological and legal precedents that were acknowledged by the Galician government for the future implementation of such MPAs, opening the door for other fishermen’s organizations to initiate similar processes. The Ría de Cedeira MPA was the second of its kind to be decreed in Galicia, on 29 January 2009, followed

elect a Committee of Representatives, which would normally include external facilitators who gather periodically to work on the MPA proposal; and to establish efficient communication and information channels among resource users to enhance their participation during the whole process. During the meetings, the Committee of Representatives starts by identifying the main features that will influence the MPA design and planning. Fishermen's experiences and traditional ecological knowledge are the major sources of information used to thoroughly characterize the area in terms of resource uses and users, threats, conflicts, most productive fishing grounds, annual fishing cycles, species life cycles, key habitats, and so on. Integrated in a geographical information system (GIS) database, this information will provide the basis for decisions on the MPA location, size, shape and zoning, and subsequently on how resources are to be used and protected. Therefore, at the end of the Design Phase (as at the end of every phase), it is very important to organize a plenary session (or a General Assembly, in this particular context) with all the fishermen to legitimize the proposal elaborated up to that point by the Committee of Representatives.

Subsequently, during the Planning and Management Phase, the Committee formulates a Preliminary Management Plan defining long-term goals, identifying and prioritizing management needs, and proposing adaptable regulatory measures to address these needs in each one of the previously identified management zones (no-take zones, special protection zones and use zones). Regulatory measures applied to use zones generally comprise restrictions on recreational and commercial fishing on the type of gear and the number of devices per vessel or fisherman, catch limits, minimum landing sizes, and seasonal closures.

The Committee will also discuss fishing rights allocation, biological and social monitoring, capacity building, performance evaluation, surveillance and enforcement, funding and self-financing, and the functioning of the

co-management body. After being subject to consensus approval in the Committee, the final proposal for the MPA must be voted for during a General Assembly, and adjusted, if necessary, in order to be submitted for government approval. In case of an affirmative feedback, the participatory formulation of the MPA establishment decree is initiated.

The Implementation and Shared Governance Phase starts with the election of the official MPA

**...at the end of the Design Phase (as at the end of every phase), it is very important to organize a plenary session (or a General Assembly, in this particular context) with all the fishermen to legitimize the proposal...**

co-management body (*Órgano de Gestión*), which will be composed of an equal number of government officials and fishermen's representatives. This body is responsible for the co-management of the MPA, elaboration of its annual operational plan, co-ordination of monitoring and enforcement activities, and for the development of internal communication channels and external communication strategies. The content of the Preliminary Management Plan should be complemented and

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Fishermen preparing the bait on a longline fishing vessel in Cedeira, Galicia, Spain. Small-scale fisheries management in Galicia is sometimes led by fishermen's organizations

ANA JESUS



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A fish auction market in Cedeira, Galicia, Spain.  
Fish marketing issues often hamper the development of small-scale fisheries

continuously reviewed, updated and adapted by the co-management body, according to the new knowledge generated by the management process itself, and by monitoring outcomes, and through continuous consultations with fishermen.

The implementation of MPAs for small-scale fisheries management purposes in Galicia is a recent phenomenon with a lot of potential to develop and strengthen. From our experience in *Fundación Lonxanet para la Pesca Sostenible*, a non-governmental organization (NGO) working directly with these processes, the effectiveness of this kind of MPAs would be reinforced by developing strategies to increase co-ordination among stakeholders, by drawing on other experiences through mutual learning processes and networking, by strengthening internal communication channels, by developing efficient external communication strategies and promoting public awareness campaigns on the importance of small-scale fisheries, by implementing efficient conflict resolution mechanisms, by strengthening the relationship between

fishermen and the government, and between fishermen and NGOs, by increasing management flexibility, and by reinforcing monitoring and evaluation processes.

Above all, it is important to bear in mind that the implementation of MPAs for small-scale fisheries management purposes involves a continuous process of social change and empowerment, with the potential of reconverting small-scale fishermen into proactive agents working towards the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources.

