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NO. 3: FISH STOCKS IN DISTANT WATERS DRYING UP
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Practice what we preach



Tony Long,
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Fishing is a global business. Sustainable fishing has to be a global goal. The fish we catch as well as the fishermen, processors and consumers all exist across borders. Discussions over the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) are steadily building pace, but this isn't just a policy for Europe.

The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, said in October 2011 that the CFP can be split into two parts: one part is about how fishing is conducted in Europe; the other is about how Europeans behave in the rest of the world's oceans. Merkel recognised that things are not as they should be if we are fishing away people's livelihoods. We are not getting our house in order with a more robust, sustainable CFP, if we still go and deplete stocks elsewhere.

In Europe we love seafood so much that 65% of all the fish we eat comes from overseas. Much of what is called the 'external dimension' - our fishing outside EU waters - is in desperate need of scrutiny and reform. That the Commission proposal for reform of the CFP includes (cont'd page 2)

FISH STOCKS IN DISTANT WATERS DRYING UP

Ships from the EU, China, Japan and Russia are hoovering up fish from all over the world as they travel far and wide in search of more catch. That is the conclusion of a new report conducted by 'The Sea Around Us' project.

The study, entitled *Spatial expansion of the EU and non-EU fishing fleets into the global ocean*, shows that in the past 50 years EU boats have fished further and further south which has left more and more fisheries at unsustainable levels. In fact, the percentage of heavily impacted areas increased from around 10 million to 100 million square kilometres, which equates to around a third of our total ocean surface.

Europe has become largely reliant on resources from abroad. This has put pressure on fish stocks in areas such as East and West Africa, to such an extent that catches are now stagnating or in decline. The study maps in detail the increasing impact of fishing on the world's oceans (see overleaf). The report's findings provide a clear picture of the perilous state many of the world's fisheries are in.

"Up until the 1980's we expanded our catch far and wide and at great pace, but although we are trying to fish as intensively as we did 30 years ago, the number of fish being landed is declining. That means one thing: we exploited the seas and haven't done this sustainably," said WWF's Karoline Schacht.

Ongoing fuel subsidies and the desperate state of EU fisheries (cont'd page 2)

(cont'd from page 1) an 'external policy' is a positive sign. But it lacks a considerable amount of detail. The new CFP proposes that the agreements signed by the EU with third countries outside Europe should become 'Sustainable Fisheries Agreements' (SFAs) and respect the policy's overall sustainability principles. We need more than a change of name. We need to ensure that Europe's fleet is only catching fish that is genuinely 'surplus' or which third countries cannot or will not catch themselves. The EU therefore may need to help these countries improve the scientific understanding and governance of their natural resources as well as their capacity to better manage them.

Eventually, all SFAs should be conditional on the adoption of multi-annual plans, in line with the conditions for every commercial fishery in the EU. The EU should be the one negotiating the terms and conditions of fishing opportunities abroad, not the individual ship-owners as we still see today. Ship-owners must start bearing the full cost of accessing fishing grounds. Exporting the problem of over-fishing by reflagging of vessels should be banned internationally.

To date the EU has spent millions of taxpayers' money to fish overseas without ensuring that these fisheries are sustainable. Our present role on the international stage is not appropriate for the fourth largest producer of seafood in the world. The European Commission tends to participate with weak negotiating mandates in the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) around the world. In order to lead negotiations rather than follow them, and promote long-term management rather than short-term gains, the Commission should be given a stronger mandate for the six tuna RFMOs and 11 non-tuna RFMOs.

The 2012 CFP reform is Europe's chance to show real leadership and prevent further depletion of the world's fish stocks. The EU must recognise the external dimension as a key negotiating ground for extending Europe's sustainable fishing objectives. For too long fishing outside European waters has been viewed as "out of sight, out of mind". Members of the European Parliament must now put this right. It is time to turn the spotlight on the external dimension!

