

**Common Fisheries Policy Reform in the European Union and Small-Scale Fisheries:  
*Paving the way to sustainable livelihoods and thriving fishing communities.***

**Briefing Note from the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)**

**Introduction**

The reform of the European Union's (EU) Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is a once in ten-year event. The current review and reform process is the third such in the entire history of the CFP, created in 1983, and reviewed in 1992 and 2002.

Reform comes at a critical moment for all EU citizens, in the context of profound global changes in climatic, economic, social, and security circumstances. Small-scale fisheries are particularly affected by these, and it is vital that small-scale fishers and their communities are informed about and take an active part in this third reform process.

Small-scale fishers and fishing communities have a legitimate claim, a basic right to decent and sustainable livelihoods. They also have a right to be informed and consulted about, and to participate in decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods. The historic 1984 Rome Conference of Fishworkers and their Supporters (the Rome Conference) was called because, following the establishment new international legal regime of the seas under the 1982 Montego Bay Treaty, small-scale fishers and their communities had been excluded from discussions and decision making about their future in 1984 FAO World Conference on the Fisheries Management and Development.

The Rome Conference produced the first global charter on small-scale fisheries. This defined the key characteristics of small-scale fisheries. It highlighted the sustainable nature of small-scale fishery related activities, and their vulnerability in the face of competition from other sectors, including from larger scale fisheries, industry, tourism and pollution. It set out a series of recommendations for the future development of the sector.

Subsequently, and since its founding in 1986, the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) has advocated that small-scale community based fisheries are the most effective way to achieve socially and economically equitable fisheries that are environmentally sustainable; goals that will not be achieved unless fishworkers are properly engaged in a process of informed consultation and participation in policy and management decision-making processes.

In 1997, following the founding of the World Forums of Fishworkers (the WFF and WFFP), small-scale fishers and people working in small-scale fisheries from around the world have been demanding an end to the unfair and prejudicial treatment they receive in management decision making processes, and an end to fishing and aquaculture practices that are environmentally destructive and socially inequitable.

In 2008 FAO took the important step of organizing a World Conference on Small Scale Fisheries (4SSF) in Bangkok, where over 100 people representing small-scale fishing and indigenous communities and their supporters from 36 different countries signed up to the Bangkok Statement on small-scale fisheries. This declared that the human rights of fishing communities are indivisible and that the development of responsible and sustainable small-

scale fisheries is possible only if their political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights are addressed in an integrated manner; that the development of responsible and sustainable fisheries should be coherent with human rights – political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights – of fishery-dependent communities.

Subsequently in March 2009 the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI 28) agreed to take up the issue of small-scale fisheries, and to explore various options, including a Programme of Work dedicated to small scale fisheries, a special Chapter in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and an International Action Plan for Small-Scale Fisheries.

The “Green Paper” process initiated by the European Commission in April 2009 offers an important opportunity for small-scale fishers and fishing communities in the European Union (EU) to participate in the reform of the EU’s Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). It also offers an opportunity for the stakeholders in the sector, the men and women workers, entrepreneurs and organizational representatives, to argue their case; that by defending and promoting small-scale fisheries the EU can pave the way to sustainable livelihoods and thriving fishing communities.

### **The Sustainability Challenge: The Small-Scale Solution**

The European Commission’s Green Paper on CFP Reform states that “economic and social sustainability require productive fish stocks and healthy marine ecosystems”; and that “the economic and social viability of fisheries can only result from restoring the productivity of fish stocks”. It concludes that: “ecological sustainability is therefore a basic premise for the economic and social future of European fisheries.”

In this regard, the small-scale fisheries offer a huge opportunity.

But just being small, does not necessarily make fishing activities more sustainable or socially equitable. The Green Paper notes that: “many vessels are small scale and have a limited environmental impact, but small-scale fishing can also be harmful to sensitive coastal habitats and its aggregated impact can be significant with real consequences on the state of the stocks”.

That may be so, but under conditions that allow for a full and active participation of the actors and with appropriate sectoral support, this sector does have greater capacity for employment in decent work, greater capacity to distribute the benefits from fishing more equitably, less requirements for fuel and other inputs, and greater capacity to adapt seasonally, annually and multi-annually to changing circumstances, economically, ecologically and socially.

Small-scale fisheries could play a vital role in placing EU fisheries on a more sustainable footing, and cushioning fishery dependent communities from the economic and social consequences of the current fisheries crisis facing the EU, and from the measures required to address it.

## **Small-Scale Fisheries in the European Union**

Small-scale fisheries represent the overwhelming majority of fishers in all EU Member States, engaged in a wide range of activities. At subsistence level seasonal labour intensive activities may provide important additional sources of food and income to fishing families, whilst at the other extreme highly commercial, semi-industrial, technology intensive activities may have serious environmental effects, with implications for sustainable development.