#### For more



[www.mardelira.net](http://www.mardelira.net)

**Cofradía de Pescadores de Lira**

[www.fundacionlonxanet.org](http://www.fundacionlonxanet.org)

**Fundación Lonxanet para la Pesca Sostenible**

[www.recopades.org](http://www.recopades.org)

**Red de Comunidades de Pescadores Artesanales para el Desarrollo Sostenible**

# Contesting Claims

Spain's traditional fishermen's organizations—the *cofradías*—have undergone drastic changes and no longer truly represent the interests of the artisanal fishery

In Spain, fishermen's *cofradías* continue to be the most important organizations for the coastal or inshore fisheries sector. *Cofradías* are formal public organizations assigned exclusive territorial areas for their activities and represent the interests of the entire fisheries sector. They also act as formal consultative and collaborative bodies of the State administration. There are 299 *cofradías* in Spain today.

Over the last eight years, Spain's *cofradías* have been changing and adapting to the different historical, economic, political and ideological circumstances that have arisen in the management of fisheries as a naturally renewable resource of public use.

Historically, *cofradías* have evolved through an assemblage of objectives and functions. To begin with, they were organizations of a religious-welfare nature, like the first *cofradías* between the 12th and 16th centuries, when their main function was religious advocacy. Later, from the 17th to the 19th century, they functioned as professional guilds or *gremios*. With the abolition of the *gremios* in 1873, free associations of producers or vessel owners came into existence, and also mutual assistance organizations (*montepíos*, *positos*, etc.). These were maintained until 1939, when, with the end of the civil war, the dictatorship forced a single organizational model onto the fisheries sector in line with the then ruling fascist ideology. It is in this context that the 'new *cofradías*' were imposed as the only organizational form, obligatorily linked to vertical trade union structures and displaying an organizational and representative structure of a corporate nature. In this way, by creating a new model of corporate organizations, the

Franco regime institutionalized direct intervention in the fisheries sector, dominating it politically.

Once the dictatorship was over, in 1978, the *cofradías* had to be transformed to adapt themselves to the new democratic order. However, paradoxically, they maintained their character of public corporations, as well as their organizational and representative structures. But, in the new democratic context, the possibility for the existence of free trade unions opened up in the fisheries sector. Until then, all the new kinds of associations were banned including those that represented the interests of boatowners or producer organizations.

As publicly owned non-profit corporations, *cofradías* can be created or disbanded only through a special legal statute. It is legally obligatory for them to be constituted where they do

**...Spain's *cofradías* have been changing and adapting to the different historical, economic, political and ideological circumstances...**

not exist and where there is professional fishing activity. They report directly to the public administration. In order to engage in his profession, every Spanish fisherman must be, in some way or other, associated with a *cofradía*, although some exceptions do exist.

## Governance bodies

Organizationally, the *cofradías* have a representative structure that must include, in equal parts, the interests of the workers (seafarers) and capital

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(boatowners) in all their governance bodies. The *cofradías* are formed by an Assembly of all the members of the *cofradía*, including those who are retired. The General Body comprises all active members with voting rights, while the *cabildo* (the executive organ) is elected every four years, ensuring parity between workers and owners,

**The *cofradías* represent, defend and promote the social and economic interests of their members...**

and equality between the different sectors that exist in the *cofradía*, namely, trawlers, seiners, shell fishers, artisanal fishers, and so on.

Executive powers are vested in the Chief Skipper (*Patrón Mayor*), who acts as president and legal representative of the *cofradía*. The Secretary of the *cofradía* is responsible for its day-to-day administration and communication with the public administration. For this reason in some *cofradías* the secretary may even be a public functionary.

Since the law enjoins the *cofradía* to represent everyone in the fisheries sector, seafarers and boatowners, small artisanal producers (owners and skippers of vessels) as well as the owners of industrial vessels that fish in coastal or inshore water must be present

in the decision-making bodies. However, the owners of offshore or distant-water industrial vessels organize themselves through vessel owners associations and not necessarily through the *cofradías*. These vessel owners may be affiliated to the *cofradías* but normally they use private associations to organize and represent their interests.

Structurally, the *cofradías* are vertical and co-operative in nature, and are regulated as a public, not private, body, in contrast to trade unions or boatowners' associations which have a horizontal character. Each *cofradía* is provided with an area of coastline over which it has jurisdiction to organize the fishery activities of its members; these are not exclusive fishing areas, but are coastal zones where the *cofradías* have jurisdiction to organize the logistics of their fishery activities by providing a base for each vessel, and scope for trade through fish auctions.

