

## Back to school

**The Patagonian fishworkers have recognized the value of educating and training themselves**

**I**n February 2000, artisanal fishworkers from Puerto Madryn, together with their families, started a series of training courses for the sector. These courses included resource biology, on-board and shore-based fish handling, quality control and business techniques, and using the Internet for marketing.

These courses were conducted within the framework of an agreement made between the Artisanal Fishworkers Association of Puerto Madryn, the National Patagonia Centre (CENPAT), and the Puerto Madryn Town Council. The educational aspects of the project were prepared by the Education Secretariat in the National Ministry of Labour.

The course on resource biology lasted three months, and classes were given in a collegiate form by researchers from CENPAT, with the training in each specialist subject being provided in simple language, with no deadline pressures. This allowed the sharing of knowledge between scientists and fishworkers; scientific knowledge and, in the case of fishworkers, empirical knowledge gained through experience.

This was a completely new experience for both parties. They discovered that the classroom and laboratory environs enabled them to, on the one hand, determine criteria that could be used to scientifically define species of commercial interest in Patagonia and that would be included in a future Manual of Patagonian Artisanal Fishing. On the other hand, it enabled the fishworkers to identify contacts for in-depth information on a particular species.

What is more, this training has enabled fishermen to be included in technical working groups and has provided the

technical information required from time to time by national researchers and administrators.

There is an ever-increasing need to generate information that provides a true picture of the state of fisheries resources, to avoid overfishing.

Such information also provides the basis for strategies and efficient management plans that ensure the sustainability of the resources. It also helps those who live from artisanal fishing to recognize the value of adopting a code of conduct for responsible fisheries.

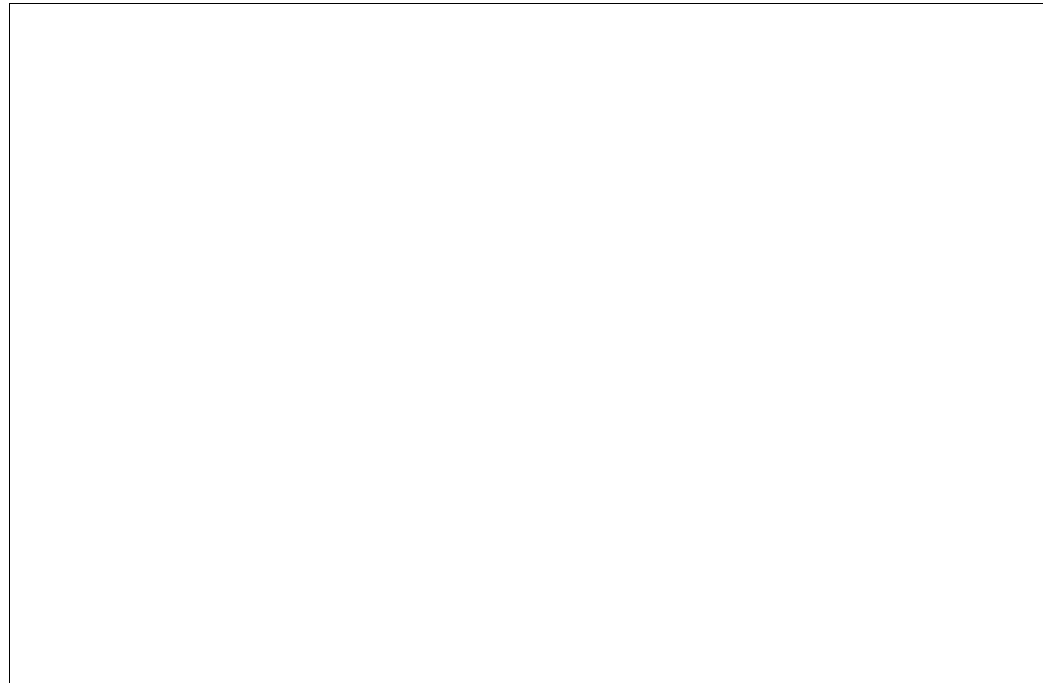
These courses have set an important precedent for training on artisanal fishing, in a country with around 5,000 km of coast.

Faced with the possibility of a massive transformation due to the industrial crisis, the fishworkers of Puerto Madryn have invested enormous efforts in training themselves and their families. This is to enable them to participate in the debates on setting the rules of the game for artisanal fishing, such as management and monitoring plans, and impart knowledge of laws that provide security to those who have always lived from artisanal fishing.

Some fishworkers have to travel 50 km to participate in the intensive, day-long classes, before returning to their homes on the coast.

### **Efforts rewarded**

But the effort has been rewarded, as they have learned about biology, the distribution of resources, about ecology, the classification of species, their anatomy and reproductive behaviour, etc. In the area of law, they have learned about the



existing national and provincial regulations, sanitation laws, etc.

The Patagonian fishworkers have recognized the value of educating and training themselves, so as to be able to defend their rights, and they are proud of having accepted the challenge of going to classes.

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