



# An ambitious European Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy

## Securing a future for fishermen through efficient management of fish stocks

Common Position of Aquitaine, Lower Normandy, Brittany, Pays-de-la-Loire and Poitou-Charentes regions

### Executive Summary

There is a need to **maintain the CFAP** (Common Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy) with **additional financial resources** (Common Market Organisation and European Fisheries Fund) in order to **structure the sector more efficiently** (strengthening of Producers' Organisations) as well as to **protect the internal market**.

**Multi-level governance must remain in place** but the **Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) need to be strengthened** and the Regions must participate more actively in the RACs in order to enable an **ecosystemic management** of fish stocks, **structured on the basis of each fishing ground** at the most relevant level of each Maritime Basin.

Fishing and aquaculture can only be planned efficiently in the framework of an **Integrated Maritime Policy**, since both activities interact with the overall economic, social and environmental context.

These sectors must be able to **modernise** (by training **young people** and developing the **fishing vessel of the future**) in full coherence with a **sustainable management of resources**.

### Main points developed in the Common Position

#### **1. Governance**

- a. Maintain the CFAP with increased financial resources (Common Market Organisation and European Fisheries Fund);
- b. Strengthen the role of the RACs, which should shift from an advisory role to an increased decision-making role – particularly in relation to managing fish stocks – with the active participation of the Regions; furthermore, move towards stronger governance at the Maritime Basin level. The European Institutions (European Council) should continue to define the intervention framework;
- c. Maintain and strengthen the EFF. To this end, public funding is essential.

Financial assistance should be provided to modernise the fleet and equipment, promote transparency and market organisation, and further develop research activities.

Strengthen Producer Organisations (POs), who should continue to be primarily responsible for the initial placing of the product on the market.

## 2. Resources

- a. Fish stocks are a public good which should remain under public control;
- b. Improve knowledge and strengthen the dialogue between scientists and fishermen: co-expertise;
- c. Concerning the allocation of fishing rights:
  - Develop a quota distribution system for each fishing ground, to be managed at Maritime Basin level – Importance of an ecosystemic approach;
  - If the TAC and quota system is maintained, then:
    - i. Maintain relative stability;
    - ii. A clear legal definition of individual transferable quotas (ITQs) by the Institutions;
    - iii. Quotas not to be traded as marketable commodities;
    - iv. Proposal for a mixed model combining a quota system and fishing vessels operating under licence (fishing grounds within 12-mile zone);
    - v. Review of the tonnage criterion.
- d. Introduction of fisheries environmental management measures (FEMMs).
- e. Place fisheries at the centre of the Integrated Maritime Policy. Adoption of an integrated approach by linking the CFAP to environmental policies, introducing harmonised and transparent monitoring systems, and effectively managing the marine space so as to meet the needs of different users (transport operators, energy, tourism, etc.);

## 3. Markets

- a. The CFAP must protect the European internal market (from low-quality cheap imports which do not comply with sustainable management criteria);
- b. Common Market Organisation (CMO): Market regulation instruments must be kept in place and financial support must be strengthened.
- c. Provide support for the structuring of different segments as a priority objective of the CMO, particularly for POs in relation to the initial marketing of the products and the development and establishment of quality standards at EU level. Enable producers to obtain more added value.

## 4. Aquaculture

Enable its development, taking into account the specificities of each type of production and adopting an integrated approach (use of marine space, environmental issues, etc.)

## **Introduction**

Since 1983, the European Union's fish stocks have been managed under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The CFP is still today – together with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – one of the most “communitarised” policies. It has repeatedly been reformed in the course of its history, with the latest version dating back to 2002. Its main regulations, which concern the management of fish stocks and the fishing fleet, will expire in 2012. Thus, the stage is set for further reforms of the European fisheries and aquaculture sector.

This reform – the initial elements of which are outlined in a Green Paper – will provide an opportunity to discuss a number of issues that have recurrently been raised by stakeholders in the sector for the past twenty years or so: how to manage a live resource which is not unlimited; how to adapt the fleet to the actual catch potential; how to organise the professionals working in the sector; how best to market the products; governance issues, etc.

Fishing consists in using natural resources without directly managing the renewal of the resources, while the resources used in aquaculture are the result of a planned breeding process. Therefore, these two segments of the fisheries sector do not face the same kind of constraints concerning resources. We will therefore deal with them separately.

Today the fisheries sector is confronted by several major problems: It requires particularly heavy investments, which makes access to it difficult; operating costs are also very high and are even showing a tendency to increase; the sector exploits a resource that is being weakened by environmental problems and climate change, and thoughtful management is required to preserve the fish stocks; and, lastly, fishermen exert very little control on the way in which their products are marketed. In order to find solutions to the problems experienced by the fisheries sector, policies are required to address all these different aspects simultaneously.

