

# News Round-up

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## ***Subsidies cut***

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In early June, at the end of a two-day workshop on policy recommendations for sustainable fisheries, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** jointly called for a reduction of over US \$50 billion in subsidies. These were meant to be spent annually by nations worldwide in excess of fish harvest revenues. The organizations said this was a major stimulus in encouraging uncontrolled over-competitive fishing that depletes fish stocks.

## ***Behave!***

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The New England Fishery Management Council has mooted a voluntary, non-binding Code of Conduct to be discussed by a Responsible Fishing Committee. The proposed code urges commercial fishermen to protect the fishery resource, ensure high-quality products, advance scientific knowledge, keep abreast of technological innovations and develop mutual respect and trust. Phew! What a tall order!

## ***Be responsible***

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Self-regulation seems to be the order of the day. A couple of months ago, a coalition of US seafood associations and

companies announced the development of a voluntary set of 'principles for responsible fisheries' to guide the US seafood industry in responsible resource use.

The principles seek to improve the way seafood is caught, processed and distributed; to ensure environmentally sound

use of seafood resources; and to offer guidance from the fishing industry to government managers.

Elements of the fishing industry adopting these principles are expected to co-operate with government managers to improve resource use and management.

## ***And don't just fish***

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"It is no longer enough for fishermen to simply know how to operate a boat and catch fish," says a recent report on responsible fishing prepared for the Fisheries Council of **Canada**. Although Canada claims to have one of the most comprehensive fisheries management systems in the world, crises abound. Witness the

sharp decline in recent years of stocks of groundfish on the Atlantic Coast and salmon the Pacific Coast.

Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) has developed a new 'vision' for the future management of Canadian fisheries. This is based on the concept of co-operative management, and is consistent with the recommendations contained in FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

The long-term strategy of the DFO is to transfer more responsibility for fisheries management to the fishing industry, while maintaining legislative responsibility for protecting stocks.

## ***Slamming salmon***

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On behalf of the David Suzuki Foundation, the Friends of Clayoquot Sound and Greenpeace, the Sierra Legal Defense Fund in the US has prepared a report entitled *Containing Disaster: Global Lessons on Salmon Aquaculture* that discusses negative aspects of salmon farming. Aquafarmers may find its contents interesting, even if uncomfortably so.

## ***Dear President...***

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In late May, several organizations representing the interests of fishworkers in the **Philippines** sent

an open letter to President Fidel V. Ramos. It urged Ramos to undo the disastrous effects of the 22-year old presidential Decree 704, promulgated to fully exploit the Philippines' fishery resources. The signatories, including Bigkis Lakas Pilipinas, specifically asked for reforms to protect mangroves and fishworkers' rights. They also demanded priority for fisherfolk co-operatives in fish pond lease agreements.

## ***Scot-free-for now***

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Vessels from **Namibia** found fishing illegally in South African waters may yet escape the arms of the law, since the current laws on marine fisheries do not provide for punitive measures

against such offenders. Sihaleni Ndjaba, Namibia's acting permanent secretary for fisheries, was reported by Xinhua News Agency as saying that the country was planning new legislation under which Namibian vessels spotted in other territorial waters would be fined or impounded.

## ***Hol(e)y war***

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The European Union's plan to manage the region's fisheries through regulating the mesh size of nets has invited the wrath of fishermen. Hundreds of

striking French fishermen blocked several Channel ports, crippling traffic to and from **Dunkirk, Calais** and **Boulogne** in late April. The fishermen were protesting EU regulations increasing mesh size for fixed sole nets from 80 mm to 120 mm. A French court ordered the fishermen to life the blockade. The fishermen complied, but only after French officials promised to raise fishermen's concerns at a meeting of EU ministers.

### ***Satellite tracking***

Those all-seeing eyes of the Big Brothers up there in space may soon help monitor fishing fleets and avoid fresh fishing battles in the waters of **Europe**. Using a combination of Global Positioning System and satellite tracking technology, trials for a new system have been conducted by the European

Commission in Brussels. A similar system is also being tested out for the ASEAN region, where a satellite tracking system could be more centralized and thus much less complex.

### ***Bedding down***

Japan, India and an East European consortium of nations have joined the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration of the US

to hire a Seattle-based company, Redmond's sound Ocean System Inc., to conduct

environmental tests to determine how future deep Seattle-based company, Redmond's Sound Ocean Systems Inc., to conduct environmental tests to determine how future deep seabed mining would disturb sea life on the ocean floor.

### ***Sock! Pow! Bang!***

Around 35 Puerto Rican fishermen from the island of Vieques were reported to have clashed with troops aboard six naval vessels from **Belgium** and the **Netherlands** anchored in a popular fishing area which the fishermen claimed was reserved for civilian activities. The US Navy owns portions of Vieques and allows other nations to conduct exercises there.

### ***Drifting away***

The EU Fisheries Council is considering a co-financing plan to convert the swordfish fishery of **Italy** away from drift-net use over the 1997-1999 period. The proposed plan would provide financial incentives for fishermen and vessel owners to encourage them to cease or modify their drift-net fishing.

### ***Herring plant***

State and local officials in Massachusetts, US are

reviewing a proposal by the Dutch fishing conglomerate, Parelvliet & Van Der Plas, to construct and operate a 50,000 sq.ft. processing plant for herring and some mackerel at a state-managed pier in Gloucester.

About 20,000 tonnes of herring would be packed, frozen and shipped to European markets annually, providing an estimated US \$10 million in economic benefits to the community.

The Dutch company has offered to fund the conversion of Gloucester vessels for herring fishing.

### ***Sad sardines***

Fishing industry officials in **Japan** have reported that, due to a severe decline in the harvest of sardines by Japanese fishermen, sardines for canning are being imported from the US and Mexico. The price of sardines in Japan has thus risen substantially.

### ***Stop dumping***

Over 550,000 tonnes of discards of edible fish were dumped into the **North Sea** last year, according to an assessment report by the secretariat of the fifth North Sea Conference, prepared for the Intermediate Ministerial Meeting on the North Sea in Bergen in mid-march. That is roughly equivalent to the current Danish catch of sand eel dedicated to fishmeal and oil production.

Stuart Barlow, director general of the

International Fishmeal and Oil Manufacturers Association, has called for control of discards from the human-grade fisheries thrown back into the sea. He said that this practice represents enormous waste of valuable protein from the North Sea. If landed, these fish could help meet the European demand for whitefish and would cut back imports of this commodity. This would save the European countries around US \$55 million each year, according to Barlow.

### ***Oysters for Maoris***

An agreement reached between the government of **New Zealand** and the Treaty of Waitangi Commission has given New Zealand's Maoris a 20 per cent share of the oyster catch from the Foveaux Strait. Oysters have not yet been included in the Quota Management System agreed in the 1992

Maori fisheries settlement.

For the current agreement, the government bought quotas from existing permit holders at a cost of about US \$4.2 million.

The annual revenue from a 20 per cent share of the Foveaux Strait oyster catch is estimated to be at least US \$ 0.7 million.