Tony Long

(cont'd from page 1) will drive further exploitation of distant waters. With the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) the European Union holds an excellent tool to re-assess the way it's fleets behave in international or foreign countries' waters (see below).

"If the EU directive on the exploitation of surplus fish only is applied, we can get other fishing nations to respect the same principle"

Dr. Mohamed Vall, WWF programme manager in Mauritania

As part of its 'More Fish' campaign, WWF is calling for a mechanism that legally obliges all EU vessels, both inside and outside EU waters, to fish under the same set of rules.

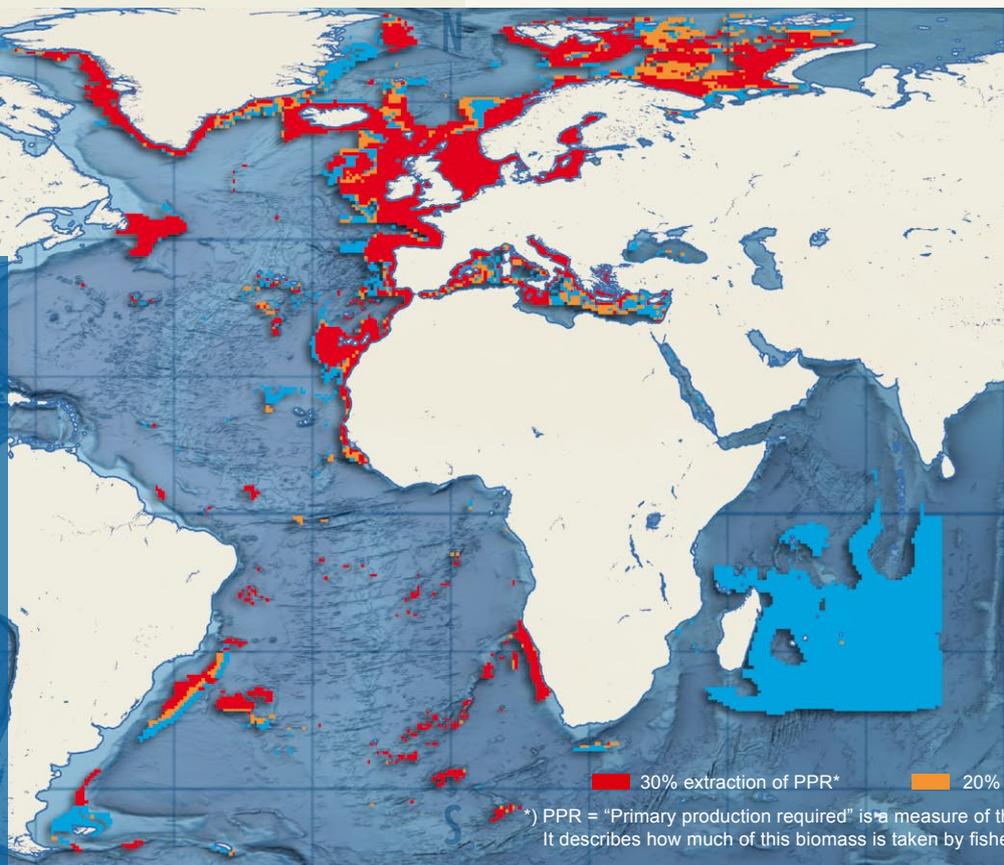
This means that the EU should also aim for multi-annual management plans drawn up for overseas fisheries. At the same time WWF is calling for an improvement in the scientific data collection and for an end to the huge fuel subsidies that allow fishing in distant waters in spite of falling catches and dwindling profits.

ALL LIVING THINGS ARE CONNECTED

This report mapped the struggle for survival for the period of 1950 to 2006.

In the seas, as on land, there is a complex food chain. If we take too many fish from up and down the food chain then the whole chain comes under pressure and some species may struggle to survive.