Furthermore, while the fisheries sector provides products that are essential to a balanced diet, it suffers from a poor public image. It can in fact be seen in a negative light by public opinion, which sometimes considers fishing operators to be irresponsible. Yet fishermen earn their livelihood from the sea and are therefore the first to be affected by the structural upheavals and uncertainties experienced in the sector. They will also be the first to benefit from a more sustainable fisheries sector.

In order to meet all these challenges, we must view the fisheries sector in a broader context – that of an Integrated Maritime Policy capable of reconciling the interests of all users of the marine environment, including not only fisheries and aquaculture operators but also all the actors involved in transport, defence, tourism, water sports and the production of energy. Indeed, the problems currently faced by fisheries foreshadow those that may soon be faced by the whole of humankind in a context of continuing demographic growth and exploitation of the limited resources of a finite world. The future of fisheries therefore concerns society as a whole.

A thorough analysis of principles and objectives is essential to map out the future of the CFP. Such a general policy framework is indispensable to address more technical issues as well as a series of horizontal problems relating to governance, intervention systems under the CFP and the central issue of resource management. Putting forward an ambitious CFP also requires finding ways of improving the marketing of sea products and strengthening aquaculture and its development in Europe.

## **1. Principles and objectives of the CFP**

### **A common policy**

In the first place, it is important to recall the origins of the CFP. They are related to the fact that political and administrative borders have no bearing on the distribution of fish stocks, which are extremely mobile by their very nature – and obviously this is still the case today. The use of these resources – which are shared by Member States and other countries that can access the same fishing grounds – can only be planned rationally, effectively and sustainably at EU level. The CFP must remain a common policy.

### **A public policy**

The CFP is a regulatory policy for the proper management of a common natural resource. It might not be perfect in its current form, but it nevertheless cannot be considered a failure, given that the situation would probably be much worse without the CFP. Europe has in fact developed one of the most elaborate fishing policies in the world – a policy which benefits European fishing as a whole and France's Atlantic coastal regions in particular. The principle of public regulation in the general interest must remain at the core of the CFP.

### **A food policy**

It should also be recalled that the CFP and the CAP have a common legal basis in the Treaty, since the founding objectives of both policies are identical<sup>1</sup>. Given this common basis, it should be stressed that the CFP is, first and foremost, a food policy. Among other aims, it is intended to ensure security of supply, market stability and reasonable consumer prices. In view of this, the CFP should be considered a strategic Community policy aimed at providing food security for EU citizens while at the same time meeting the EU's responsibilities in terms of the global food balance.

### **A sustainable policy**

Fishing means using natural resources. If this use does not take into account the conditions under which these resources can be replenished, sooner or later it must come to an end. Fishing will either be sustainable or will cease to be, and this principle must become a central underlying element of the CFP. However, it is apparent that fishermen are not exclusively responsible for variations in the biomass of fish stocks. The quality of water, accidental pollution, the balance between predators and prey species, as well as other factors such as climate change, also cause significant variations in the marine ecosystem, which need to be taken into account. An eco-systemic approach, which includes consideration of human and social aspects, is therefore essential to address the problems confronting the fisheries sector.

### **An economic policy**

Of course, fishing is an economic activity carried out with the aim of making a decent living. In order to be sustainable, fishing must be profitable, but this can only be achieved by taking into account the entire production and distribution chain as an integral whole, striving for an equitable distribution of added value between the different actors involved, rather than dealing separately with fishing proper (obtaining the catch), on the one hand, and the downstream links of the chain, on the other. Furthermore, fishing requires a Common Market Organisation which must be effective and capable of mitigating strong price variations as well as of ensuring fair competitive conditions in a strongly globalised market.

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<sup>1</sup> Articles 38 and 39 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. This legal basis will not be modified in the event of the Lisbon Treaty being ratified.

### **A quality policy**

In a context of strong international competition and trade liberalisation, European sea products will only be able to stand out from other products thanks to their superior quality, not only in sanitary terms, but also in terms of their culinary properties and other characteristics relating to compliance with certain standards (organic products, eco-label). The CFP should encourage initiatives moving in this direction in order to promote and make the most of these products in the interest of all stakeholders, including producers and consumers. At the same time, the CFP should protect the European market from imports of cheap products of lesser quality or which are fished and/or marketed without complying with sustainability criteria.

### **A social policy**

Fishing provides jobs both at sea and on land in areas where few alternative forms of employment exist. The CFP should not neglect this aspect and should aim to maximise employment on the basis of the available fish stocks. It should also aim to provide safe and decent working conditions, given that fishing is still the most hazardous profession in the world<sup>2</sup>. Taking into account the human and social dimension of fishing and aquaculture must be a central priority of the new CFP.

