



SYMPOSIUM

A FUTURE FOR FISHERIES?

Towards effective strategies for sustainability

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REPORT OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION

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REPORT:

1. Technical measures

Intro - (Charles Clover)

As the moderator of this panel discussion I am not that 'moderate' as in my book I lashed out seriously at fisheries. *[Charles Clover is the author of 'The end of the line: How overfishing is changing the world and what we eat']*

Is there a future for fisheries? This discussion would have been impossible 5-10 years ago. Today, we all support the same narrative, also fisheries. We all use the term 'global crisis' (a term used since the fisheries data of China were excluded from the world statistics). We are aware that whole ecosystems are affected. Some because of human interference (fisheries, pollution), but many more factors are involved (e.g. global warming). Today, on the symposium, we heard in all presentations about overfishing. It is on the forefront of many people's mind. Also the EU recognizes the problem, but usually takes insufficient measures. This Christmas however, the fisheries council decided an inventive technical measure. *[Scottish and English fishermen have proposed a solution and the ministers have adopted it in December 2007: the fisheries council allows fishermen in the North Sea with 11 % more cod quota, but cuts the time they have to catch it in. For extra time at sea (approx. 12 days a year) the fishermen will have to sign up to a series of voluntary conservation measures like real time closures of areas with high concentrations of juvenile fish and selective trawl gear, designed to allow cod to escape while catching other species.]*

Question:

Are this and other technical measures enough to give fisheries a future? How much is possible with technical measures (MPA's not considered)?

Daniel Pauly - The future for fisheries lies in small-scale fisheries. But it has no future if trawling is continued. We have to use lines and certain nets at certain places and certain times. Fishermen however have lost this knowledge: now they loose cheap energy to capture everything; and forgot the knowledge on where and when to fish what.

Emiel Brouckaert - Alternative techniques other than trawling and methods - like the reduction in fishing days - should be further studied, especially on how to reduce the socio-economic impacts for fishermen. We know we will have to invest in these new methods.

Han Lindeboom - The new technical measures are a way forward, but we should set up clear goals and easily measurable goals. Like e.g., how to improve the age-distribution (easily measurable) of plaice by technical measures (clear goal)? Both scientist and fishermen have to take this challenge.

Camiel Derichs - The MSC is not prescriptive, but has 3 main guidelines: (1) the stock needs to be in a healthy state or must be recovered; (2) the ecosystem needs to remain intact (e.g. minimize bottom impact, minimize bycatch, ...) and (3) the fishing needs to be done in a sustainable way. Technical measures alone are not enough. It is kind of dangerous to say that some fishing gear, like trawlers, cannot be used in a sustainable manner. One can e.g. achieve that by avoiding bycatch and sensitive areas. [MSC recently accepted trawling fisheries to be certified under strict conditions] (*Daniel Pauly does not agree with Camiel Derichs and reacts*)

Daniel Pauly - MSC made a bad decision to agree with beam trawling! With fishing techniques like trawlers, dynamite and cyanide one cannot control the fishing mortality of the target species. They destroy the habitat and have effects on non-target species that you cannot measure. They are too indiscriminate methods. Line fishing is a good, selective alternative. But you have to have the knowledge on what hooks and bait to use. It is an example of a technique 'where the fish has to move, not where the habitat has to move'.

Emiel Brouckaert - We are working hard to find means, with or without MSC! MSC is one mean of controlling, but to my feeling there are technical and sustainable adaptations possible! In Belgium there are technical adaptations suggested by scientists (who are not here) and supported by scientific studies. [*He refers to the research of ILVO-Fisheries*]

Audience (Willy Versluys - fisherman) - We should indeed care about sustainable fisheries, but why always point the finger only to the fishermen? What is the percentage of fish that goes to predators and seabirds? If you protect these, we might end up with fat seabirds and thin fishermen.

Maybe the easily available, inexpensive fuel is the main reason for the maintaining of trawling? High fuel prices may give a solution... - (*Karin Limburg*)

Audience (fisherman) - In Denmark, we used to have a native technique called 'anchor seine'. It was very environment-friendly. It needed small boats using only 50 ton of diesel per year (the big beam trawlers now use this volume per week!). Only 12 days of fishing were allowed.