Functionally, the *cofradías*:

- represent, defend and promote the social and economic interests of their members;
- use sources of credit to facilitate the acquisition by their members of vessels and gear;
- promote the construction of houses, buildings and installations of a social and welfare nature;
- use the co-operative movement as an instrument to achieve the objectives of managing and protecting the sector;
- promote the management of areas under their jurisdiction in the different production, processing and trade sectors; and
- develop the services necessary for the productive process, and for regulating and controlling the primary sale of fish.

#### **Vessel owners**

The *cofradías* organize fish auctions but do not fix prices. They offer advances to vessel owners from the sales realized in the auctions. They also collect payments from the merchants who normally pay up only after a few days of the auction. The risk of non-payment has proved problematic for a number of *cofradías*.

JUAN L. ALEGRET



A view of the harbour at Palamos. *Cofradías* in Spain are provided with areas of coastline over which they have jurisdiction to organize fishery activities

Through fish auctions, the *cofradías* guarantee a certain degree of protection to the producers by ensuring free competition and a continuity of demand. The 'Dutch' auction system, in which prices are bid down, offers each productive unit a more or less assured market for its products, with the *cofradía* acting as the mediator between the buyers and the sellers (vessel owners) but without intervening to fix prices. The *cofradías* retain a percentage from the buyer and/or the seller, ranging between 0.5 and 3 per cent of the net amount realized.

Politically, the *cofradías* have a double role: first as formal mediators between the interests of the different administrations and the fisheries sector; and second as mediators in the conflicts that are generated within the fisheries sector.

In reality, though, not all *cofradías* carry out all the functions described. The 'large' *cofradías* have commercial markets for their fish catches, while the 'small' *cofradías* have none. Another division is between *cofradías* that have vessels from the so-called 'industrial' fleet—seiners or trawlers—and those that only have an artisanal fleet.

The *cofradías* do not represent the interests of the offshore and distant-water fleet, which are represented by owners' associations.

Today an institutional change can be seen in the *cofradías* with the breakup of the collective model of co-management. This has, in turn, lessened negotiating powers and increased transaction costs.

One indicator of this loss of negotiating powers is the increasing importance of other organizations, like those of the vessel owners and the associations of fish merchants. These associations are beginning to occupy an important part of the political and negotiating space on all issues related to fisheries management and trade, which, until now, was the exclusive province of the *cofradías*.

For some years now, the *cofradías* have begun to demand direct State intervention on many issues that traditionally they themselves managed, urging the administration to assume responsibility for the legal framework



Pole-and-line fleet at Hondarribia harbour, País Vasco, Spain. The industrial fleets are represented by owners' associations

that they are no longer capable of implementing.

In view of the new economic circumstances arising from the globalization of markets, and the importance of the European Union's proposed revised Common Fisheries Policy, most vessel owners are opting not to engage collectively in trading their catches through the *cofradías*. As a result of new autonomous laws that govern the *cofradías*, such as the Marine Fisheries Law, they can now act directly and legally to commercialize the fish catches of their members. All this is causing an exponential growth in the capital invested by the traders in

**Today an institutional change can be seen in the *cofradías* with the breakup of the collective model of co-management.**

all aspects of the fish-catching chain, and an associated increase in power of this segment, to the detriment of the owners/fishers/*cofradías* who no longer have control over the market. Additionally, the political clout of the *cofradías* is being diminished.


The artisanal sector is characterized by a certain confusion in terminology—inshore fishing (*pesca de bajura*),

coastal fishing (*pesca de litoral*), small-scale fishing and artisanal fishing are all used to describe the sector. Depending on the contexts, the fisheries activity that members of the *cofradías* carry out are considered generically as inshore or coastal fishing, which would include trawling, seining, longlining and fishing with small gear.

As corporations, the *cofradías* organize their management bodies on a 'parity' basis, sharing the interests of the vessel owners and the seafarers-workers on a fifty-fifty basis. But these representatives of owners and workers

**...the *cofradías*, as they are currently structured and functioning, are not in a position to represent or defend the interests of the small-scale sector...**

that is growing in Spain, the *cofradías*, as they are currently structured and functioning, are not in a position to represent or defend the interests of the small-scale sector, as they are mainly composed of representatives of the other fleets. Also, the power of the small *cofradías* pales into insignificance against the larger ones, or compared to the provincial, regional or national federations.