### **A territorial policy**

Fishing is an economic activity with a strong structuring impact on a given territory. It generates direct activities upstream (shipbuilding, ships' supplies) as well as downstream (domestic fish trade, processing, marketing). But it also indirectly contributes to other economic activities such as tourism, for example. This is why the CFP should take into account the territorial cohesion principle, integrating marine protected areas and developing a genuine Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

### **A farsighted policy**

The fishing sector is going through difficult times, but this does not mean that it will disappear. The fish stocks in European waters will continue to provide non-relocatable jobs. But in order to make the most of these resources it is essential to ensure the continuity of the activity, also in a period of crisis. Retaining the skills, ensuring that know-how is transmitted from one generation to the next, bringing new blood to the industry, enhancing the image of maritime professions, developing adequate training, putting local development policies in place – these are some of the key challenges that the CFP must meet if it is to be a genuinely forward-looking policy.

### **Good governance for an effective CFP**

Governance of the fisheries sector in Europe is shaped by a paradox: While decisions are basically made by the Member States, in most cases the relevant management level is the Maritime Basin. For the decision-making process to adequately reflect the general interest, the CFP must provide for genuine multi-level governance, incorporating the regions into the process. It is also essential to pay more attention to the opinions of scientists and fishing professionals through a genuine expert consultation process.

### **A cultural policy**

Fishing has always had a major cultural influence on the territories where it was practiced – well beyond what its economic importance alone might suggest. Fishing and the sea are central to the identity of many communities around Europe. Fishing thus constitutes an important cultural heritage – an integral part of the cultural wealth of Europe, which is a quintessentially maritime continent. This heritage must be recognised and valued by the CFP.

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<sup>2</sup> According to figures published by the International Labour Organisation.

### **A policy in the service of citizens**

Lastly, it is apparent that European citizens have a distorted image of fishing and its regulation by the CFP. At best, this policy is misunderstood; at worst, it remains completely unknown. This poor-image problem must be seriously addressed. The CFP must be backed by an adequate communication budget to explain its role, objectives and action programmes to the general public.

## **2. Governance and modes of intervention: Renewing the CFP's structure**

### **Solving governance problems**

One of the main criticisms voiced against the current CFP is its excessive reliance on micro-management. Clearly, this is a sign that the CFP does not sufficiently comply with the subsidiarity principle. Creating efficient multi-level governance mechanisms is a key challenge for the future of the CFP:

- The European Union must continue to define the framework for intervention by establishing a set of general rules: Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and quotas, Common Market Organisation (CMO), European Fisheries Fund (EFF), etc.
- Each Member State should be responsible for ensuring proper implementation of the rules (while at the same time adapting the latter to the specificities of its territory) as well as for monitoring compliance.
- The Regional Advisory Councils (RACs)<sup>3</sup> must take on a more important role in the new system. This new role must involve an evolutionary change in the nature of the RACs, within which the Regions must participate more actively. In particular, the plans to manage fish stocks must be developed at this level for greater efficiency. With their jurisdiction extending over the 12 to 200-mile zone, RACs could – for example – be responsible for managing tools similar to those employed by the Regional Fishing and Fish-Farming Advisory Committees ("Comités Régionaux des pêches") in France within the 12-mile offshore zone. The RACs would therefore act as transnational public authorities whose role would go beyond their current advisory status to include genuine decision-making functions, particularly as regard managing the resources. Adequate funding should be made available on a permanent basis to enable them to fulfil this strengthened role.
- The Regions must participate in governance at various levels. The regional level (equivalent to NUTS II) is the most suitable for the implementation of territorial strategies geared to the expectations and needs of citizens as well as of professionals in the sector. The Regions must therefore be fully involved in the RACs. They also have a key role to play in managing the regionalised European Fisheries Fund (EFF) and the fishing fleet.

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<sup>3</sup> Seven Advisory Councils were created following the reform of the CFP in 2002. Each of them covers a specific zone or fishing ground (e.g. the South Western Waters Regional Advisory Council). They issue recommendations and suggestions on various aspects of fishing in the zone for the attention of the Commission or the relevant national authorities. RACs are composed of representatives of the fisheries sector and other stakeholder groups concerned by the CFP. Scientists are invited to take part in RAC meetings in the capacity of experts. European Commission representatives and regional and/or national representatives of Member States may take part in the meetings as observers.

- Producers' Organisations (POs) must also play a more active role, but should focus on the problems relating to placing the products on the market. It would be counterproductive to entrust POs directly with tasks relating to the management of fish stocks.

In general, the Western Regions consider that the RACs, backed by the active participation of the Regions, should play a key role in governance in order to ensure that problems are dealt with at the most appropriate Maritime Basin level.

Of course, coordination between the various basins will be the responsibility of the relevant EU institutions. In this system, the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA) also plays a vital coordinating role which complements that of the RACs, but it is essential for RAC representatives to sit on this Committee.