Small-scale fisheries are generally community and family based, in a society rooted in traditions, local knowledge, culture. Both men and women play an important role in small-scale fisheries. Some 100,000 fishers, mainly men, are employed in small-scale fishing as crew. Working relations and practices are often based on cooperation, kinship, and local networks, where sharing (of tasks and benefits) are still important. Whilst it may be the men who dominate the catching of fish at sea, women play a key role in shore based activities. Women are a key link between fishing activities at sea and the shore based support and the wider distribution of benefits in the community and society at large.

Small-scale fishers are often poorly organized, and their interests largely under represented at national, regional and European level. Existing national and pan-European institutional arrangements tend to be biased towards larger, more economically powerful interests. This tends to marginalize the small-scale sector in the consultation and decision-making processes, leaving them less well informed about developments that affect them (policy changes, new regulations, international trade, climate change, and so on), making them more vulnerable to competition from other interests.

Women play a vital, though often hidden role in the fishery production and post harvest processes. At one level they may be partners and mothers of fishermen. But women are also physically, economically and socially engaged in providing inputs, engaging in fishing, fish processing and fish vending and marketing, and in the administration of small fishery enterprises. In such roles, women are often underpaid, overworked, and not respected. They tend to be under represented in fisher organizations, and without a voice in regional and EU level decision making and consultative processes.

In several countries women's rights as "collaborating spouses" has achieved some recognition, but such a role is still highly undervalued. In Galicia in North Spain and in Portugal shellfish gathering is mainly carried out by women. In Galicia alone there are over 10,000 women organized in the sector, where it is only recently that their rights as fishworkers have been recognized.

## **CFP Reform and Small-Scale Fisheries**

The reform process comes at a time of several crises in the European fisheries sector. A resource crisis, where fishing capacity of EU fleets exceeds by far the resources available, and where there are ever diminishing returns to fishing, and ever diminishing fishing opportunities; a fuel crisis where fishing operations are highly dependent on fuel, where escalating costs and uncertainty over future supplies are undermining the economic basis of fishing; a global economic crisis that is creating a scarcity of credit and other funds for

investment, and that is eroding consumer purchasing power; a food security crisis, with a rapidly increasing gap between supply and demand for fisheries products, where over 60% of EU demand for fisheries products must be met by imports; and a socio-economic crisis in fishery dependent coastal communities arising from the combined impact of all these other crises.

To achieve the goal of ecological sustainability, the Commission proposes that a rights and results based approach to fisheries management should be adopted; an approach that will push fishing companies “to use their investments more efficiently and to eliminate their surplus capacity.” It is further proposed that access to fish stocks should be linked to performance. “Rights, responsibility and accountability should of course go hand in hand: those who exercise responsibility in a proper and effective manner should be the ones to enjoy the access to fish stocks”, states the Green Paper.

Adopting such a rights based approach to fisheries management with the use of market based allocation mechanisms, as proposed by the Commission, has far reaching implications for small-scale fisheries, and may lead to concentration of ownership of access rights, put small-scale fisheries at a disadvantage, and lead to various perverse economic and social effects.

The Commission has highlighted the need to adapt fisheries management to the requirements of the small-scale sector through “differentiated management regimes”; one for large-scale fleets, and one for “small-scale fleets in coastal communities with a focus on social objectives”.

In adopting such a differentiated approach, local and regional specificities need to be taken fully into account. In this regard, management and decision taking needs to be devolved to appropriate regional and local levels, greater flexibility needs to be built into management and resource access arrangements, according to local and regional specificities. There is also a need to ensure that institutional structures and arrangements in place adequately represent the small-scale sector. These are considerable challenges.

### **Defining Small-Scale Fisheries and Strengthening Sustainability**

Adapting fisheries management to the requirements of the small-scale sector implies that that there is consensus on how small-scale fisheries are defined. Currently no such consensus exists at EU level, other than a view that under vessels under a certain size are small in scale. But the issue of defining small-scale fisheries has often proved polemic, divisive and contentious, as highlighted by the WTO Doha Round Negotiations on Rules for fisheries subsidies, where after several years it has not been possible to reach any consensus.

It is therefore vital that small-scale fishing interests engage in the reform process to ensure that the criteria used to define small-scale fishing are based on appropriate logic. Such logic should transcend physical size and fishing capacity; it should seek to incorporate and otherwise make explicit the economic and social linkages that make small-scale fishing so vital to the economies, social fabric and cultural traditions of coastal communities.

Over the next few months, there is an opportunity to review the importance and scope of small-scale fisheries in Europe, to document practices that promote environmental sustainability, social equity and economic prosperity, and to propose what kinds of differentiated approaches are needed to guarantee sustainable livelihoods and thriving fishing communities in the future.

In this regard, the use of subsidies has an important role to play. At one level capital is required to enable fishers to shift from unsustainable to sustainable fishing practices. At another level, there is a need to invest in training, capacity building, and institutional structures that support the development of commercial chains and co-management arrangements, and which integrate the management and development of fisheries into wider coastal zone and maritime setting.

