



## **Common Fisheries Policy Reform (CFP) in Europe: Small-scale fishers demand fair treatment, not protection.**

Brussels, Belgium, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The European Union's (EU) Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) discriminates unfairly against small-scale fisheries. A radical change of approach is therefore required in the CFP reform process to ensure that the social, economic and environmental services provided by this sector are recognised and valorised in the new regulation.

This was one of the key messages transmitted by the 70 participants who attended a workshop in Brussels organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) on CFP reform and small-scale fisheries, entitled "Common Fisheries Policy Reform in the European Union and Small-Scale Fisheries: Paving the way to sustainable livelihoods and thriving fishing communities" (<http://eussf.icsf.net/>).

Representing diverse small-scale fishing interests, NGOs, scientists, DG Mare officials and others, participants included small-scale fishing representatives and fishermen from Iceland, the Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands, Galicia, Cantabria, Asturias, Basque Country, the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of France, the South and South West of England, Wales, Ireland and the Netherlands. Women workers from the Spanish shellfish sector, gear riggers, French shellfish farmers, and collaborating spouses were also present.

"This is probably the first time that such a diverse group from Europe has met with the specific objective of discussing small-scale fisheries in the context of the CFP" observed Brian O'Riordan, Secretary of the ICSF Belgium Office, in his opening remarks. "This says a lot about the CFP's bias towards the larger-scale sectors, and the myopia at national, regional and European level towards the sector. Its time for policy makers and functionaries to open their eyes to the realities and significance of small-scale fishing in the European Union"

Xoan Lopez, Secretary of the Galician Federation of Fishermen's Cofrarias, emphasized that: "European fisheries policy must take full account of small-scale fisheries, because this sector is the only viable one, and the only one with any long term future. Deprived of its subsidies, the large scale-sector can't survive. But we are not here to wage war against other sectors; they have their problems as we have ours. Each sector must sort out its own problems in an appropriate way. Although, the official analysis of the Common Fisheries Policy does not include our perspectives, there is some hope. For once the Green Paper states that we are in need of special treatment. We have until December 31 to defend our position on this against pressure groups"

From Iceland, Arthur Bogason, President of the Small Boat Owners Association informed the gathering that: “We formed the Association of Small Boat Owners to fight against Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs). If we had not formed the Association, there would be no small boats fleet today. Although we lost the battle against ITQs, we won the war because our share of the quota has increased. It took the large trawler fleet only 44 months to buy up 70% of the quotas. Then, following the Human Rights Committee’s finding that the ITQ system contravened fisher’s human rights, the new Government responded by opening up the cod fishery in the summer months for hand lining and jigging to all vessels with licenses. The important thing is to define the rights of fishing communities and to convert these rights into laws”

Participants learned that in the UK, vessels under 10 metres include some 5,000 vessels, but this fleet only has access to 3% of the quota. Despite the significance of this fleet in fish landings and employment, over the years, the Government has ignored this sector and its importance, and refused to record its landings. So when the track record based quota system was introduced, this segment of the fleet lost out. They are now perusing their case in the courts.

It was further observed that small-scale fishing as a term is inadequate to describe the variety of artisanal, subsistence, beachcombing and gleaning, shellfish gathering, and semi-commercial small-scale fishing and gathering activities. Across the EU Member States, the terms artisanal, small scale, manual/shore based (“à pied”), petite pêche, have quite different and distinct meanings. These terms need to be understood and incorporated into the regulatory frameworks at the most appropriate levels.

The Green Paper makes no mention of women in fisheries, and Katia Frangoudes of the AKTEA European Women in Fisheries and Aquaculture insisted that: “the reform process must explicitly take account of the role of women in fisheries, and the services they provide to the fisheries sector and in the wider community. This must be reflected in the status accorded to them, as collaborating spouses, as economic actors, and through the social and economic services they provide”.

Small-scale fishing representatives now have until December 31<sup>st</sup> to have their say in the public debate on the reform process being organized by the European Commission. In 2010 the Commission will analyse and respond to the issues raised in this debate, before drafting the new regulation (Reformed CFP). This must be approved by the Council of Ministers (from Members States), and, if the Lisbon Treaty is adopted, by the European Parliament, prior to its adoption and introduction in 2012/13

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