When it comes to governance, a public policy is inconceivable without a minimum budget. It should be recalled that the annual budget allocated to the CFP (less than €1 billion) only accounts for a negligible part of the EU's total budget, i.e. less than 0.9%. Even a substantial increase will therefore have only a very small impact on the EU budget, while such an increase might be of vital importance for the future of the sector.

### **A modern EFF**

The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) – the CFP's financial intervention tool – is essential to the latter's success. It makes it possible to promote and guide the necessary investments in the sector to ensure a sustainable use of resources. In view of the serious challenges currently faced by the sector, we call for the EFF budgetary allocation to be increased in order to achieve assistance levels comparable to those of the previous programming period (under the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance – FIFG). Fishermen will not be able to overcome the crisis unless they receive a minimum of public aid. This assistance is also essential to a proper management of fish stocks.

The EFF must, first and foremost, take into account one of the major problems confronting the European fishing fleet, i.e. the average age of the vessels. While there were good reasons to abolish public aid to shipbuilding in 2004 (namely, to avoid providing shipbuilding aid and financial aid for one and the same vessel), this decision nevertheless has had adverse effects on the age of the European fleet. Today most fishing vessels are too old and inadequate to operate safely and efficiently. It is high time for the EFF to support the virtuous building of new vessels that will be safer, more energy-saving and more selective in their manner of fishing.

More generally, the EFF must support the development of the fishing vessel of the future by allocating more resources and financial assistance to research and innovation activities. Research should focus on technological aspects (performance of engines and types of vessel, selectivity of fishing gear, safety on board) as well as on economic aspects, including, for example, the problem of chronic over-investment in the sector in relation to expected profits. Support for research and innovation is also required in the aquaculture sector in order to ensure its long-term sustainability by developing programmes on a range of issues, including consumer protection and food safety, fish health management, measures to limit or reduce the environmental impact of aquaculture, and diversification by introducing new species and/or new farming techniques.

The EFF must also encourage the development of land-based equipment and installations as well as promote the transparency and a more effective organisation of the sea products market. It must also contribute to further strengthening Producers' Organisations (POs), whose primary role remains the initial placing of products on the market.

The recent creation of a fourth axis of the EFF, aimed at promoting the sustainable development of fishing areas, is a major step towards strengthening the structural measures of the CFP. It is the most concrete expression of an Integrated Maritime Policy. We call for an increase in the funding allocated to this type of action in the future development of the EFF, particularly in order to encourage the more reluctant Member States to implement such measures.

### **State aid**

The Western Regions are keen to maintain the common rules governing state aid, given that they ensure fair competition between Member States. However, in the case of “de minimis” aid, they consider that the current limits do not allow effective intervention when the situation requires it, and this applies to fishing enterprises as well as to sea-product processing and marketing enterprises. The latter, in particular, should benefit from the same type of aid regime as agri-foodstuffs enterprises.

### **3. Improving our knowledge of resources to manage them more effectively together**

The seas and oceans have long been considered magical cornucopias, an inexhaustible “reservoir of resources” at the disposal of humankind, as if fishing were some kind of mining of limitless resources. However, it is much more difficult to study the populations of marine species than of land species. Marine-species population dynamics have remained a largely untapped subject until recently and even today our knowledge of them is limited in many cases. This did not pose a problem until the rate of exploitation of these resources started exceeding their rate of renewal.

The efficient management of marine resources has been a subject of study for centuries. However, technical progress over the past few decades has enabled a substantial increase in fishing capacity and, as a result, the problem of over-fishing has taken on global proportions. Currently, the FAO considers that 52% of global stocks are being fully exploited, 19% are overexploited and 8% are depleted. Increasing our knowledge of resources in order to manage them more effectively is therefore a vital task for the future of fishing.

### **A rational, open-minded approach**

The Western Regions reject any kind of simplistic approach which regards fishing as an essentially deleterious activity or which tends to stigmatise a particular type of fishing. Public debate on fishing is much too often marred by a certain number of prejudices which must be combated:

- “*Soon there will be no more fish in the sea*”: The depletion of stocks should be relativised. While it is true that certain fish stocks are on the verge of extinction, this is not the case everywhere nor does it apply to all stocks. Some species are doing very well, despite being fully exploited; others are being replenished, which proves that fishing grounds can be properly managed and that critical situations can be reversed. According to the FAO, 1% of global stocks are currently in the process of being reconstituted. Of course this figure is still too low, but it is a beginning.