Red areas show where EU fisheries have severely affected the ecosystems. Find the report at wwf.eu/cfp_external_dimension



60-SECOND BRIEFING: FPAs

The issue

In Europe we love fish and we eat huge amounts every year. However, not all of it comes from European waters. In fact, 65% of the fish we eat comes from other parts of the world. Before the EU fleet can fish in remote coastal waters, it has to negotiate Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs) with relevant countries. These agreements give EU fishermen access to fish (particularly tuna) in distant waters, and help keep the EU market supplied. In return, recipient countries receive a lump sum to invest in developing their fisheries

“For the fisheries agreements to be sustainable we need all stakeholders to participate meaningfully in the negotiations and inform our citizens about them.”

Ibrahima Niamadio, WWF Western African Marine Eco-Region programme



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■ Is the EU fishing away people's livelihoods?

industry and infrastructure to ensure future sustainability. At present, the EU has agreements with 13 countries – mostly in Africa. However, these FPAs often come under intense criticism. We need to be sure that the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) changes more than just their name – from FPAs to SFAs, Sustainable Fisheries Agreements.

December 2011 the EU Parliament's plenary rejected an extension of the treaty with Morocco. The reasons for the rejection included the excessive exploitation of certain stocks and the limited contribution of EU funds to the development of fisheries policy. Furthermore, there was no proof that the EU money benefited the population of Western Sahara. The vote led to an immediate halt of the treaty and was a call on the Commission to negotiate a new and better agreement.

The pressure

Many FPAs are far from sustainable, in either economic or environmental terms. European vessels are catching a lot of fish overseas that is not 'surplus' to the host country's requirements. This can be difficult to prove because data is often limited. However, according to the Fishery Committee of the Eastern Central Atlantic most stocks in West African waters are being fished beyond their sustainable limits. What's more, the access fees are rarely used to support the development of coastal areas or invested in sustainable fisheries. In fact, it's rarely traceable. So, millions of Euros in taxpayers' money are disappearing, with just a few countries and companies benefiting.

The solutions

The EU must support third countries to manage their fisheries sustainably and promote good governance whilst EU fleet owners should pay for access to fish in remote waters. We need to ensure that any fisheries agreement abroad follows the same sustainability criteria as those in Europe. Any funding must also be transparent, targeted and of benefit to the local coastal communities.

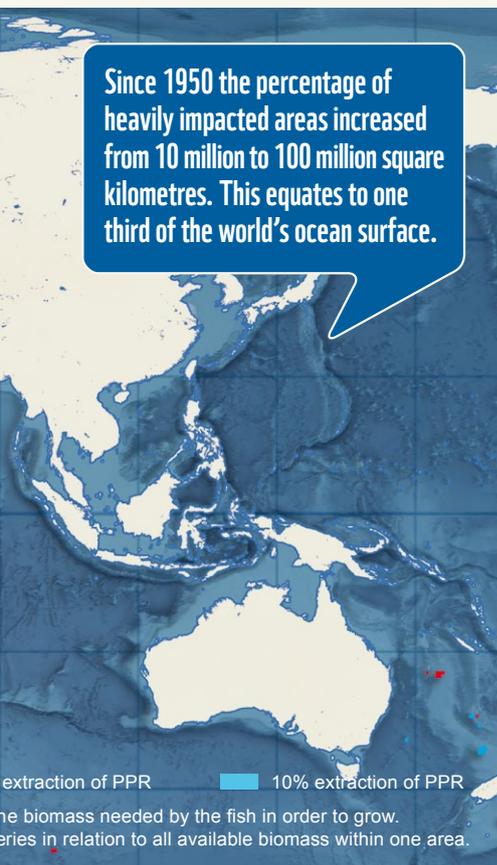
The latest

In reforming the CFP, the Commission has included 'External Policy' in the Basic CFP Regulation for the first time. This will form the basis to ensure that EU fleets behave elsewhere as they do at home. But if FPAs badly impact the environment, human rights or the economy, they can be repealed. Mid-



© Mark Edwards / WWF-Canon

■ Netting increasingly meagre catches in West Africa



MYTHS YOU MIGHT HEAR ...