2. Consumer responsibility

Intro - (Charles Clover)

Daniel Pauly stated in his presentation today that the consumers only have a small part to play. Too little people are involved or will ever be involved (max. 5%). The money invested in building consumer awareness should better be spent in lobbying/awareness building of policy makers, governments and politicians.

Question:

Does the consumer have a responsibility in the global fisheries crisis? Is it the consumers fault?

Camiel Derichs - MSC is active in 35 countries. There is a high increase in consumer's awareness. More and more people are asking for sustainable fish and ecolabels. According to a poll in 2007: 21% of the consumers was concerned and aware of MSC; 10% made the active choice for MSC-ecolabeled products. But the purchasers of food serving companies and supermarkets are the real gate-keepers. They foresee, select and give what their buyers want.

Charles Clover - Can you solve the problem by convincing the supermarkets?

Daniel Pauly - I don't want to dump on MSC. People should be more active. And awareness can be turned into action. E.g. WWF has the yearly 'smart gear competition', asking fisheries to come up with practical solutions to reduce their impact. This can actually help.

But the main problem is that we cannot get as much fish from the sea as we do now. Governments on the other hand advice people to double their consumption of seafood for healthy reasons. But where should all this fish come from? In the western world the consumers do not notice shortness, because a lot is imported from developing countries. The more fish we eat here, the less you have in Africa. Dutch companies e.g. are involved in turning sardinella (food for local people) into pig food. Is this sustainable?

Emiel Brouckaert – Today, all presentations were very interesting. I learned a lot. It is clear that the fisheries sector has to go sustainable to everybody's advantage. Not only for socio-economic reasons, but also for the ecosystem maintenance. In Europe at least we need an increased cooperation between science and industry. The industry is not enough involved, not enough aware. We need more guidance to make use of all this scientific information. Fisheries managers should also take part into this discussion.

Ulf Dieckmann – In this discussion we look at secondary issues. Technical measures and consumer awareness takes the attention away of the primary issue: the overexploitation of the stocks. Effort reduction is the main issue! The cost of exploitation is paid by everybody. There are two steps in the understanding of it:

1. Scientific advice – Although there is still some uncertainty in the advice (quality is increasing, still room for improvement), the patterns are clear enough!
2. Political arena or the implementation of scientific advice – The main impairment is that the scientific advice is mainly ignored by the politicians. E.g. for 5 years scientists advice a closure of cod fisheries but it is not happening; the advice is not implemented. This can indeed be solved by an increased cooperation of scientists and industry. A more profound dialogue is needed.

Daniel Pauly – There is no need for more dialogue! There is also no need for more public consultation! There is need for more enforcement! What is there left to talk about? We keep on talking over and over again about the same things... [A comparison is made with the tobacco industry (kept on denying the health risk of smoking) and the police (no discussion possible when being fined)]. The only dialogues that are acceptable to me, is when they are about what decisions to be taken. E.g. how to turn subsidies for new boats into subsidies for retirement.

3. Ownership and rights to fish

Question:

Who owns the sea? Is there any reason to give fishermen preferential rights to use the sea?

Frank Maes – There is a theory that if you give a fisherman exclusive rights in a certain territory, he will be safeguarding this territory for a good catch in forthcoming years. However, if more fishermen are using the same territory, there is a fierce competition leading to negligence. There is no longer a link between the fisherman and his catch anymore. How to deal with this is very difficult... Do we want to give a certain group certain exclusive rights to increase their sustainability?

In between fisheries and consumers lie the multinationals. The world seafood commerce is in the hands of a few big commercial groups. They can sell anything on any market. These groups are never very visible in the discussion and they should also be involved. We need to make rules for those groups that directly have control on the fishing industry.

Han Lindeboom – Marine spatial planning is also important and can be very effective. I am not completely opposed to beam trawling as such. In the Dutch shells e.g. we can plan certain zones where beam trawling could be allowed, in other zones beam trawling should be banned completely. In the open areas everything can be taken and the bottom can be ploughed several times a year.

In Holland the industrial cockle fishing is banned, only hand fisheries are allowed. But the ban is not working, cockle is still not sustainable. Some years are good, some are not. One should not only plan on a spatial scale, but also take into account important natural temporal scales.