- *“Friends of wildlife versus friends of fishermen”*: This is a false dichotomy. Fishermen are obviously not the enemies of fish, given that fish stock depletion and/or poor quality is not in the interests of the fishing industry. Combining economic activity with proper management of resources is essential to the long-term profitability and sustainability of fishing.
- *Blanket condemnation of high-sea fishing (i.e. “small is beautiful”)*: European fishing is rich in its diversity. To believe that only small-scale coastal fishing is sustainable will not solve the crisis. This kind of solution ignores, precisely, the diversity of fishing activities and tends to confuse certain types of fishing with certain types of ownership of fishing vessels. This is all the more misleading given that fisheries and the organisation of the industry often vary from one Member State to another and even from one region to another and therefore cannot easily be compared. On the contrary, improvements must be introduced in all segments of the European fleet in order to achieve an optimal exploitation of resources, even though in some cases this may involve treating individual segments differently.

### **Improve our knowledge of fish stocks and the fishing fleets**

Living as they do in an aquatic habitat, fish stocks can only be studied indirectly and this inevitably means that scientific knowledge of these resources is characterised by a fairly high degree of uncertainty. This uncertainty fuels a certain distrust and even contestation of scientific experts among fishermen. Improving the management of resources will therefore require, on the one hand, improving our scientific knowledge of stocks and, on the other, strengthening the dialogue between scientists and fishermen. The emergence of genuine co-expertise must therefore be encouraged by promoting the participation of fishermen in collecting data for scientific purposes as well as in defining the aspects to be researched and carrying out expert evaluations.

It is easier, in principle, to study fishing fleets than fish stocks. In spite of this, however, knowledge of the fleets remains inadequate, particularly at European level. For its knowledge of the fleets, the European Commission depends entirely on the information supplied by Member States; and the least that can be said is that this information is fragmentary. At present there is no reliable overall study of the evolution of the European fishing fleets and fishing equipment or of fishing crews and other fishery workers. It is therefore essential that Member States provide the Commission with much more detailed information in order to adjust the fleets’ fishing capacity more closely to actual needs and anticipate the evolution of the fleet and of land-based installations.

### **Manage the access to resources more effectively**

The French Western Regions wish to stress, once again, that fish stocks are a public good which must remain under public control. The TAC<sup>4</sup> and quota system could be gradually complemented by a more comprehensive multi-annual management system based on the various fishing grounds and functioning at Maritime-Basin level.

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<sup>4</sup> Total Allowable Catch: The TAC is fixed – for each zone and each species on an annual basis (or every 2 years, for deep-sea species) – by the Council of European Ministers at the proposal of the Commission. The proposal is based on the scientific expertise of national research institutes, the evaluations carried out by the working groups of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the opinions of the ACOM (ICES Advisory Committee) and the STECF (an advisory committee of the European Commission), following discussions in several committees (RACs, EESC, ACFA and COREPER).

The main instrument for managing access to resources is currently the TAC and quota regime. It is based on the relative stability principle, whereby the distribution of TACs between Member States is always carried out according to the same formula for apportionment. This principle is both open to strong criticism in the long term and very difficult to dispense with. It at least has the merit of providing the system with stability for the benefit of fishermen, even though the latter may not always be aware of this. Its abolition would undoubtedly cause more problems than are created by keeping it in place.

A process of reflection is also under way on the best way to manage access rights. Clearly, in view of the existing diversity of ecosystems and fisheries in Europe, there can be no single ideal model suited to all situations. Nevertheless, the question of the Europe-wide introduction of individual transferable quotas (ITQs) is repeatedly being raised. The strongest advocates of such a system seem to wish to apply – to all fisheries – a very specific model, namely privatised quotas that could be traded on a European market. But this is a very restrictive view of ITQs. A system based on fisheries operating under licence (as practiced by the Regional Fishing and Fish-Farming Advisory Committees in France within the 12-mile offshore zone), managed under public supervision, without quota-trading, is already a viable form of ITQ which should be maintained.

We request the European Commission to clarify the notion of ITQ. Is the “individual” allocation to be performed per fishing vessel, per fishing company or per PO? Would access rights be transferable on a quota market or through public regulation? Would this transfer be possible at PO level, fishing-ground level, Member-State level or EU level? Would a distinction be drawn between coastal areas and high-sea fishing?

In the opinion of the French Western Regions, the ITQ encompasses four different concepts: individuality, transferability, commercialisation and sanctions. These concepts can all be dissociated from each other, particularly in terms of their implementation. Our Regions request the EU to clarify the definition of ITQ *legally*, so that no misunderstandings can arise about any positions or decisions taken subsequently on ITQs. At any rate, our Regions flatly reject the commercialisation of quotas, which could lead to major catastrophes (such as have taken place in Iceland, for example). Fish stocks are a public good which must remain under public control. Furthermore, commercialisation could lead to excessive quota mobility; and then, in the long term, to excessive concentration, which would run counter to the essentially territorial dimension of fishing activities. It is up to the European Union to create a proper regulatory framework, particularly by establishing a set of conditional rules governing access to resources. These rules must be universally applicable and embody criteria concerning such aspects as employment, environmental protection, selectivity and energy conservation. However, the implementation of any such measures must respect the principle of subsidiarity in order to adapt to the diverse situations encountered in Europe.

