

News Round-up

Get lost!

Coastal communities in **Somalia** are shooing away foreign ships engaged in illegal fishing in their country's territorial waters. Illegal fishing rose after the disintegration of the country into clan-based fiefdoms follows the overthrow of President Siad Barre in 1991.

Somalia's marine resources are rich and fisheries is the country's second largest industry after agriculture and the fourth largest earner of foreign exchange after livestock, banana and frankincense.

Banking on the lack of a central government in Somalia, foreign ships are using prohibited fishing methods.

These include drift-nets,

dynamiting, breaking coral reefs and destroying the coral habitats where

lobsters and other coral fish live.

As a result, even tiny female lobsters carrying eggs are killed indiscriminately during their reproductive cycle, something which was illegal before the civil war began in 1991.

To combat illegal fishing, local fishermen, armed with small firearms, have formed vigilante groups. When they capture a foreign fishing vessel, its occupants are forced to pay some cash as a fine for the illegal practice.

No to quotas

Over 2,000 fishery and fish processing workers, members of the Food and Allied Workers Union, marched to the Parliament of **South Africa**, protesting the month-long closure of a commercial rock lobster fishery after established quota holders went to court to challenge the government's plan to grant additional quota to new fishing concerns.

The Directorate of Sea Fisheries also has halted issuing quotas for hake, pilchard and anchovy until the

court challenge is resolved.

Remember Exxon Valdez?

The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council has issued a report on the progress with recovery nearly a decade after the spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska, US. Only two of the nearly 24 species of affected animals are considered fully recovered—river otters and bald eagles.

Species listed as recovering include pink salmon, mussels, sockeye salmon, common murre, clams, Pacific herring, sea otters, black oystercatchers and marbled murrelets. Species showing little or no signs of recovery include common loon, cormorants, harbor seals, harlequin ducks, killer whales and pigeon guillemots.

Recovery status is unknown for cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden trout, Kittlitz's murrelet, and rockfish.

EIAs, please

The Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association (GFWA) has called upon the

governments of the US, **Canada** and **Mexico** to quickly conclude negotiations for transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This move is necessary to adequately protect fishery resources which straddle the country borders.

At a US-Mexican Summit last month, President Clinton and President Zedillo expressed satisfaction "to be approaching agreement, along with Canada, on a trilateral arrangement to ensure the cross-border effects of many proposed projects and activities can be included in our respective environmental impact assessments, and the bordering states and their citizens will be able to participate in the assessment process."

Concurrently, meetings between the Canadian Environment Minister and the Mexican Secretary of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries were taking place in Ottawa.

GFWA believes that five years is ample time to conclude negotiations on what

all parties have admitted are urgently needed provisions to cover proposed projects "likely to cause significant adverse transboundary effects."

An appeal

Ocean Watch, the National Ocean Watch Centre, based in New South Wales, **Australia**, is now engaged in a research project to document the mechanisms used by fishermen to reduce by-catch in non-trawl fisheries.

Duncan Leadbitter, Executive Director of Ocean Watch (email: oceanwch@geko.net.au) would like to hear from fishermen, researchers and others.

He needs information on what type of

actions (eg, avoiding areas of heavy by-catch abundance) and devices (eg, escape gaps) fishermen either use or know of.

Microbe attack

Researchers claim that previously unknown bacteria and viruses blooming in the earth's warming oceans are

killing some marine life and threatening human health.

More and more reports are coming in of corals dying, shellfish getting diseased and waters being infected with human virus as the temperature in seas rise and pollution from the land intensifies.

The increase pathogens may be linked to a 1.8 degree rise in sea surface temperature detected in many areas. Some of the viruses detected in coastal waters are linked with heart disease, diabetes, meningitis and hepatitis.

Around 10 per cent of the corals worldwide have died, researchers told a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The warmer waters kill algae living on the corals, weakening them and making them more susceptible to infection. Often, the pathogens killing the corals, like viruses, bacteria and fungi, have not been previously identified. The loss of coral is significant because the reef-building animal is the basis for the health of the tropical seas.

Training courses

The Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) of the Indian Council of

Agricultural Research, based in Cochin, **India** has just announced training programmes for technical staff employed in fish processing units, women and young entrepreneurs.

The courses deal with different aspects of fisheries and fish processing, like training on HACCP concepts, laboratory techniques for identifying bacteria in fish and fish products, training in value-added fishery products, etc. CIFT can also arrange special need-based ad hoc programmes on

specific requests. Further details can be had from the Director, CIFT, Willingdon Island, Cochin (Email: Kravi@cift.ker.nic.in. Tel: (91) 484 66 6845)

Moroctopus

A representative from the Ministry of Fisheries of Morocco told a cephalopod conference in Barcelona that there exists too much catching capacity in the octopus fisheries of Moroccan waters.

Catches have fallen by 50 per cent in just two years. After November 1999,

when the current fisheries agreement with the EU expires, Morocco will stop issuing fishing licences for foreign vessels.

Foreign companies, however, will be allowed to form 50:50 joint ventures with Moroccan companies and will be able to invest in shore facilities. But all catches made in Moroccan waters will have to be landed in Moroccan ports.

Responsibly

Over 100 individual seafood companies in the US have enforced the Principles for Responsible Fisheries, formulated by the National Fisheries Institute, the Virginia-based fish and seafood trade association representing over 1,000 companies in the seafood trade.

These principles are designed to direct the efforts of fishermen and seafood businesses towards conserving the productivity of American fisheries, protecting water quality and contributing to the health and nutrition of consumers.