Audience (Greenpeace) – The international law is clear! Fishermen have a right to fish, but only under the condition that the stocks are maintained. This responsibility lies on the shoulders of the fishermen and the governments. One should give fisheries the rights to fish (through quotas arranged on an international scale) only under the condition that they keep some responsibilities (maintenance of stocks and the environment). It is still separated because it is left to individual member states.

Audience (Friends of the Sea) – Illegal fishing is not mentioned today, although the situation is very bad. A lot more is landed than reported in the books. It is very lucrative, the penalties are mild [example is given of a UK fisherman being caught and only forced to pay a punishment of 20% the value of the illegal landed fish]. This has to be controlled more!

Daniel Pauly – Misleading the quota seems part of the game. It is always done, in all fisheries. Is there another sector where you can do this? None! Only in fisheries you can regularly steal things from the public and break the law.

Emiel Brouckaert – Policy makers should react! A lot of effort is being invested in fighting against illegal fishing, especially in Belgium and Europe. Nowadays ship managers also react on unreported fishing. And about subsidies: in Europe (and certainly in Belgium) we are restricted to subsidies if we are not reducing the fishing effort.

My answer is: yes there is a future for fisheries. There are the long term management plans in European waters, and the recovery plans up to 2015. We are moving into the right direction and fisheries are looking at cooperation to get there. That is why I am surprised

about Daniel Pauly who does not want to cooperate with the fishermen... although they are the people that are always on the sea.

Karen Limburg – I do have a question for the fishermen. Why do honest fishermen do not close the ranks against the ones that are cheating? It is in your interest to do that!

Audience (Willy Versluys – fisherman) – There are too many fishermen from too many countries. Belgian fishermen try to follow the Belgian rules as good as possible. But there are other rules in other countries. Europe should make the same rules for everybody. They define the quota, but the countries are free to put measures and rules.

[Charles Clover asks whether he believes that these new general rules will be taken up by all the fishermen? As an example he quotes an example of Belgian trawlers catching too many small fish in Irish Sea. Versluys counters this example as history. Nowadays, every ship in the Irish Sea is controlled every week. Small fish are not aboard, but put back into the sea. Versluys quotes the example of Norway, where all the bycatch must be landed. But states that finally it is thrown away as well, because no value.]

4. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Question:

Will the management plans have an effect? Will Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) have an effect? What proportion of the sea should be set aside? Greenpeace says 45%...

Han Lindeboom – 25 years ago I advised my government to close off an area of 25 % completely for damaging fisheries. And then I almost got fired... Now my point of view has changed in the sense that these areas should be open to some fisheries. It is not sustainable to close it completely. You must compromise.

Daniel Pauly – The governments of the EU countries committed themselves (Convention for Biodiversity Diversity) to implement these Marine Protected Areas and set the goals. These commitments are supposed to be binding! Every government has a minister of environment (representing the public) and a minister of fisheries (representing the fishing industry). But they fight each other, instead of implementing their commitments. *[In the presentation of Han Lindeboom it was demonstrated that The Netherlands and Belgium already assigned their MPA's but did not change any activity yet]*

Camiel Derichs – If the government does not take his responsibility, others can also force these goals: the fishermen, the fishing industry, ngo's,...

Ulf Dieckmann – If MPA were the main means in the future, then I think a closure of 50% is needed. The main political goal is to get a maximal profit out of a stock with the safeguarding of employment. On the one hand we need a fishing effort reduction of 50% to have maximal profit out of the stock. On the other hand employment has to be maintained. Fishing a depleted stock costs more, in terms of fuel and people's effort, than a healthy stock. It is a trade off: yield against employment. That is why the decision making on fishing effort reduction is so slow. Why do politicians keep on pumping so much money in fisheries? Subsidies are used to combat unemployment. We better use this money for other types of employment programs.

5. Ultimate solution?

Question:

What is your number-one prescription? What is your top one solution?

Emiel Brouckaert – Cooperation and communication

Ulf Dieckmann – Reduce the fishing effort with 50%

Frank Maes – Enforcement and regulation

Han Lindeboom – Get strait goals and go for it.

Daniel Pauly – Abolish subsidies please!

James Barrett – Things can change! We don't have to fish always, because we have not always been fishing.

Karen Limburg – Reduce and think about the rest of the system

Camiel Derichs – Certify!