### **A sustainable approach through the introduction of fisheries environmental management measures (FEMMs)**

As in the case of agriculture, good practices can be promoted in the fisheries and aquaculture sector by introducing environmental management measures that act as incentives for fishermen to move beyond basic standards.

Such measures can concern, for example:

- The management of resources (limitation of the number of discards by using more selective fishing gear, limitation of the fishing effort, the closure of fishing seasons or areas to allow fish to reproduce, etc.);

- Improving energy consumption;
- Diversifying fishing-related activities, such as e.g. fishing-tourism;
- Etc.

### **Building and efficiently managing a new fishing fleet**

The method used to estimate fishing capacity in order to overcome the problem of over-fishing must absolutely be reviewed. Using tonnage as the central criterion to manage this aspect has shown its limitations. It has led to the construction of vessels that are unsafe and particularly energy-inefficient. We call on the European Commission to develop a set of more relevant criteria to assess fishing capacity.

The Lower Normandy, Brittany, Pays de Loire, Poitou-Charentes Regions and Aquitaine regions are convinced that fishing has a future in Europe. For this future to become a reality, however, safer, more energy-efficient and more selective fishing vessels have to be built. The development of research and innovation programmes to improve existing technology and limit fishing vessels' energy consumption is therefore a priority task. It is also essential to help fishermen – including, in particular, young people looking for a career in fishing – to move in this direction. This is why it is necessary to lift the ban on public aid to shipbuilding, while at the same time ensuring a rigorous organisation of the sector, including compliance with the regulations governing the commissioning and decommissioning of fishing vessels, the limitation of fishing capacity, energy efficiency, selectivity, etc.

### **Place fisheries at the centre of Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP)**

The implementation of management plans under the CFP is a fairly recent and positive development. Such plans must be further promoted in order to enable all stakeholders to contribute to the efficient long-term management of fish stocks. The plans should favour an eco-systemic approach rather than a problem-specific approach in order to take account of the evolutionary interactions between species.

In particular, this approach could be applied to the management of access rights. This would not only constitute a welcome simplification measure for the many existing multispecies fisheries, but would also have an impact on the discard-reduction policy, making it more realistic by setting intermediate objectives (e.g. every five years).

The CFP should also be linked to environmental policy. The interactions between these two policies should be taken into account, particularly in the case of marine protected areas. The conservation objectives set when such areas are created should be defined in agreement with fishermen in order to reconcile environmental protection with sustainable fishing. In this connection, it should be noted that water quality goes hand in hand with product quality, particularly in the case of aquaculture and the taking of fish by hand (mainly shellfish and seaweeds).

Furthermore, a resource management policy cannot be properly implemented without an effective and transparent control policy. A reformed CFP must therefore be closely linked to such a control policy, with the aim of harmonising the control methods as well as the sanctions imposed for non-compliance.

The Western Regions wish to insist on the importance of the implementation of the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) proposed in the European Commission's Blue Paper. Fishing and aquaculture

activities can only be managed efficiently within the general framework of the management of all activities relating to the sea and coastal areas (maritime transport, tourism, planning of coastal areas, etc.). However, fishing must be placed at the centre of the IMP in order to prevent the disappearance of a whole range of activities that are essential to the survival of the fishing sector and to the economic development of coastal areas as a whole.

#### **4. Better regulation of the fishery products market, both internally and abroad**

##### **Overview of the situation**

Fishery products provide an essential contribution to the global food supply. However, unlike the agricultural products market, the fishery products market is highly globalised. Currently, exports account for 37% of global production. This is a relatively recent phenomenon which, moreover, is gathering pace: between 2000 and 2006, the export share of production increased by 32%. The main producing countries are – in order of importance – China, the United States and Peru, but the greater part of production (52%) is carried out in Asia.

The European Union therefore occupies a marginal position in this evolution, experiencing its consequences rather than actively taking part in it. Over the past 30 years, the import share in sea products consumed in Europe has risen from 30% to almost 70%. The problem faced by the European fishing sector is not so much to win export markets as to stop losing them and to recover the share it has lost in the internal market. To this end, it must address the problem that most of the added value generated by fishing goes to the retailing and distribution industry, and it must develop a more effective marketing system for the benefit of fishermen.

## **Building a better balance in international agreements**

Unlike other foodstuffs, fishery and aquaculture products do not receive special treatment under the WTO agreements, because they are considered traditional industrial products. Is there not a case for international agreements to take into account the specificity of sea products?

There is a clear contradiction between a proactive policy to encourage sustainable resource management, on the one hand, and complete openness to global trade, on the other. What is the point of protecting fish stocks in Europe if Europeans consume products over-fished elsewhere?

