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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

Committee on Fisheries

CONFERENCE

**A stronger dialogue between scientists and fisherman for a
renovated Common Fisheries Policy**

9 September 2008

European Parliament, Brussels

SUGGESTION RECORD

QUESTIONS & KEY PROPOSALS

1. How can the expertise of fishermen be better included in the scientific advisory process and reconciled with the work of scientists?

The speakers appeared to be unanimous on the fact that it was fundamental to better integrate fishermen's experience and know-how in the process of developing the scientific advice on which decisions are based within the framework of the CFP.

Positions along these lines were expressed by, among others, Sylvie Alexandre (MAP France) (*'The dialogue needs to be strengthened on a day-to-day basis'*), Fokion Fotiadis (DG MARE) (*'Fishermen's knowledge must be fully used to inform policy decisions'*) and the experts John Casey (CEFAS) and Javier Garat (Europêche) (*'Greater involvement of all stakeholders in all stages from data to decision taking is needed'*, *'We must make sure that the fisherman sees the scientist as a partner, not as an enemy or as a policeman'*).

2. How can the communications policy be improved?

None of the speakers questioned the fact that the CFP had to remain a policy based on scientific findings (Fokion Fotiadis: *'CFP is a science based policy and must remain so!'*). Nevertheless, most of the speakers noted a clear conflict of interest between fishermen and scientists in the short term, whereas the long-term objectives appeared to be more compatible.

It therefore appeared essential, in order to defuse this conflict, to point out and better communicate to fishermen that it was in their interest to take into account the economic benefit that they could expect in the medium or long term, in the assessment of their (alleged) short-term economic loss.

Michael Sissenwine (ICES) and Fokion Fotiadis called for more transparency in the process of the production of scientific advice, which should be communicated directly to fishermen and in easily understood language. Patrick Daniel (DG MARE) added that reality proved that to ensure the dissemination of the advice, making it accessible simply by placing it on a public web site was insufficient. More effective channels for the dissemination of the information therefore had to be put in place.

John Casey also commented that it would be important to make professionals from the fisheries sector understand that scientific advice was essential in order to allow them to make investment decisions in full knowledge of all the considerations involved and that they therefore needed this advice to ensure the success of their economic enterprise.

Finally, Patrick Daniel commented on the need to better manage the flow of scientific information intended for legislators, in particular for Members of the EP, at the time of the adoption of a legislative proposal by the Commission.

3. How can the quality of the advice be improved?

Michael Sissenwine highlighted the worrying problem of the deficit of young scientists in applied research in the fisheries sector, because the careers were not very attractive compared to other basic sciences (*'Not money, but human resources is the problem!'*). Zbigniew Karnicki (industry) also mentioned this point, recalling how an institute specialising in fisheries research, in his town in Poland, had to close its doors on due to a lack of students.

It therefore appeared essential, for this scientific path, to re-establish interesting and status-enhancing university degree courses, leading on to remunerative careers. Cornelis Visser (MEP, member of the Committee on Fisheries) and Javier Garat also expressed themselves in favour of an education policy that did more to motivate young scientists to take up applied research in the fisheries sector, instead of basic research.

Jean-Yves Perrot (Ifremer) and Giampaolo Buonfiglio (COGECA) also mentioned the need to homogenise the various applied research models currently used in the Member States in order to make the results more comparable and to facilitate the aggregation of the data. An intensification of the cooperation between national research institutes was therefore desirable.

Sean O'Donoghue (producers organisation) suggested a rating system (assessment) for scientific advice according to the level of uncertainty of the variables used in a given model.

4. How can fisherman be involved in the collection of data?

Many speakers highlighted the problem of data collection. It was not only a question of knowing how to obtain reliable data essential for research at the right time but also how to involve the fishermen in this task.

José Antonio Suárez Llanos (Long Distance RAC) stressed the advantages of including the data collected by the fisheries sector in the models used by the scientists, provided of course that reliable and rigorous common standards could be agreed for collection.

