

News Round-up

Deal sealed

After the fish war of March, it now seems to be time for peacemaking. Canada and the European Union (EU) have signed a deal over turbot fishing and has got it endorsed by the North-west Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO).

The deal will allow EU fishermen, mostly Spanish, to catch 11,000 tonnes of turbot in a disputed zone off Newfoundland, outside Canada's territorial waters. To ensure there is no cheating, NAFO will use on-board observers as well as satellites to monitor the agreement.

Chinese zeal...

Monitoring its new venture is China's biggest fishing company, Dalian Ocean Fisheries, which hopes to use New Zealand as its base to explore deep-sea fishing

opportunities in the South Pacific. Impressed by the technology available in New Zealand, the Chinese company has tied up with Seafresh Fisheries of Lower Hutt to develop new commercial deep-sea species. The Chinese firm thinks this joint

venture may turn out to be the biggest of its operations outside China.

...keeps growing

But China's biggest existing foreign joint venture in fisheries is the Zhoushan Industrial Company Ltd, based in the island city of Zhoushan in the east China Sea off Zhejiang province. It was formed last December between the Thoushan No.2 Ocean Fisheries Company and the Maruha Corporation of Japan.

The new company is now racing to keep up with the ever-growing market demand abroad. During the first quarter of this year, it exported us\$15 million worth of marine products to Japan, almost half of the company's total exports last year. Nearly 80 per cent of these comprised processed products such as shredded squid, fish meat sausages and fish slices.

Recently, businessmen from the US, Spain, New Zealand and Hong Kong have also come knocking on the Chinese company's doors for its products.

Flying out

Also on the joint venture route is Okinawa based Shonan Fishing Company, which specializes in tuna products. Along with the National Fisheries Corporation of Micronesia, it has launched a new company called Pacific Islands Airflight Corporation. This

company will charter flights to transport tuna from Micronesia to Guam, where the tuna will be packaged for

export to Japanese markets. The new operation is expected to cut transportation costs by almost 30 per cent.

Sorry, no fishing

To cut off chances of a further fall in fish stocks, Mauritania has banned all fishing in its waters during October. No fishing boats, not even local ones, are allowed to fish in Mauritanian territorial waters.

Half of Mauritania's export income comes from fishing, which makes up 10 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product. Total fish production mainly squid, octopus and shrimps dropped from 479,824 tonnes in 1993 to 296,627 tonnes in 1994. This decline is due to dwindling fish stocks, say officials. To allow fish stocks a chance to recover, Mauritania imposes similar bans occasionally. This year the ban coincides with a row between Morocco and the EU about fish quotas.

Poisoned dead

A depletion of a different kind occurred in Bulgaria where two

tonnes of dead fish were found floating on a 30-km stretch of the Maritsa River last month.

An official at the Regional Environment Inspection Service suspected that the fish were poisoned by pollutants from Bulgaria's largest chemical fertilizer plant, Neochim.

Purses fatten

Getting larger in size is the Philippines' distant-water purse-seine fleet. There are now around 15 seiners in operation, mostly second-hand vessels from South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Australia. Each of the three largest purse-seining companies, viz, RBL Fishing Company, RD Fishing Company and MAR Fishing Company, operates three or four 400-tonne class seiners.

With skipjack and tuna resources dwindling in the coastal waters of the

Philippines, some companies have begun joint venture operations to fish in Indonesia waters.

Clashes at sea

Meanwhile, the cancellation of a fishing agreement between companies of Burma and Thailand have led to clashes at sea.

New Light of Burma, a Burmese English language daily, reported that two Burmese fishermen

were killed and 24 declared missing after a clash.

The paper claimed that the agreement between the fishing company and the military junta had been violated by the Thai fishing crew.

Tuna hunting

Also chasing stocks of tuna are purse-seiners from **Ecuador**. With the collapse of pelagic sardine resources, industrial fishermen have been lately buying tuna purse-seiners of up to 1200 tonnes capacity.

They use these to catch tuna stocks, which are then supplied to the country's leading canneries, like Bumble Bee and Star-Kist.

Greening fields

The government of **Cambodia** isn't buying the new craze for shrimp farms.

It feels that the country's dwindling mangrove forest ecosystem is being threatened by Thai-financed Cambodian shrimp farmers who wish to cash in on the growing appetite among Cambodians and Thais for shrimp.

A clutch of Thai businessmen recently began financing over 100 shrimp farms in Koh Kong, Cambodia's most southwesterly province, just 10 minutes by speedboat from Thailand.

Cambodia's environment minister said that an investigation by his ministry showed that the shrimp farms had expanded into the mangrove areas.

As a result, the government has ordered the Ministry of Agriculture to temporarily stop issuing licences for shrimp farming.

Massive study

After almost a decade of work, the first comprehensive inventory of the world's most biologically important marine sites is ready.

In the four-volume report, the World Bank, the World Conservation Union and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority of **Australia** concluded that marine resources are at risk world-wide.

They have called on international financing organizations and governments to fund a comprehensive plan to protect and manage marine sites.

The study identified 1,306 protection zones. Some of these are already subject to national or regional conservation efforts, but many are not. Of these, the study chose 155 as marine protection areas.

Fish for food

International understanding will hopefully be on display at Kyoto from 4 to 9 December when the Government of **Japan**, in collaboration with FAD, organizes the International Conference on the Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Food Security.

The official hope is that delegates will agree, possibly in the form of a declaration, on a set of policy options or strategies meant to ensure the sustainable contribution of fisheries to food security.

The conference will address ways in which all nations can co-operate to secure the supply of fish as food, while respecting cultural differences.

Ruling supreme

Respecting the sustained campaign against shrimp culture in the coastal areas of **India** was the country's Supreme Court.

It passed an order on 24 August asking all coastal states not to grant long-term licences or permits for aquaculture farms on agricultural land.

A couple of months ago the court had observed that the practice of drawing groundwater for aquafarming should not be allowed in these states, in order to make sure that villagers got enough drinking water.

The apex court's order comes in the wake of a long and forceful campaign. This was

spearheaded by the People's Alliance Against Shrimp Industry, a loosely knit grouping of representatives of fishworkers, environmentalists and consumer activists.

Special edition

As a way of life, does fishing have a future? Everywhere, livelihoods that have sustained coastal communities for millennia are under threat from mismanagement, resource depletion, pollution and population pressure.

To focus on these problems that confront poor producers in coastal and near-shore areas, ITDG's *AT Journal* has just brought out a special edition.

For copies, contact Kimberly Clarke at IT Publications,

London at Fax: ++ 44 (0)171 4362013 or e-mail: itpubs@gn.apc.org

Adopted

On 4 August over 100 countries finally adopted a path-breaking legal agreement to prevent international conflicts over fishing on the high seas and conserve fish stocks.

This was the culmination to the process of the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, which began in April 1993.

The agreement is expected to be opened for signing in early December.

It will come into force after it has been ratified by 30 countries, a process which could take around two years. In the meanwhile, several countries will possibly begin to implement the agreement provisionally, in particular its conservation and management measures.