The CFP should make it possible to protect European domestic production from poor-quality, cheap imports which do not comply with the principles of sustainable resource management. If Europe wishes to have at least some say in the management of global fish stocks, it cannot envisage liberalising its markets even further in the fisheries sector. In view of this, the EU should, first and foremost, effectively resolve the conflict of interests which exists within its own borders between the production sector and the processing sector. A fairer balance must be achieved between the need to provide the processing and marketing companies with regular supplies, on the one hand, and the need for some form of Community preference, on the other.

The European Union has concluded numerous bilateral fishing agreements to which it allocates substantial funds. It is essential that these agreements be balanced for both sides, not only in the case of countries such as Norway and Iceland, but also in the case of much poorer countries, particularly in the African continent. As far as the latter are concerned, apart from any purely financial forms of compensation, genuine development-aid mechanisms to promote the sustainable exploitation of fishery areas for the benefit of local populations must accompany the signature of any further agreements.

As regards the Regional Fishery Management Organisations (RFMOs), close monitoring of their activities is a *sine qua non* condition for effective global governance of fisheries in the case of stocks shared with third countries. Acting on behalf of the Member States, the European Commission must monitor the activities of all the relevant RFMOs, actively uphold the values of the EU within them, and make every effort to promote the setting up of RFMOs where none exist as yet.

## **The Common Market Organisation (CMO)**

As a highly globalised food market, the sea product market is by its very nature especially sensitive to sharp price variations. European-level regulatory instruments are therefore essential. The current CMO should be maintained, particularly bearing in mind that its budget (somewhere in the region of €25M for the EU as a whole) is very economical in comparison to the agricultural CMOs.

It is very important to preserve a range of instruments to intervene in the markets when necessary. These instruments can be deactivated when they are not necessary, but it would be very unwise to abolish them altogether. Market crises are unforeseeable, and hastily reintroducing previously-abolished mechanisms would take too long to achieve effective results. In addition to storage and intervention measures, the possibility of obtaining decommissioning aid should be kept in place, while at the same time this kind of aid should be regulated in such a way as to prevent it from becoming a “cop-out”. The Western Regions wish to re-establish – as a primary objective of the fishing and aquaculture CMO – the provision of genuine support to reorganise the sector, including the provision of substantial financial assistance to enhance the value of fishing and aquaculture products.

Producer Organisations (POs) are the most suitable structure for placing products on the market and regulating this task. The CFP should further encourage the structuring of the sector into POs in order to ensure that sea products are placed on the market in the best possible conditions from all points of view: creation of added value, marketing, promotion and price transparency. Structuring the sector along these lines would also improve the balance of forces with other stakeholders and actors in the sector.

As regards enhancing the value of the products, the fisheries sector would be well-advised to follow the well-tested models developed for agricultural products (PDO, PGI). Complementing the eco-label system, this would help meet one of the major challenges confronting the sector: the distribution of added value between different actors. At any rate, properly structuring and organising the label system at EU level is essential to achieve a fair market environment.

The CMO also fulfils a major regulatory function. We regret the European Commission's current tendency to reduce the scope of this function – on grounds of simplification – in the fisheries sector as in many others. Shared public standards are a precondition for greater market transparency, for the benefit of fishermen as well as of consumers. Moreover, they are an essential component of our trade policy since they often enable European products to be distinguished from products from third countries. In view of this, it is essential to ensure compliance with all standards and regulations throughout the territory of the EU and, in particular, at its borders as far as imported products are concerned. Checks should regularly be performed on both EU products and imports in order to ensure the quality of fishery products for the benefit of consumers.

Lastly, it would be useful to start a discussion on the process of placing fishery products on the market in order to give more weight to producers in the sector. More specifically, the networking of points of sale, particularly through dematerialisation, should make it possible to improve market transparency and, possibly, reduce the number of outlets for placing the products on the market. However, this rationalisation of the initial placing of the product on the market should not entail a systematic reduction in the number of existing ports of unloading and harbours. A better networking of the ports of unloading, sales outlets and buyers should make it possible to more effectively meet the needs of the sector's downstream activities, which are more concentrated, while at the same time enabling the development of shorter distribution channels. The CFP could include the development of proactive intervention tools to create a genuine European sea products market and make the most of European resources as a matter of priority.

This strategy must be backed by public investments, particularly through a strengthened EFF.

## **5. Liberate the potential of the aquaculture sector**

As pointed out earlier, Europe is highly dependent on imports to meet the demand for fishery products. On a global scale, production from aquaculture is catching up with production from traditional fisheries. 47% of sea products come from fish farms and this figure could rapidly increase to the 50% threshold. The growth of the sector is taking place mainly in Asia, where 89% of aquaculture production is concentrated, with China alone accounting for 67% of this total figure. The EU is largely missing out on this growth, given that aquaculture production within its borders is stagnant and even showing signs of decline.

