

# News Round-up

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## ***Supertrawler ahoy!***

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The world's biggest-capacity fishing ship has just been launched.

Atlantic Dawn, 144 metres long and sporting a 24.3 metre beam, is a midwater trawl and purse-seiner that belongs to Irish skipper and businessman Kevi McHugh of Atlantic Dawn Ltd.

The supertrawler cost US\$65 million and was built by the Umoe Sterkoder shipyard in Norway. Atlantic Dawn is the biggest and most powerful in a trio of 140-metre plus new-generation pelagic freezer stern trawlers being put into service this year. The other two, from Spanish shipyards, are for Dutch owners.

Atlantic Dawn is expected to catch sardinella, mackerel and horse mackerel in West African waters, starting off Mauritania, fishing under the new European Union fishing arrangements.

The supertrawler has a freezing capacity of about 350 tonnes per day and can carry around 7,000 tonnes of fish.

## ***Far too many***

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Overcapacity is still the main problem facing the **European Union's** fishing industry, says the EU fisheries commissioner Franz Fischler. His comments came in the wake of the announcement of a Green Paper which discusses options for the future of a sustainable Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), reports Fishing News International.

Fischler said that EU fleet reduction programmes have not proven sufficiently effective in tackling "this scourge of most fishing industries." He also expressed concern at the weakness of the implementation of CFP measures in the Mediterranean.

## ***Hot Chile***

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The **European Union** (EU) has said it will demand a process of consultation in the World Trade Organization (WTO) to resolve the differences caused by the ban that **Chile**

has imposed on the use of its ports to unload the catches

made by the community's industrial fleet on the high seas.

The decision comes on the heels of a study which, Brussels says, proved that the Chilean measures were incompatible with the policies of the multilateral organization. The Chilean government defended its position on the grounds of marine resource conservation in the framework of the Law of the Sea.

The EU's high-seas fleet has caused the overexploitation of the swordfish fishery, a species which is both highly trans-zonal and highly migratory. This has badly affected the Chilean artisanal fisheries sector. EU officials say the aim is to remove the restrictions in force since 1991, which prevent vessels, mainly Spanish, from trans-shipping swordfish catches in

Chilean ports. The EU argues that environmental concerns in a commercial context must be resolved multilaterally, and not through arbitrary or discriminatory unilateral measures.

## ***Pushed out***

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Trang's provincial fishery office in **Thailand** has launched a programme to encourage push-net fishermen to use less destructive and more environmentally friendly fishing gear, reports the Bangkok Post.

Provincial fishery chief Suporn Suthanurak said he hoped all the province's 150 push-nets would be gone by the year's end. He would not say what cash incentives the fishermen would be offered, but said the authorities would not enforce harsh measures.

Environmentalists, however, have said that fishermen who maintained sound practices were being unfairly treated. Pisit Charnsoh chairman of Yadfon Association, said

push-nets should be banned unconditionally. He said the money should go to activities which improve the ecological balance, such as mangrove reforestation and education.

### **Pesky for the fish**

Pescanova, the multinational fishing and processing giant based in **Spain**, has become the world's largest fishing vessel operator, following its acquisition of a

majority shareholding in financially troubled Pescafina.

Pescanova, which has operations worldwide, is now said to corner a 65 per cent share of the Spanish frozen food market. Pescafina, which was fishing on quotas in **Iran**, **Namibia** and **Cuba**, fell into financial difficulties over two years ago when a joint venture partner went bankrupt. It reportedly owed 15,000 million pesetas to 20 banks.

### **New worry?**

A new deal renewing the Euro-Ivorian

fisheries agreement between the European Commission and the **Ivory Coast** will allow an increased number of EU vessels to fish for tuna off the Ivory Coast. The permitted tonnage, however, will remain at 8,500 a year.

The agreement, which lasts until June 2003, also features a high level — 71.3 per cent — of EU financial compensation to the Ivory Coast. This will be used to promote scientific and technical programmes, and monitoring and control. The previous agreement had only 20 per cent as financial compensation.

### **Go, Goa, gone**

A High Court at Panaji, Goa, **India** recently put its foot down on violations of its trawl ban order. It suspended the licences of all trawlers registered with the Fisheries Department of the Goa government, sealed the use of the seven official jetties by the trawlers for unloading their fish catch, and directed the Goa government to publicize its order in the newspapers so that the public is made aware that there exists a ban on all mechanized fishing activities till 15 August.

Earlier, a local citizen had written a letter to

the High Court complaining that the government had reduced the ban on fishing in the State of Goa from 90 days to 54 days during the monsoon period, despite full knowledge that this was the breeding period for the economically important varieties of fish including mackerel and sardines.

The petitioner pleaded that such indiscriminate fishing would impact negatively on fish stocks and this would affect his right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. He also stated that fish protein is the principal staple food of the coastal population of Goa. Traditional fishermen would also be deprived of their livelihood.

The High Court converted the letter into a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) and directed the Goa government including the Chief Secretary, the Director of Fisheries and the country's premier ocean research institution, the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), to file affidavits. The Goa Government was unable to produce any documentation in support of its decision to reduce the ban from 90 days to 54 days.

The NIO, however, filed a fairly detailed affidavit in which it informed the court that it was of the opinion that the ban on the fishing season from 1 June to 31 August could offer a degree of protection to several varieties of fish including mackerel and sardines.

### **A mega event**

The World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF) will hold its Constituent Assembly from 2 to 6 October 2000 in Loctudy, France, when it will be formally giving itself a constitution.

The three-year old WFF was founded on 21 November 1997 at a meeting in New Delhi, when representatives of small-scale fish harvesters from Asia, Africa, South America and North America came together to battle the reckless plunder of the seas by the world's large industrialized fleets. WFF has a registered membership of 28 fishworkers/harvesters' organizations.