

No Time for Dissension

World Fisheries Day was celebrated at Lorient, France, with a two-day conference that gave hope and optimism for reforming the basics of fisheries management

On 20 and 21 November 2009, Pêche et Développement, the non-governmental organization based in Lorient, France, which is a fishing and development collective, organized celebrations at the famous Brittany port to mark the World Fisheries Day. Set against the context of the current reform of Europe's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the collaborations and synergies found in the sector gave an optimistic and hopeful tone to the debates that animated the two days of conferences.

World Fisheries Day dates to 21 November 1997 when the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers

fisheries", said Ben-Yami. According to him, such management is founded on an obsolete and inappropriate science, which fishermen have absolutely no means to challenge. This is due to the prevalence of mathematics and exact science to the detriment of other kinds of knowledge.

According to Ben-Yami, scientific fisheries management suffers from two major handicaps: firstly, it considers fishing as the only factor causing the fluctuation of stocks; secondly, it is based on models that isolate species instead of considering the interactions that exist between them. According to him, that makes it an "ecologically absurd management" that takes no account of the ecosystem approach.

A strong promoter of professional knowledge and knowhow, Ben-Yami emphasizes the need to consider fishers as experts in management matters. He is equally critical of the pre-eminence of quantitative, often "speculative" and "fantasist" scientific data, as well as its manipulation. "Since the invention of the computer, people believe that statistics alone suffice to evaluate fish stocks. It's more comfortable than going to take a look to see what's happening in the sea", he concluded.

Empirical knowledge

The discussions that followed brought to light the elements essential for an effective partnership between fishers and scientists. Benoît Guérin, Secretary of the South Western Regional Advisory Council (SWRAC), underlined the need to formalize the empirical knowledge of professionals in order for this to be recognized, and to confront scientists with their contradictions. André le Berre, President of the Brittany

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—Menakhem Ben-Yami

(WFF) met in New Delhi, India. Annual celebrations are held on this day to highlight the social and economic importance of artisanal fishing in all the regions of the world. Each year, this day highlights both the solidarity existing between fisher associations and the current challenges facing the sector.

Day one, dedicated to a "Critique of Scientific Fisheries Management", was introduced by Menakhem Ben-Yami, former fisherman, ecologist and expert on Israeli fisheries. Ben-Yami highlighted the inadequacy of the rarely questioned bioeconomic approach to fisheries management. "Managers advised by scientists never question the basic fundamentals of

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Regional Maritime Fisheries Committee (CRPMEM), stressed that such a development would require, above all, that the image of fishers as 'pillagers' and 'liars' be abolished. René Pierre Chever, Secretary of the Guilvinec Local Sea Fisheries Committee (CLPMEM), explained about the lack of confidence between fishers and scientists. All agreed to work to reinforce collaboration, for a management system closer to the realities of the sector.

A roundtable was organized with the main theme, "Fishers Are Also Experts". Xoan Lopez, Secretary of the Galician Federation of Cofradias, was the first to intervene. He came back to the need for a deep reform of fisheries management, putting the accent on the expertise of the professionals. According to Charles Braine, fisheries specialist for the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the objective of collaboration between scientists and fishers is to come up with systems other than total allowable catches (TACs) and individual transferable quotas (ITQs), regarded by fishers as a benchmark that is poorly adapted to living resources. "We must continue along these lines, which come from the bottom up, and try to establish long-term management plans", he concluded.

At the end of the first day, Alain le Sann from Pêche et Développement commented on the generalized apprehension shown by fishermen with regard to scientists. "We are embarked on collective reflection", he concluded.

The second day's theme was "Responsible Fishery Initiatives, Developed by Fishers, for Another Kind of Common Fisheries Policy". Danièle le Sauce, President of Pêche et Développement, introduced the day with the following words: "For too long, fishers have delegated. For too long, decisions have been taken on their behalf. The best way to take their initiatives into account is when it is they themselves who valorize them."

Bastien Malgrange, responsible for research at Pêche et Développement, presented "Responsible Fishing Initiatives" initiated by fishers along the Brittany coast. Amongst these "good practices", both individual and

collective, we find the management of scallop fishing in the Bay of Saint Brieuc, and the creation of the Iroise Marine Park, as well as the improvement of selectivity in the lobster fishery in the Bay of Biscay.

Malgrange emphasized the key role of "initiative takers" and "innovation transmitters" in