“The state of our seas isn’t that bad. Environmentalists are just exaggerating the problems of overfishing.”

Fact: If there is only one thing you take away from these newsletters, it’s this: it is that bad. What’s more, for over 25 years the situation hasn’t improved. Three out of four of Europe’s assessed fish stocks are

over-exploited. We don’t have enough data to know what the situation in all stocks is like – over half the stocks have not been assessed. Assuming that these un-monitored stocks are in good health is a risky game to play. If the reform of the CFP is not ambitious enough, by the time we review the policy again in a decade, according to the European Commission only eight of our 136 stocks will be at sustainable levels.

Did you know? If European fish stocks are allowed to recover, it is estimated the fisheries that rely on them will be five times more profitable.

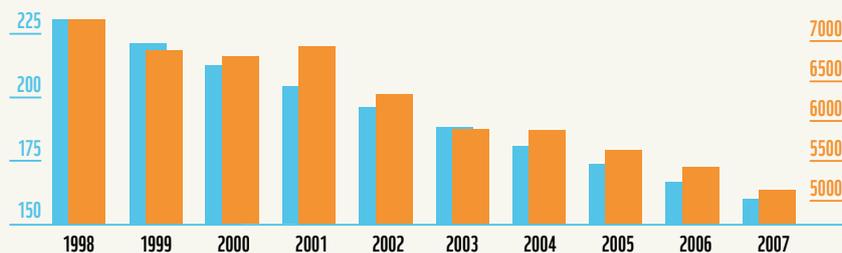
“If the Common Fisheries Policy reform further reduces fishing activities, more jobs in the European fishing industry will be lost.”

Fact: The number of employees in Europe’s fishing industry has decreased by 4 - 5% every year since 1996/97. In the same period, overall landings dropped by 30%. The fishing industry is struggling to keep its head above water – even with subsidies – and this insecurity can-

not continue. So far, Fisheries Ministers have not faced up to this fact and the current CFP encourages a short-term scramble for fish with fishermen chasing as many fish as they can in a very short time. This will, sooner or later, leave us with no fish and no jobs. The new CFP is a chance to restructure the fishing sector for the benefit of fish, fishermen and the fishing industries.

Did you know? Between 1997 and 2003, the number of employees in the fisheries sector decreased by 23%, with the majority of the job losses (80%) in Spain, Portugal and Italy.

Trends in numbers of employees in the fishing sector and landings of fish in the EU



■ Employees in the fishing sector in '000 ■ Total Landings in the EU in '000 tons (EU-27)

For more myths and more info go to: www.wwf.eu/fisheries



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

www.wwf.eu

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WHAT'S NEW

Smart new gear for fishermen

WWF’s *Smart Gear Competition*, which has been running since 2005, rewards practical, innovative fishing gear designs that reduce bycatch – the accidental catch of non-target species ranging from turtles and marine mammals to birds and non-target fish.



A device designed to reduce the number of seabirds caught on long-line fishing gear has won this year’s \$US 30,000 Smart Gear Competition. The runner up is the ‘The SeaQualizer’, designed for recreational fishermen catching deeper sea fish. These fish are raised to the surface with their swim bladders fully expanded. Releasing the fish at the surface could kill it, as it cannot compress its swim bladder again to reach deeper waters. The SeaQualizer allows release at the right depth. More details are available at www.smartgear.org.

Disappointing deal

Measures to prevent illegal fishing of Mediterranean bluefin tuna have been strengthened at the annual meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The Commission decided to implement an electronic system for recording bluefin catches, which will provide more accurate data. While it welcomed the move, WWF said there were still ‘holes’ in the supply chain, notably the tuna fattening farms. WWF is calling for a thorough and reliable assessment of all fish transfers to tuna fattening farms across the Mediterranean – or, in the absence of this, for the banning of tuna farming altogether in the region. On swordfish – another popular and overexploited Mediterranean fish – new measures adopted were ‘weak and insufficient’ said WWF. For more details visit www.panda.org/tuna