Patrick Daniel also positively viewed the involvement of fisheries professionals in scientists' data collection work.

Michael Sissenwine proposed, among other things, the conversion of commercial vessels for research purposes, in particular within the framework of fleet reduction plans.

Struan Stevenson (MEP, member of the Committee on Fisheries) and certain other speakers sharply criticised the practice of tow surveys – still practiced in the same traditional areas – which seemed to take no account of the migrations of fisheries stocks linked to climatic changes and, for this reason, suffered from a serious lack of credibility in the eyes of fishermen.

5. How can an ‘appropriate’ TAC be set?

John Casey suggested moving from the current system of setting ‘annual TACs’ to medium/long-term management plans, with intermediate values to be agreed with the sector (*‘move from the annual TAC setting more towards long-term management plans, with interim objectives to be discussed and agreed by fisheries managers’*).

Carmen Fraga (MEP, member of the Committee on Fisheries) stressed the need to more frequently turn to the option of setting ‘multi-species TACs’.

Jean-Marie Wacogne (producers organisation) suggested allocating turnover quotas rather than quotas of fish caught, as well as taking greater account of the factors external to fishing that can contribute to the increase of mortality in certain fish species, such as aggregate extraction, wind farms and marine pollution.

Jacques Bigot (ETF) deplored the excessive influence of certain third countries, such as Norway, on the setting of the Community quotas (Norwegian diktat).

6. How can the national and Community authorities contribute to intensifying the dialogue? What could be the true role of the RACs?

Sylvie Alexandre commented that it was necessary to maintain the targeted fisheries research programmes to preserve responsive and quality expertise.

Several speakers expressed themselves in favour of strengthening the role of the RACs and highlighted the need to provide them with adequate funding.

John Casey and José Antonio Suarez Llanos spoke in favour of a broadening of the RACs’ communication platform accompanied by an increase in their resources. José Antonio Suarez Llanos in particular considered the RACs to be a ‘common home’ within which greater trust between fishermen and scientists could develop.

Aukje Coers (Pelagic RAC) pointed out that each RAC faced very specific problems, which called for different solutions and that it was counterproductive to deal with them as though they were identical. In this respect, she criticised the Commission’s (DG MARE) practice of only inviting one RAC, to represent all of them, in certain meetings. She deplored the fact that the Commission, on the one hand, criticised the proposals of the RACs as having an insufficient scientific basis, but, on the other hand, did not allow them to directly contract the ICES to obtain the advice they needed. Michael Park (North Sea RAC) also called for stable funding of the RACs and greater access to the services of the ICES.

The issue of subsidiarity, that is the question of whether the micro-management of quotas should be delegated to the RACs, was also raised in several speeches. Struan Stevenson called the CFP a failure in view of the fact that thousands of jobs had been lost in the fisheries sector, while no significant increase in fish stocks had been seen.

The proposal of having scientists work with the RACs on a contractual basis was not favourably received by representatives of the RACs, who preferred to retain the choice of the scientists they called on according to their needs.

7. Other suggestions

- Improving the responsiveness of scientific advice according to the rapid development of the situation on the ground
- Strengthening the capacity of the STECF as a vehicle for the coordination of national expertise
- Resolving linguistic obstacles to proper communication between professionals (particularly within the RACs) and between scientists and professionals – the exclusive use of English was not a satisfactory solution.

8. Operational conclusions

- 1) Specific information should be gathered on the way in which the dialogue between scientists and fisherman currently operated in the different Member States, and the best practices listed.
- 2) Financial resources within the framework of the EFF should be mobilised to help the RACs to strengthen their role.
- 3) The scientific community should be urged to develop more common methodology standards in fisheries research.
- 4) The possibility of delegating certain aspects of quota management (micro-management) to the RACs should be considered.
- 5) The European Parliament was determined to work actively on the implementation of all of these improvements, particularly in the framework of the new powers (codecision) that it should soon be recognised as having in relation to the CFP.
