



Review of International Small Scale/Inshore Professional Fishers Meeting Biarritz and Sainte Marie de Gosse les 25-27 November 2009

More than 200 participants from Canada, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Portugal, Spain, Holland and Ireland met in Biarritz the 25-27 November for the first meeting of the International Small Scale Professional Fishers.

Three principal themes emerged from the presentations, round tables and discussions at the meeting:

- The importance and contribution of professional inshore fishers as stakeholders and caretakers of the environment complements the expertise brought by scientists and other actors. Traditional knowledge passed down from generation to generation is becoming lost not only by a lack of replacement of young fishers in the inshore fishery but also by bureaucratic mistrust of this type of knowledge. At a time when ecosystems are increasingly degraded by overexploitation, traditional knowledge remains an important base on which we can rebuild and restore our natural environments;
- The accumulated knowledge and know how over the generations of fishers is extensive and diverse including methods for exploitation in different environments, knowledge of the biological cycles and natural equilibrium, ways and means to fish and the value given placed on the products derived from their fishing activity. The cultural heritage of each inshore fishing community provides a background that permits fishers to reflect on the definition of credible ecolabels that are based on responsible exploitation with guarantees of safeguarding the marine, estuarine and continental ecosystems;
- Inshore fishing is practiced by over 28 million fishers worldwide and almost 100,000 fishers in Europe who are equipped with more than 60,000 boats less than 10 meters long. Inshore fishing is also adapted to local needs and realities. In certain European countries it is also largely practiced by women (who are one third of the active fishers). These women highlight the value of certain products which contribute not only economically but also gastronomically to the cultural heritage of the European Regions.

However, all this is placed at risk by the numerous constraints and misunderstandings regarding fishing activity at various levels of society that those present at the conference shared with each other during the course of three round tables. Participants discussed and suggested the following measures:

- Better acknowledgement of fishing activities by European and national interests. This lack of acknowledgement is especially blatant in continental waters where there are



- numerous conflicts over usage but it is also the case in maritime waters where only the Regional Advisory Committee South supports the small scale fishing activity.
- It is urgent to take into account the impact of climate change especially in the European nordic regions, while the southern European regions are suffering from a strong environmental degradations that diminishes productivity and reduces the natural populations in the coastal, esturian and continental ecosystems;
 - The fate of the small scale fishery and the maintenance of the ecosystems can not be addressed by fisheries regulations alone. An enhanced dialogue with the scientific world is important since they have a better vision of the global situation of the ecosystems and an understanding of the importance of coordination between the different environmental and fisheries administrative services on a national and European level to improve governance which in turn will enable more sustainable development;
 - The fishers as a whole do not feel either the administration nor the scientists listens to their concerns, however, if they do listen and collaboration does take place, several examples of effective strong success among the actors involved, were highlighted during the meeting presentations. In addition, professionals participating in these experiments brought a new understanding as to how aquatic resources and fishing techniques can be better managed and adapted for sustainable exploitation in the region.
 - The management of small scale fisheries does not include fishers rights. Fishers in these contexts have the feeling there are strong regulatory constraints on their fishing activity in spite of the fact that they make a valuable contribution to the GDP in the coastal regions (e.g., 10% of the GDP in Galicia)
 - Over the past ten years fishers warnings regarding environmental degradation of the aquatic resources have not been heeded by managers who place little value on the fishers as a profession. Fishers became scapegoats for the abuses of all users of the natural environment and were often easily illimated to appease the conscience of our urban and industrial society vis-a vis environmental degradation. However, inshore fishers are among the few professionals to recognize that the economic value of their activity is directly linked to the ecological environmental value;
 - All participants underlined the importance of unified action by a community of people of the sea, including fishers of the esturian waters, to gather knowledge and know how, make it accessible in such a manner as to highlight differences and develop local initiatives in the context of an international network (including developing countries). This network will demonstrate the capacities of this community to defend the natural heritage and develop way of sustainable responsible exploitation of marine, coastal and esturian waters. Many examples were featured during the meeting demonstrating the accumulates richness of small scale fishing activity.



Officials opening and participants in the meeting

Mr Didier Borotra : Senator-Mayor of “Biarritz” ; Mr Michel Maumus : Representative and in charge of the Agenda 21 for the Pyrénées Atlantiques District ; Mr François Maïtia : Vice – Chairman of the Aquitania Region ; Mr Francis Betbeder : Mayor of “Sainte-Marie de Gosse” ; Mr De Chavanes : Executive Director of Maritime Affairs in Aquitania ; Mr Luçay Han-Ching : Director of “Centre Ifremer de l’Atlantique” ; Mr Hubert Carré : Director of the National Committee for marine fisheries and marine aquaculture ; Mr Louis Vilaine : Chairman of the National Commission for migratory fish and estuaries ; Mr Philippe Boisneau : Chairman of the National Committee of professional inland fishers ; Mr Serge Larzabal : Chairman of the Committee of marine fisheries of Bayonne; Mr Mikel Epalza : Regional representative of the “Mission de la Mer” ; Mr Marc-Adrien Marcellier : Director for France of the North Atlantic Salmon Fund ; Mr Jean Allardi : Chairman of the International Association for the protection of Atlantic Salmon.

Foreign delegations:

Mr Jon Bjarnason : Icelandic Minister of Fisheries ; Mr Orri Vigfusson : Chairman of the North Atlantic Salmon Fund ; Mr Arthur Bogason : Chairman of The National Association of Icelandic Small Scale Fisheries ; Mr Xoan Lopez : Secretary of the Galician Federation of confrarias de pescadores ; Mr José Morales : Executive director of Fisheries of Galicia ; Mr Brian O’Riordan : Secretary of ICSF ; Mr Audunn Konradsson : Chairman of the fishers associations from Feroes ; Mr Niels Jacob Nielsen : Chairman of the association of shipowners from Feroes ; Mrs Maureen Woodrow : Executive Director of the Ocean Management Research Network – University Ottawa ; Mrs Marja Beckendam de Boer : Network AKTEA -Netherlands ; Mr Arjan Heinen : Policy Advisor Professional Inland Fishers in the Netherlands