As things stand, the *cofradías*, though formally representing the interests of all the fleets, really represent the interests of the majority, which is not the artisanal fishery. Any move to develop and strengthen artisanal fishing in Spain will not succeed unless the minimum pre-conditions are created to enable the sector to exercise its rights and meet its demands under conditions of equality with the rest of the fleets. 

are elected and organized according to the different fleets or gear that exist in each port. Thus, in some *cofradías* we find a single artisanal section, as in a *cofradía* catering to vessels that employ small gear, while in others we may find two, three, four or five sections that divide up the power of the *cofradías* according to whether they use, in addition to the small gear, trawls, seines or longlines, or whether the members are shell fishers using vessels or fishing on foot.

Organizationally, thus, it becomes problematic for the *cofradías* to ensure full representation of the specific interests of the Spanish small-scale or artisanal fisheries sector (*artes menores*). It is also difficult to apply differentiated management regimes or forms of representation and participation that would strengthen and revalorize artisanal fishing.

There are now demands from Spain's artisanal fishing sector for the exclusive use of the coastal zone out to 12 miles, and the restriction of trawling. Demands are also being made for the creation of more marine parks for fishing, which would function like exclusive zones for artisanal fishing.

In the contesting claims between the artisanal fishing sector and the more capitalized, intensive forms of fishing

#### For more

[www.gemub.com/pdf/218.pdf](http://www.gemub.com/pdf/218.pdf)

**Fishermen Guilds in Spain  
(*Cofradías*): Economic Role and  
Structural Changes**

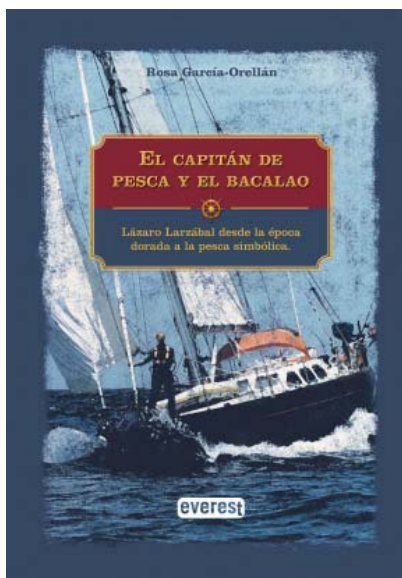
[www.univ-brest.fr/gdr.../](http://www.univ-brest.fr/gdr.../)

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**The Fishermen Guilds in Spain  
(*Cofradías*): History, Functionality  
and Present Difficulties**

# Sleeping with One Eye Open

Rosa García-Orellán's biography of a Basque fishing captain follows him from his start as a 'cabin boy' in the 1950s, to 2008, when the writer interviewed him



COD AND THE FISHING CAPTAIN: LÁZARO LARZABAL, FROM THE GOLDEN AGE TO SYMBOLIC FISHING Rosa García-Orellán, Everest León 2011. 199 pages. ISBN 978-84-441-0304-4

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Since 2004, when the first edition of the book *Hombres de Terranova* (“Men from Newfoundland”) was published, the end of the industrial method of pair trawling for cod has been in sight. This fishing technique, in which two vessels trawl with a single net, experienced its golden age in the decade of the 1960s. From the 330 pages and the 306 accounts and life stories contained in *Hombres de Terranova*, emerge 74 alternative voices, which show the circumstances under which fisheries activities were developed, speaking for three generations and thereby placing in context over 70 years of fishing activity.

The captains in the Spanish fleet worked in teams hunting for the fish shoals, in the same way that Portuguese, French and Russian captains did. In 2006 Rosa García-Orellán, the author, met Lázaro Larzábal, a captain from the Spanish cod fleet who was atypical, having explored the Grand Banks alone. He had never worked as part of a team, but made his own innovations in fishing. In examining his experience through this biography, Rosa García-Orellán reveals a new perspective on the world of seafaring in the era of Lázaro Larzábal.