Reviving the aquaculture sector in Europe is probably one of the main challenges of the future. The Commission seems to be fully aware of this, given that it has recently proposed updating the strategy for the sector. However, we believe that the measures proposed are not ambitious enough in view of

the challenges that have to be addressed. It is a fully-fledged CFAP, a Common Fisheries *and* Aquaculture Policy, that needs to be put in place, particularly since aquaculture appears to be the only sector capable of providing a response to the problem of Europe's excessive dependence on imported sea products.

If we further consider the social and economic consequences of reducing production in the fisheries sector (in line with the Commission's aim to reduce the fishing fleet's overcapacity), it is important that such a reduction does not lead to an increase in the volume of imports from third countries. On the contrary, the European Union must provide firm support for sustainable aquaculture in the EU's maritime regions.

The aquaculture sector is in fact composed of four main segments which are very different from each other and which should be dealt with separately:

- **Freshwater fish farming:** This was formerly a strong sector in Europe but today it is in tatters, despite the fact that it has considerable growth potential. It is essential that the CFP provide responses to the major problems faced by fish farmers: Where to find a site – on a river, pond or lake – to set up a production unit? The prospects for expansion are relatively limited. How can aquaculture be developed? What are the best species? How can environmental problems be managed, particularly as regards water quality? How to deal with predators, e.g. the great cormorant? Freshwater fish farmers need support, leadership and organisation to deal with a whole range of issues including e.g. sanitary and environmental monitoring and protection on production sites; the development of a system of EU approval of disease-free areas; sanitary and environmental certification of fish farms; investments to limit the environmental impact of fish farming; ways of improving the quality of products; innovation in production techniques; the introduction of new species, etc.
- **Marine fish farming:** This is an emerging sector in Europe. At present, it mainly concentrates on species at the end of the food chain, which poses problems of supply as well as environmental problems. As in the case of freshwater fish farming, the problem of finding suitable coastal sites is critical for the development of the sector.

An additional limiting factor for both marine fish farming and most forms of freshwater fish farming is the feeding of the stock, which involves the use – and hence the production – of substantial amounts of fish meal (on average, 5 kg of caught fish are required for 1 kg of farmed fish produced).

- **Shellfish culture:** This activity is highly concentrated in certain areas of the European territory, including the French Western Regions, which are particularly well-suited to this type of culture. In these areas, shellfish culture is a major source of economic wealth, environmental enhancement and territorial cohesion. Shellfish products are rich in vitamins, minerals and trace elements and therefore have high nutritional value. Shellfish are also sensitive to the quality of water and to the effects of other coastal activities. The existing production and product-identification systems – still largely based on artisanal methods and traditional know-how, which also characterise the finished products – deserve special attention, but the CFP has not yet sufficiently taken these aspects into account. However, if the aim is to develop shellfish culture, it is important to prevent the latter from moving too far in the direction of intensification to the detriment of quality. On the other hand, this does not mean ruling out any technological progress. The European Commission must resolutely strive for a certain regulatory equality between EU Member States in the area of food safety by developing

efficient standardised tests while at the same time maintaining optimal consumer health protection. Furthermore, tailored assistance measures (including compensation and relief funds or solidarity funds) must be available for fish farmers affected by the closure of production areas on health grounds. Water quality in production areas must be preserved and the impact of coastal urban development must be effectively managed (the same applies to marine fish farming). Enterprises should be encouraged to adopt new farming systems that combine productivity with product quality as well as to modernise and equip their installations in order to improve working conditions, health protection and shellfish sanitary control, and to use motors that are as environmentally friendly as possible for their vessels.

- **Algae culture:** Often ignored, algae culture has substantial growth potential. It is a highly diversified sector (energy, cosmetics, additives, etc.). There is a great need for research in this area.

Once again it is apparent that to deal with all these problems, which are often caused by external factors (for example, water quality), an integrated approach is absolutely essential. Resource planning and development is a particularly sensitive issue. In coastal areas, a balanced coexistence between all users is an essential prerequisite for the sustainable development of aquaculture in the long term.

## **Conclusion**

The CFP is probably the European Union's most complex policy. Any attempt at partial reform is bound to fail. Rather, what is needed today is an overall reform which takes account of all aspects of the policy: resource management, fleet management, market management, monitoring and control, governance, aquaculture, etc.

We advocate the development of an ambitious CFAP which aims to maintain a sufficient level of fishing and aquaculture in Europe so as to avoid excessive dependence on imports; a policy managed at the most relevant Maritime-Basin level, in which the regions will play a major role; a policy that promotes forms of activity that are more sustainable both economically and environmentally; a policy that will preserve qualified, well-paid jobs and provide a high level of protection and safety for fishermen, particularly when they are at sea; lastly, we need a CAFP that is part and parcel of an Integrated Maritime Policy.