

# News Round-up

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## *Galloping off*

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Around 900 protesting fishermen recently vacated research stations they had seized in the Galapagos Islands in **Ecuador**, after the government met their demands and loosened limits on lobster trapping.

The fishermen had taken control of the Charles Darwin Foundation's research facilities to protest a government-imposed limit on their catches. In October, the Galapagos fishing commission established a seasonal limit, giving fishermen up to three months to harvest no more than 50 tonnes of lobster. But the weight limit was exceeded after only two months, and 939 fishermen—almost double the number registered in 1999—were demanding an extension.

The Galapagos archipelago is 600 miles west of the

Ecuadorean mainland in the Pacific Ocean and is Ecuador's main tourist attraction. Its species of plants and animals, found nowhere else in the world, have unique characteristics that helped Charles Darwin develop his theory of evolution.

## *No suicide*

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**Morocco** is not keen on entering into a 'suicidal' agreement with the European Union (EU) on fisheries, according to the kingdom's sea-fishery minister, Said Chbaatou.

The EU answer to the kingdom's proposals does not take into account mutual commitment for a 'renovated' and 'balanced' partnership, Chbaatou said. He deplored the EU response as a mere duplicate of the last fishing agreement (1995-99). He also insisted Morocco was

sovereign on its resources and keen to make the most of relations with

Brussels in every field, including fisheries.

The Moroccan proposals call for a reduction of duration of the agreement and number of European fishing boats, and limitation of catches and their landing in Moroccan ports. Morocco also wants exclusive fishing zones for nationals, satellite monitoring and boarding of local fishermen on European trawlers.

## *Wan no more*

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With its recent entry into the Convention on Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Central and Western Pacific Ocean, a government-to-government international fishery organization, the **Republic of China** (ROC, Taiwan) has raised its profile.

According to fishery administration officials, this is the first time since the ROC's expulsion from the UN in 1971 that **Taiwan** has managed to fully participate in a multilateral international organization. They said that Taiwan joined the commission as a 'fishing entity' under the name of 'Chinese

Taipei' and the ROC, as a fishing entity in the executive commission, will enjoy almost the same rights and obligations of the convention's 'contracting parties'.

Observers said Taiwan's enormous clout in the deep-sea fishing industry is the major reason behind its success in breaking Beijing's diplomatic embargo and taking part in all six rounds of negotiations for the formation of the body. The ROC ranks among the world's six largest deep-sea fishing countries, according to official UN tallies.

## *Yanks poached*

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**Russia** has decided to confiscate a US fishing vessel for poaching. The city court in Petropavlovsk-

Kamchatskiy passed a ruling on 8 November to confiscate the M-Grey Shadow fishing schooner, belonging to the US Arctic Sea Corporation. The schooner poached in the Sea of Okhotsk off the Kamchatka western coast, concealing its name and registration. The schooner had reportedly started

escaping to the high seas on 11 October, when the Russian Pagella coastguard ship tried to stop it for inspection. Only after being fired upon by a coastguard plane did the vessel stop. The schooner was flying the Honduran flag, and its crew consisted of Russians. The court fined their captain, Yevgeniy Vanin, over R150,000.

### ***Hands off our fish***

We need investments alright, but we'd like to keep the fish for ourselves. So seems to be the collective will of **South Africa**. As Europe's fishing fleet, too big for its own waters, wants permission to move into the recently rehabilitated waters off South Africa's coast, the country's government, unions and industry are intent on preventing European fishing boats from casting their nets within 125 miles of the country's coastline.

The government says Spain and Portugal are pushing the EU to press for access to those waters, as the two countries are currently the main buyers of South Africa's lucrative hake exports and both have excess fishing and fish-processing capacity at home.

### ***Pay up or else...***

Fishing companies from **Chile** exported

canned and frozen jack mackerel to **Cuba** for a total amount of US\$14.5 million (1.5 million boxes). The amount exported represents 44 per cent of Chile's total exports during the first half of 2000.

However, according to Pesquera Alimentos Marinos (Alimar), Cuba owes a total of US\$18 million to different Chilean fishing companies that have been sending the canned and frozen products to that country.

Apart from Cuba's government, two traders are also responsible for the debt: Tres Lirios and Sur Continente. The capacity of the exports exceeded the ability of these two companies to respond economically.

Cuba negotiated direct credit with some local companies such as Pesquera Coloso. San Jose and Camanchaca, two of the biggest Chilean exporters, are some of the companies whose commercial activities have been affected, since the expected money has not arrived yet. Cuba's debt with Camanchaca, for example, has reached US\$4 million.

### ***Cracked cans***

Retailers in **South Africa** have started sending back

Namibian canned fish products, after they discovered cracks in some Namibian fish cans, reports The Namibian. South Africa is the main

importer of Namibian canned fish products. The fish factories said they had not yet quantified losses as a result of the cracked tins but said it would "definitely run into several millions".

South African fish factories use a different type of tin for its fish, which has fewer joints than the tins used by Namibian processors. An independent food scientist, jointly appointed by the Namibian Government and the Geneva-based International Standards Organization, found that the cracks in 425-gm tins of fish among the stored 1998 production was caused by corrosion that increases during storage and handling of the cans.

### ***Shrimp crimped***

The collapse of **Indonesia's** economy three years ago has taken its toll on one Indonesian shrimp

farm purported to be the world's largest shrimp processor. The company, Dipasena Citra Darmaja (DCD), once valued at US\$2.5 billion is now worth just US\$400 million at most, says the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency.

Most of DCD's 18,000 shrimp ponds have been empty and farmers are refusing to work. Close to 60,000 people rely on the company for their livelihood.

Its operations include hatcheries, feed mills, large-scale grow-out operations, state-of-the-art processing and cold-storage plants, two power stations, feed mills, hatcheries, cold-storage facilities, international sales and marketing facilities and two container ships.

The company hopes to add enough ponds by the end of 2001 to

reach US\$1 billion in sales. In its best year, DCD took in revenues of less than US\$200 million and this year it and its affiliates will be lucky to clear US\$100 million, says an article in the Far