In February 2006, the author started to record interviews in Bayona, Pontevedra. At that time, Lázaro had been commanding vessels for around 50 years and was then in charge of the cod pair trawler *Leon Marco* based in Vigo. Guided by Lázaro, we follow the course of cod pair trawling in the northwest Atlantic from 1962 to 2008, when pair trawlers began to withdraw from fishing, making way once again for single-vessel trawling, with very few

vessels. By following Lázaro's training and early beginnings in fishing, the biography makes us enter a different world and a different environment.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first covers Lázaro's infancy and family memories, his formative years in the nautical fisheries schools and his passage from the *boniteros* (tuna fishing vessels) to taking command of trawlers in Ondárroa. The second chapter is dedicated to Newfoundland, the third covers Norway, and the last deals with fishermen's culture.

Lázaro, whose professional career extends from 1952 to 2008, has over 50 years of uninterrupted work in seafaring. Son and grandson of trawler fishermen, his family circumstances take us back to the start of the expansion of industrial fishing based on pair trawling in the Basque coastal ports, and its expansion along its northern coasts.

All life is interlaced with contexts and reference points; we are all mediators of our time, and Lázaro's biography allows us to observe how the world of fishing lives with a large variety of contexts and reference points. Situations like the 1936 civil war, the post-war period and subsequently being orphaned mark the life of our protagonist. It was the women in his domestic entourage who pushed him to become a fishing captain—he became what his father and grandfather were before him.

## Cabin boy

In 1952 Lázaro was the youngest pupil in the nautical college. In the same year, armed with his college certificate, he worked aboard three *boniteros*, but his

age forced him to abide by the tradition of the youngest member aboard the vessel becoming the “txó” or cabin boy, who has to serve the crew as well as learn to stitch nets. His father’s encouragement of the value of sport and discipline influenced Lázaro’s approach to vessels in his future professional career. Being orphaned made him responsible for the economic care of his family, and forced him to abandon sailing, his passion, and decide to continue in industrial fishing where more money could be earned.

Lázaro’s sea-going experience during this initial phase is interesting. From working on tuna vessels mid-way through the last century, he made the change from trolling vessels to using tanks with live bait for fishing—a genuine attempt to install new technology to address a range of problems that needed solving. Space on board the fishing vessels then was highly restricted, with crews of 12 to 14 manning vessels of only 14 m in length.

Dolphins along the Basque tuna coasts were seen as “sheep dogs” as they rounded up shoals of anchovies from below, bringing them to the surface and making them visible for the vessels, signalling when it was opportune to shoot the net so as to catch the anchovies as bait for tuna. Dolphins were never hunted for profit, which was prohibited by the fishermen’s *cofradia* (union); they only fished dolphins for food and any excess would be kept in the vessel to be shared with the rest of the fleet. It was not long before radio was introduced into the tuna fleet, which meant better communication amongst the fishermen, which also contributed to safety at sea. Throughout the decade of the 1950s, technology was being introduced into the tuna fleet that allowed them to fish for tuna at farther distances.

Experience aboard the Ondárroa trawlers forged the aptitudes and skills needed by a fishing captain to master a vessel. Under French captains Lázaro learned about trawling innovations, and thanks to his explorer’s nature, which combines knowledge, intuition and leadership

capacity, he began to make hugely successful catches. He becomes a star much in demand among fishing vessel owners. However, in 1966, Lázaro decided to make his first trip to Newfoundland, assisting the fishing captain Ángel Aldanondo to convert two single trawlers of the *Pesqueras Españolas de Bacalao Sociedad Anónima (PEBSA)*, the Spanish cod fisheries company, the *Santa Elisa* and *Santa Marina*, for pair trawling. The stakes for this trip were high.

The decade of the 1950s saw pairs of smaller vessels of 180 tonnes appearing on the Newfoundland Grand Banks. A decade later, once they were successfully established, they began developing towards using stern ramps. According to Lázaro, pair trawling, due to the seabed conditions where he was working, caught the largest, most commercially prized, cod. It was the hunt for large cod that encouraged vessel owners in PEBSA to try pair trawling with the *Santa Elisa* and the *Santa Marina*. The stakes were high, since these were large vessels, 100 m in length, which must be co-ordinated with precision, using hydraulic steering during fishing manoeuvres (shooting, hauling and handling the net).

