

**“PRESS RELEASE (16/9/2008)**

**Fishermen, conservationists, scientists and the European Commission agree to manage European fisheries for the long term**

An international Seminar on Long Term Management (LTM) Plans was held the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of September at the seat of the Regional Council Pays de la Loire in Nantes (France). The event was co-organized by five Regional Advisory Councils (Baltic Sea, North Sea, North Western Waters, South Western Waters, Pelagic Species) and sponsored by Région Pays de la Loire and AGLIA.

The aim of this Seminar was to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and views in order to understand from a multidisciplinary perspective how LTM Plans might be better elaborated and implemented as an effective tool for achieving a sustainable exploitation of the stocks by 2015 (following the EU commitment at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002)

Every December, feelings run high when the European Commission, working from scientific advice, proposes changes, and often reductions, to TACs so as to let fish stocks survive. Fishermen then feel obliged to argue their case via their government representatives and Ministers for more fishing quotas so that the fishermen themselves can survive. This system has not worked well for either side. Thankfully, at this RAC led meeting, all sides acknowledged this problem and began frank discussions on ways to work together in the management process.

A wide range of presentations about the different elements and dimensions of Long Term Management Plans were given by European Commission DG MARE, ICES and RAC fishing industry representatives, together with renowned researchers and independent experts in the fields of biology, environment, economics and social sciences.

Early results of a new long-term management system were analysed; where it was found that such systems allow fishermen, scientists and administrators to work together on planning methods for setting quotas for years ahead according to predetermined rules which, allow depleted stocks recover and, eventually lead to high and stable catches.



The Director for Atlantic, Outermost Regions and Arctic at DG MARE, Mr. Reinhard Priebe stated that *“All the parties have agreed during these two days that long term management arrangements will improve the management of fisheries compared to the far from perfect situation of annually negotiating TACs”*.

However, it was noted by members of the RACs that these management systems needed proper assessments to be done which combine biological, economic and social information, prior to their adaptation.

Hugo Anderson, chairman of the North Sea RAC stated that *‘In this new system, it's important to involve all concerned stakeholders and to think about how fast changes can be made and how much they will cost before returns improve. Some people are worried to avoid sudden and major changes, and they need to be listened to.’*

After years of disagreements, The Regional Advisory Councils, the scientists and the Commission could agree to work together on proper planning for fisheries management. No doubt compromises will still be needed, as Mike Sissenwine, president of ICES stated, *“For each fishery, multiple objectives are possible and we need to set intermediate objectives”*

It was recognized by the attendees that the RACs have proven to be efficient organizations and should play an important role on channeling participation of stakeholders in this process. However, the exact coordination between the European Commission, the scientific community and the RACs remains to be better defined. Developing RACs’ involvement on this issue will need additional funding which could be sought through EU structural funds.

A final comprehensive report stating all the discussion, key points and outcomes of the meeting is being currently produced and will be available soon, together with all the relevant information about this event (agenda, meeting papers and presentations) in the websites of the organizing RACs.

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