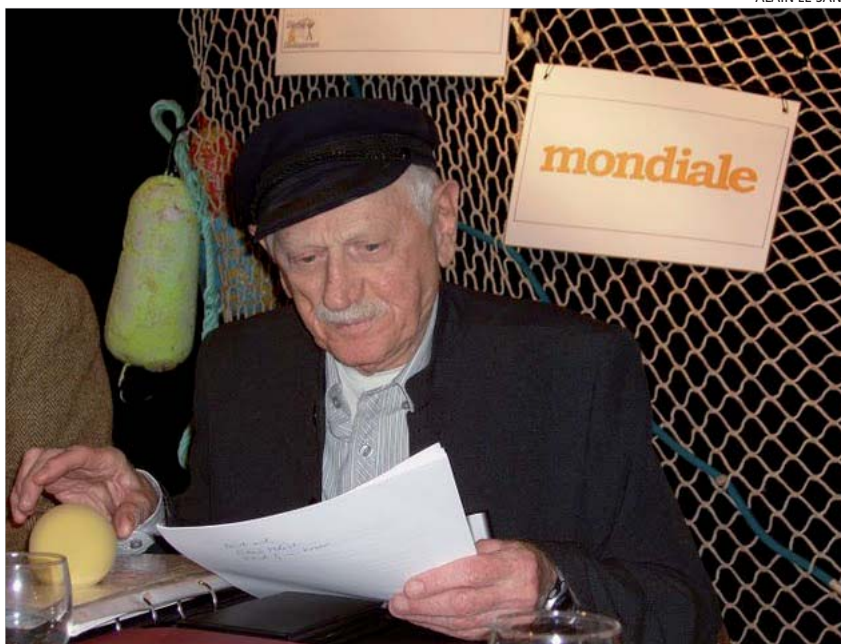
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—Charles Braine

establishing responsible and sustainable activities. He also underscored the need, at the local level, for an evolution towards decisiontaking oriented towards the long term. "Such advances in management systems are incompatible with policies that favour globalization and uniformity", he concluded.

It is with this perspective that Romain Verger, a line fisher from Ouessant, presented his work for valorizing products caught by line fishing. He expressed his fears about the use of ITQs or other instruments synonymous with the transfer of

ALAIN LE SANN



Menakhem Ben-Yami, fisheries adviser, Israel, at a workshop in Lorient, France, discussing the elements needed for an effective partnership between fishers and scientists

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resource access rights, and denounced the absurd profit margins taken by the distribution chains. Calling for qualitative and quantitative approaches, he underlined the ineffectiveness of the current CFP: “The system of subsidies has allowed the fishery sector to be drip fed, but with deeper reflection, it is clear that this is going to fail”.

Katia Frangoudes, member of the AKTEA network and researcher at the European Institute of Marine Studies (IUEM) in Brest, broached the subject of women’s role in fishing

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communities. According to her, this role remains particularly unrecognized, including by the fishermen themselves. In effect, the tasks undertaken by collaborative spouses, and even their roles in processing and sales, are often relegated to secondary importance. The issue of gender is, in effect, rarely brought up in strategic and operational plans of Member States, as in the case of the European Commission’s Green Paper on the reform of the CFP. She advocated greater recognition for women’s groups in the world of fishing,

as well as affording them greater participation in the decision-taking processes.

The subject of the fishermen’s *prud’homies* and good practices in the Mediterranean was described by Elisabeth Tempier from the Mediterranean antenna of Pêche et Développement. These traditional management institutions have experienced a series of upsets in recent decades that point to an end of the logic of sharing that characterized the 1960s. This territorialized and democratic system, founded on community principles of respect for people and resources, faces an expansionist and deregulated system, based on individual freedom for investment and innovation.

Tempier explored the options available for the future: “The dilemma that we face today, and which is posed by the Green Paper and on which we are reflecting, is to know which model of development to choose”. She selected three possibilities: integration of fishing in the global market for the benefit of large companies; the ring fencing by large environmental groups of the resources on which fishing communities depend; or the integration of fishing into a regional development plan. According to Tempier, this third possibility seems the most able to reconcile the socioeconomic objectives of fishing communities with the needs for environmental sustainability (see “In the Balance”, page 24, *SAMUDRA Report No. 54*).

Tempier underlined the positive potential of such regional fisheries integration in the Mediterranean and the role of *prud’homies* in the integrated use of coastal areas, with the participation of fishers as well as the tourism sector and other users of the coastal area.

Fisheries management


Menakhem Ben-Yami made a second intervention, this time about the issue that fisheries management becomes ineffective if it is perceived by the fishermen as erroneous or false: “Fisheries management, instead of being conceived with the participation

of fishers, is essentially conceived through a 'big brother' approach”.

He contrasted two systems of fisheries management: the one based on “output” and the other on “input”. According to him, the former (based on quotas) favours concentration in the hands of large companies but without assuring that the resource is safeguarded, while the latter (based on inputs) leaves artisanal fishing some margin to manoeuvre.

On this matter, Ben-Yami mentioned the work of Elinor Ostrom, the 2009 Nobel Prize winner for economics, by clarifying that “numerous coastal fisheries have been well managed by local communities who control access, the fishing rights and means, etc. Often they do better than the State or privatized systems”.

The debates following this presentation provided the occasion to put the accent back on the need for decentralized fisheries management. Alain Cadec, European Deputy and Vice President of the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament, argued that territorialization has an essential role to play in community policies, with respect to the particularities of each region. Xoán López considered that a differentiated management for each local group was a basic condition for designing the fisheries of the future and allowing the application of appropriate management measures towards 2020.

World Fisheries Day 2010 was closed on a positive note by the Chair, Danièle le Sauce. The dialogue opened up by the process of CFP reform allowed professionals, from both the industrial and artisanal sectors, to reflect on reforming the basics of fisheries management. “There is not sufficient time for dissension”, the Chair concluded. 

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—Elisabeth Tempier

For more



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ICSF's Website on Small-scale Fisheries and EU CFP Reform

www.peche-dev.org
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