

# News Round-up

## **Easy subsidy**

The **European Commission** (EC) has taken a new decision in order to implement the provisions included in the 2002 Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

This time around, the aim is to simplify fishery-aid concessions to Member States, provided that the subsidy does not jeopardize or threaten the conservation of species. This rule would take effect on 1 November.

In a press release, Franz Fischler, the commissioner for the EU Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, expressed his view of a "balanced and coherent norm that establishes simpler and quicker procedures while guaranteeing the control required to ensure compliance with regulations."

This simplification established by the European executive covers the categories that "have never been researched by the

EC," namely the promotion or publicity of fish products, producers' associations, protection and development of aquatic resources, innovative measures and technical assistance.

Exemptions also include equipping fishing ports, scrapping fishing vessels, socio-economic measures, investments in the transformation or commercialization of fishing products, as well as aquaculture and inland waters.

## **No, not here**

**Argentina** has followed Brazil in disallowing the fishery fleet of the European Union (EU) to gain access to national waters by virtue of the treaty the EU negotiates with Mercosur countries (Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay).

Overexploitation of resources is the main reason for rejecting the European request. "Our ocean is over exploited and we can not receive new players," Miguel Campos, Head of the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Foods, pointed out.

A 1994 agreement with the EU allowed

large vessels from the Spanish fleet to enter Argentine waters, exercising great pressure on the hake (*Merluccius hubbsi*), the nation's main resource.

## **Shrimp shrink**

The US has slapped tariffs on shrimp imports from China and Vietnam, fuelling fears that shrimp prices could jump this month. The US Commerce Department ruled that China and Vietnam have been dumping their products in the US market at unfair prices.

The proposed tariffs range from just under 8 per cent to nearly 113 per cent and are expected to take effect in about a week. In total, tariffs could affect about \$2.3 billion in annual shrimp trade.

The decision to apply large punitive tariffs cheered hard-pressed US shrimpers, but could anger processors, restaurants and consumers who have made the low-priced shellfish the nation's most popular seafood.

A decision will be made later this month on whether duties also should be imposed on shrimp from Thailand, Brazil, Ecuador and India.

The ruling "is a critical step on the road to recovery for tens of thousands of fishermen, farmers and processors devastated by the massive volume of dumped Chinese and Vietnamese shrimp," Eddie Gordon, president of the Southern Shrimp Alliance, said in a statement.

The trade group, with members in eight southern States of the US, claims the dumping halved the value of the US shrimp harvest between 2000 and 2002, from \$1.25 billion to \$560 million, as domestic producers were forced to respond to the imports' lower prices.

"This is going to result in immediately higher prices within the month," said Wally Stevens, president of the American Seafood Distributors Association, a trade group opposed to import duties. Stevens said his group will continue to argue against the tariffs as the US International Trade Commission considers final penalties. That decision is expected in early January.

Stevens said the reason that Asian exporters can deliver a cheaper product is not because of illegal

trade practices, but because they can raise shrimp on highly efficient farms. The United States has a colder climate, so Americans must catch shrimp in the wild, burning up expensive boat fuel to do so.

### **Women's network**

Women with interests in all aspects of the fishing industry in Europe have called for the formation of a North Sea Women's Network. The women were attending a two-day conference at Peterhead in the northeast of Scotland to discuss the changing role of women in fishing communities.

The conference came at a time when the first of the new regional advisory councils—the one covering the North Sea—is getting off the ground. Each of the new councils will require one member of its 24-strong executive committee to represent women's interests.

Lea Verstraete, director of structural policy in the European Commission's fisheries division, told delegates that although equal opportunities are enshrined in community

principles, in reality there was under-representation of women when it comes to a decision-making role. "We need to build on this," she said. Regional advisory councils should provide an important way of helping this process.

### **Tonkin training**

Vietnam will train fishermen on how to recognize the demarcation lines of the Tonkin Gulf, as well as the legally applicable limits of different maritime areas.

The Tonkin Gulf has been demarcated along 21 points, with geographic co-ordinates determined in the agreement between Vietnam and China, reached on 30 June, on the delimitation of the territorial sea, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf.

Previously, disputes were common in the Tonkin Gulf because of undefined territories, leading to the arrests of many fishing vessels and fishermen from both countries.

In addition, the agreement on fisheries co-operation establishes a buffer zone three nautical miles wide from the demarcation line on each side and ten nautical miles long from the Pei Lun river mouth. Small fishing vessels of both sides are allowed to pass through the buffer

zone to the agreed fishing areas.

### **Seahorses down**

When the impotence drug Viagra was launched in 1998, few people could have foreseen its impact on the seahorse—the peculiar-looking and sexually ambiguous member of the *Hippocampus* genus.

Seahorses have for 600 years been used

in traditional Chinese medicine as a cure for impotence, served up in rice wine, mixed up raw with herbs or dished up in soup as a source of potency and virility. The arrival of Viagra appears to have spurred a huge increase in demand for impotence remedies using seahorses as a cheaper alternative.

Twenty-five million seahorses a year are now being traded around the world—64 percent more than in the mid-1990s—and environmentalists are increasingly concerned that the booming trade in seahorses is putting the creatures at risk.

Seahorses were recently added to the list of protected species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and

Flora (CITES), meaning all 166 member nations will be required to regulate the cross-border trade in seahorses and prohibit the trade in any specimen under 10 cm in length.

### **Trawl gift**

Around 15 of the sea-worthy 50 Indian fishing craft captured by the Sri Lanka Navy in the island's territorial waters over the past two-and-half months will be handed over to needy Sri Lankan fishermen, according to a decision of the Minister of Fisheries, Chandrasena Wijesing. These fishing craft are 40-50-ft wooden trawlers made in Tamil Nadu. The engines of some

trawlers are good and the hulls of others, in serviceable condition.

India enforces a seasonal ban on trawling by deep-sea vessels during the monsoons. In addition, Rameswaram District in Tamil Nadu has banned fishing on three days of every week. On such days, Indian trawlers are said to come in hundreds into Sri Lankan waters, often bulldozing Sri Lankan fishing craft and cutting the nets of local fishermen.