

News Round-up

March zone

The National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) organized a march through the state of Kerala in south India in late November to press for the implementation of new legislation designed to protect the country's coastal zones. Though several problems remain about interpretation and implementation of the law, the NFF feels that it is a good beginning.

Hawaiian restraint

Also begun around the same time was a series of public meetings by the Kahoolawe Island Reserve Commission on an ocean management plan which proposes to restrict fishing around the island of Kahoolawe

in Hawaii. The aim is to permit only those who live on the island- for educational or cultural purposes- to fish in adjacent waters for subsistence.

Reef grief

The US Agency for International Development has sanctioned a \$21 million Coastal Resources Management Project in

the Philippines to prevent the destruction of coral reefs by detonation dynamite and spraying cyanide to catch fish. The project will try to create a local coalition for sustainable management to preserve the coastal environment and fight forces earning money by destroying it.

Tuna battles

A fight of sorts also followed the meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), held recently in San Sebastian, Spain. Earlier, the US indicated that it may seek ICCAT approval of sanctions against non-ICCAT members Belize, Honduras and Panama for harvesting bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean Sea without regard to ICCAT guidelines. But Panama's Commerce Minister denied any violations. He said that Panamanian vessels were told in October 1996 that their registry would be cancelled if they fished for Atlantic bluefin tuna.

Chilly reception

Rejected on 21 November by Chile's Foreign Investment Committee was an application by a local fishing company to replace three small vessels with the world's largest factory trawler, the American *Monarch*,

owned by the American Seafoods company but registered in Norway. Greenpeace had protested the proposal

to use this 96.2-m surimi ship to harvest and process as much as 1,000 tonnes of fish daily off southern Chile.

Net solution

In Mississippi, US, the Commission on Marine Resources adopted a regulation requiring Mississippi fishermen to use nets made of degradable material after 1 January 1997. But the fishermen protest that such nets are not made in commercial quantities, that the proposed material is difficult to distinguish from non-degradable materials, and that costs are significantly higher than non-degradable nets.

Caviar, anyone?

The new year will perhaps see less of caviar. In mid-November, fishing industry representatives from Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan met as an international committee on Caspian Sea biological resources

and signed a protocol banning fishing for sturgeon in the Caspian Sea beginning in 1997. Sturgeon fishing will, however, be permitted in the lower reaches of the Volga and Ural Rivers.

Grim shrimps

The National Fisheries Institute joined the US government in appealing and seeking a stay of the October order by the US Court of International Trade that expanded the embargo on shrimp imports to the US. On 8 October, the Court had ordered the US government to prohibit shrimp imports from nations not certified under P.L. 101-162. Shrimp exporting countries are required to install Turtle Excluder Devices in their trawlers.

The court ruling rejected the argument that shrimps harvested in aquaculture operations or by methods not harmful to sea turtles should not have been embargoed. It held that only an embargo on all shrimp imports would provide the incentive for nations to get certified.

At the same time, four Asian nations (India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand) filed a case against the US with the World Trade Organization (WTO) relating to this ban.

These nations have asked the US for formal consultations on the issue. The US had 10 days to reply and 30 days from 8 October 1996 to begin consultations. If no solution is reached within 30 days of consultations, a full WTO dispute panel will convene.

Spare the fish

Excluders are also in demand elsewhere. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council in

the US has heard a hearing on proposed regulations requiring shrimpers to use fish excluder or by catch reduction devices when trawling in federal offshore waters. The aim is to minimize the capture of immature red snapper and other finfish species.

World tribunal

International disputes relating to the ocean and seabed can now be resolved in a new forum: the UN's International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. On 18 October, 21 judges were sworn in at Hamburg, **Germany** to initiate the tribunal.

Hake take

Later that month, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources approved a

request by **Australia** that it be allowed to begin fishing for black hake next summer in waters near its Heard Island territory.

No cod

The Russian Fishing Committee adopted a resolution recommending that fishing companies in **Russia** suspend any commercial fishery dealing with Iceland, due to Iceland's alleged unregulated harvest of cod from international waters in the central Barents Sea. Despite protests from Norway and Russia.

And no pods too?

A fishery organization in **Morocco** has called for urgent measures to protect cephalopods (octopus, squid and cuttlefish) from extinction due to alleged overfishing in Moroccan waters by foreign fleets.

It says that average catch rates were only half of what they were a year ago.

Good read

How the alarming decline in biodiversity-agricultural, aquatic and livestock-can be. Reversed in addressed by Intermediate Technology, UK in three recently published booklets on 'dynamic diversity', reports Brian O'Riordan of Intermediate Technology.

These describe how farmers, livestock keepers and fisherfolk around the world are

working to safeguard such biodiversity.

The booklets describe conservation activities and propose policy changes needed to halt the decline of biodiversity of food species, the very basis of food security.

Another good one

The same topic is also tackled in a new publication, titled

Biodiversity in the seas: Implementing the Convention on *Biological Diversity in Marine and Coastal Habitats*.

Jointly published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) of the US, it is written in a non-technical style.

It is meant for a variety of users, from national and international policymakers to local and regional managers of marine living resources.

Cyanide danger

Beware the waters off Manila Bay in the **Philippines**. Officials announced that cyanide appeared to be the cause of massive 30-tonne fish kill observed early last month. The source of

the cyanide was unknown.

Opening up...

Markets in **South Korea** will now open up to imports of 31 additional fisheries and agricultural products this year, within the framework of WTO. From 1 July, products like frozen pollack, sole and hairtail have been allowed to enter South Korea. About 95.9 percent of the Korean market has thus been opened to fishery and agricultural products.

...and dwindling

Since 1990, **Sierra Leone** has seen a significant drop in the number of large-scale fishing vessels, partly due to the reluctance to sign fishing agreements with the erstwhile USSR and the EU. The number of registered fishing vessels peaked in 1987 at 309 and then dropped drastically to 74 in 1994.

But this has helped the artisanal sector which targets the same species. This sector has reported a recovery in fish stocks and a rise in the number of fishermen and outboard motors.

Oops, spilt oil!

Over 300 fishing vessels gathered near Chinese Petroleum's offshore oil port at Kaohsiung, **Taiwan** on 20 September 1996 to protest slow action to compensate them for damages from an August 1996 oil spill. Fishermen claimed that the US\$ 8.36 million compensation payment schedule was not being met.