In 1968, as the captain in charge of these boats, Lázaro broke the record for landings in the port of Vigo: 1,760 tonnes of salted cod based on

LÁZARO LARZABAL



Lázaro Larzabal on deck. Son and grandson of trawler fishermen, his professional career extended from 1952 to 2008

the preparation of 4,048 tonnes of fresh cod. There was no desalination equipment aboard the vessels then, and the cod had to be worked by hand on deck. That was the largest landing ever made by a pair trawl operation in the Spanish fleet, and it has never been beaten. Those were the golden years for pair trawling, and Spain moved from being a fish-importing country to an exporter. An interplay of factors contributed to this change, including fleet expansion, pushed by the State through shipping credit policies, new navigational methods and electronic fish detection, and on-board freezing technology.

The continued success of pair trawling depended on exploring the seas, and in that era of *Mare Liberum* they not only explored the Grand Banks from Boston to Greenland but also the Norwegian banks. The changing technology of the vessels, as well as the imposition of the 200-mile limit by coastal States created a new framework for the cod fleet, making it necessary to apply new strategies.

Life on board the trawlers revolved around work: time was divided

and those of vessel owners pointing to their need for the activity to be profitable, and the voices of biologists and public administration officials completing the picture.

As regards fishing culture and trawling, “fishermen are like farmers, they want the fields to be fertile so they can harvest crops”. Fishermen consider that once the sea bed is cleared of corals, shoals of fish can move in, and this makes for an interesting interaction between the positions taken by biologists and fishermen. There is much reflection about the reasons for the collapse of the cod on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. While several causes have been cited, the fact that cod populations are not recovering is an issue that should not be mixed up with the overfishing that produced the collapse.

For the Spanish biologist Antonio Vasquez, first of all, it is the ecosystem that has changed; a second possibility is that the ecosystem does not allow for the recovery of collapsed species. There are also views like those of the Canadian biologist George Rose, who maintains: “Climate change may be more of a threat than overfishing, given that while we might be able to come up with some solutions for overfishing, for climate change, at the rate global warming is going, we can’t.”

The repercussion that the collapse of cod had for the Newfoundland fisherman is also dealt with in this book, given that cod is a very important charismatic species for the east coast Canadians whose settlements were built on the “Atlantic gold”, the cod. The book shows how they were struggling to cope with the cod fishing moratorium.

Captain Lázaro reflects that despite the dependence on high-tech gadgets these days, fishing gear and instinct still play an important role, though much less so today than mid-way through the last century.

### **Different voices**

Apart from the voices of fishermen, the voices of the vessel owners, who need to ensure that their activities

**Lázaro’s biography also reflects on the exploitation of marine resources, with the voices of fishermen describing their activity and the state of the sea...**

between periods of work and periods of rest, but once fishing started, there was a rhythm marked by the catching and handling of fish. Lázaro exercised authority and power on his boat, but he also experienced moments of extreme solitude when taking decisions on accidents, deaths, mutinies and when cod did not appear for more than 10 days. Those were the times when he had to make decisions all alone. He also had to confront storms of force 12 on the Beaufort scale.

Lázaro’s biography also reflects on the exploitation of marine resources, with the voices of fishermen describing their activity and the state of the sea;

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remain profitable, also emerge in the biography. By 2008, after over a decade of globalized markets for fishery products, there is a definite paradigm shift, where pair trawling is giving way to single-boat trawling, with single vessels equipped with high technology making pair trawling no longer profitable.

The work described in this book already belongs to museums, in the sense that pair fishing cannot continue in the new fisheries framework. However, its history in industrial fisheries is of great interest for marine biologists such as Antonio Vázquez or Enrique Lopez Veiga, for whom the future will require us to “make fields in the sea”. As George Rose points out, rather than managing fisheries on a species basis, we must manage them as marine ecosystems. Currently, all these proposals are relevant in fisheries exploitation at the global level, with a population that has tripled since the Second World War, and with globalized markets that force us to look at oceans in their entirety.

The sentiments and the life of the fisherman is the main thread that runs through the book, so it is apt that this short account should finish with the words of Lázaro himself: “On board, we sleep with one eye open, and this lasts for the entire fishing campaign. You can’t afford a lapse in concentration or discipline, as being off your guard will put all the others at risk, and this we know. Those who don’t know the sea are unaware of what takes place there and how we work on board ... those hours, dark and black, for all you can say about them, they go unseen. And what is more, seeing them and feeling them is very hard. So we really respect the sea”. 🐟



Dockside in Vigo. In 1968, Lázaro broke the record for landings in the port of Vigo by a pair trawl operation, which remains unbeaten

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