It is therefore crucial that consideration is given to the interaction with, and impact on small-scale fisheries by other coastal area usage, such as marine parks, recreational fisheries, tourism, offshore installations for wind farms and oil extraction, aggregate extraction, effluent discharge, and so on. These activities have a considerable impact on small-scale fisheries and the sustainability of coastal communities.

### **The Consultation Process**

The European Commission has outlined a process of review, including public consultation, and reform. Up to December 31 2009, there is an opportunity EU citizens - fishermen, fish processors, retailers, environmentalists, consumers, taxpayers - to have their say.

The public consultation will end on December 31 2009, by which time “all interested parties” should have commented on the questions set out in Green Paper, along with any additional comments on the reform process.

The Commission will sum up the debate by first half of 2010 and produce conclusions on the direction of the CFP reform. An impact assessment will then be conducted and after further consultations with stakeholders, the Commission will draft a proposal for a new basic regulation, which will be presented to Council and the European Parliament together with all other legal base proposals in the context of the new Financial Framework after 2013.

### **ICSF’s Proposal**

The ICSF is proposing to facilitate a process over the next few months that will help to create greater awareness about the importance of, and interest in the review process of the CFP and its reform in 2012 by small-scale fishing interests. We plan to engage in the public discussion that ends on December 31 2009, and to contribute to the further process of consultation leading up to December 2012.

We aim to:

- encourage and facilitate organizations representative of small-scale fisheries (coastal and inland) interests to participate in the public debate on the Review of the CFP;
- strengthen networks of small-scale fisheries (coastal and inland) interests in the European Union;
- arrive at joint positions on the various aspects of the CFP of relevance for small-scale fisheries and feed these into the review process;
- through a process of discussion and consensus building a) identify key characteristics of, and develop criteria to apply to small-scale fisheries that define the nature and scale of fishing operations that would be subject to a “differentiated management regime”, as proposed in the Green Paper, and b) make proposals for differentiated management regimes to be applied to small-scale fisheries;
- arrive at a clearer understanding of the importance of small-scale fisheries in Europe, including on the relations between fishing and shore based activities, between men and women, and between catching, commerce and consumption that provide the basis for sustainable livelihoods and thriving fishing communities; and
- put forward some concrete proposals for the strategic development of the sector.

To kick start this process, ICSF will organize a workshop in Brussels on September 28<sup>th</sup> 2009 in cooperation with the European Economic and Social Council (EESC), the Galician Federation of Cofradias, the Fundación Loxanet, Pêche et Développement, the European Federation of Small Islands (ESIN) and other partners.

The workshop will form part of a series of consultative activities over the next 36 months, which will initially, and before December 31 2009, aim to:

- highlight key issues affecting small-scale fisheries that require attention in the CFP reform and provide user-friendly briefings these;
- provide answers to the questions posed by the European Commission in its Green Paper, and articulate key recommendations for representatives of small-fishers and their organizations to take up in their formal responses to Green Paper; and
- prepare the ground for further consultations on the reform process in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

### **The Brussels Workshop**

The Brussels Workshop is intended to be a first encounter, providing an opportunity for fishworkers, their representatives, and those with an active role in small-scale fisheries in Europe to meet, exchange, and share experiences.

Workshop participants will include representatives from artisanal fishing and coastal community organizations, and NGOs from Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, UK, Netherlands, Ireland and Denmark.

The workshop will discuss:

- the characteristics and perspectives of small-scale fisheries (coastal and inland) in the EU, identify commonalities and the key issues in small-scale fisheries to be addressed in the CFP reform;
- successful/good examples, and key lessons of management practice of small-scale fisheries, and how these could feed into the adoption of a differentiated approach; and
- the role of small-scale fishery activities in sustaining fishing communities, and key issues and basic principles to consider in the CFP reform process.

These issues will be taken forward at local, regional and EU level through electronic discussion and working groups, and will provide material to feed into parallel and related processes of consultation.

### **Brussels Workshop Programme**

09.00 - 09.30 Registration, coffee etc

09.30 – 09.40 Welcome and Opening

Background to the meeting - Brian O’Riordan, Secretary, ICSF Belgium Office

09.40 – 11.00

Round Table 1: CFP Reform, the Green Paper and Small-Scale Fisheries

The Opinion of the Committees on the CFP Review, M<sup>a</sup> Candelas Sánchez Miguel, rapporteur for the Committees opinion on the Green Paper.

Presentation on the "Reform of the CFP, small-scale fishing and coastal communities". DG Mar Official (20 minutes).

Questions and Discussion (30-40 minutes).

11.00 - 13.00

Round Table 2: Small-scale Fishing in the European Union - range and scope of activities

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch Break

14.00 – 15.30

Round Table 2: Management of Small-Scale Fisheries - examples of differentiated regimes

15.30 – 15.45 Coffee break

16.00 – 17.00

Round Table 3: Securing sustainable coastal communities: the role of small-scale fisheries

15.45 - 17.15

Discussion and information sharing

17.15 - 17.45 Conclusions and closure.

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