

News Round-up

Dying out

Optimists, stop smiling. If any confirmation is needed that the world's marine resources are still threatened, in early May, the World Wide Fund for Nature announced the findings of a workshop of 32 scientists in **London**.

According to them, 131 of the 152 fish species discussed faced possible extinction, with 15 considered critically endangered.

The workshop results will go into the 1996 Red List of Threatened Animals, to be issued later this year by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

Dwindling

As worried are officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries of Japan.

They have just announced that the country's fishery production declined in 1995 for the seventh consecutive year.

The total production in 1995 was 7.47 million tones, about 8 per cent less than in 1994. Most

of this drop sprung from huge declines in sardine and mackerel catch.

Bye-bye, catch

No wonder resources are being fast depleted. According to preliminary data leaked from a report on trawlers, being prepared under contract for the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the **British Columbia** trawl fleet has been responsible for excessive by-catch.

Activists of the environmental group, Greenpeace, used this piece of information to criticize the Canadian government.

Illiquidity

Overfishing alone is clearly not the problem. In a recent report titled 'Liquid Assets', the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated that 40 per cent of American rivers, lakes and streams are too polluted for fishing or swimming and that one-third of all shellfish beds are closed due to contamination.

Recouping elsewhere

To let fish stocks recover, the Egyptian government announced a ban on all fishing within the 12-mile territorial waters of the Mediterranean Sea in **Egypt** during May.

And, to make sure Egyptian fishermen do

not suffer too much, the government proposed to compensate for any loss of fishing time.

According to officials, the government offered to buy fish from these fishermen at higher prices, once fishing resumed in June.

Rush! Free Salmon!

The poor prices offered by processors were enough to make salmon

fishers in **California** protest.

Rather than sell at low prices, they stopped fishing and even gave salmon away free to the public. Processors say that the price slump is because of too much salmon in the world market.

Cut down

Too many cooks spoil the broth. Equally, too many agencies spoil supervision. That seems to be the thinking of the Government of **South Korea**.

If recently announced that it will merge three existing bodies- the Maritime and Port Administration, the Fisheries Administration, and the Maritime Police

Administration-to form a new Ministry of Maritime Affairs.

Turtles, come home

The **Philippines** and **Malaysia** have concluded an agreement on a new international sanctuary for sea turtles in the Turtle Islands on the Malaysia-Philippine border, 25 miles northwest of Sandakan in Malaysia's Sabah State. This area is an important nesting site for green and hawksbill turtles.

Russian rights

Last month, **Russia** signed a bilateral agreement with the US which recognizes that all fishing within the international waters ('peanut hole') in the central Sea of Okhotsk, completely surrounded by the Russian EEZ, should be conducted in line with Russian Federation rights, duties and interests,

The US also agreed to observe all Russian efforts to preserve fishery resources in the area and co-operate with Russia in actions against fishing vessels of third countries.

Scallop follow-up

To accommodate user conflicts at the originally proposed site, the **New England** fishery Management Council has approved

an alternative location for the Westport Sea Scallop Project of the Massachusetts Institute Grant Program.

Final regulations on the nine sq.mile site in the offshore EEZ are expected soon. The approval process for the project spanned more than two years.

Chinese checker

Don't even think about fishing in areas of the southern Yellow and China Seas. The Chinese Ministry of Agriculture has clamped a moratorium on all offshore fishing in these parts during July and August. The aim is to protect fish stocks, especially hairtail. A similar ban was imposed last year too.

Sharing herring

The negotiations did not include quota claimed unilaterally by the European Union (EU).

Norway, Russia, Iceland and the **Faroe Islands** have signed an agreement on this year's harvest quotas for fishing in international waters.

These quotas relate to stocks of herring which spawn in Norwegian waters. Under this agreement, a total of 1.1 million tonnes will be harvested.

Drifting into trouble

The EU Fisheries Commissioner, Emma Bonino, has asked Italy to respect international regulations on large-scale drift-nets or face possible US trade sanctions on Italian fishery products. Bonino reported that,

during June, EU fishery enforcement patrols found that 15 of 16 Italian vessels inspected were using drift-nets averaging twice the permissible length.

Reclaiming the sea

Off the tiny island of Mer in the Torres Strait off northern **Australia**, the islanders have started to reclaim their rights to the sea surrounding their home.

Commercial fishermen from Australia who come seeking coral trout in the reefs around Mer are chased away by Mer inhabitants, members of the powerful Malo-Bomai cult.

Other parts of the Torres Strait have been overfished and so, the Mer islanders are keen to protect what is left. Only then will they be able to sustain a commercial fishing venture and hope for self-sufficiency.

A Conference that Was...

The beautiful island of Vega in **Norway** was the setting for a conference late last month on Local, Regional and Global Management and Distribution of Marine Resources.

Organized by EUROSTEP, a coalition of secular NGOs of Europe, and Norwegian People's Aid, it attracted around 50 participants

representing countries like India, Nicaragua, Senegal, South Africa, Chile, Iceland, Netherlands, Ireland and Norway, as well as the FAO.

Their discussions focused on the EU's Common Fisheries Policy and the role of NGOs in ensuring changes in world fisheries, apart from general overviews of the global fisheries crisis and development programmes.

...a workshop to come

ICSF plans to hold a South Asian Workshop on Coastal Area Management in Madras, **India** between 26 September and 1 October to focus on the institutional, legal and policy dimensions of the subject.

Apart from documentation, the workshop will review legislation and institutions relevant to coastal resources management, from the perspective of small-scale fisheries.

The six-day programme will be split into two parts. The first will comprise a four-day interactive session.

The second will be a two-day symposium, which will attempt to help start a dialogue between policymakers and fishworkers.

The workshop will try to conclude with a common statement of concern.

...and yet another one

The World Aquaculture Society (WAS) is

organizing a special session on sustainability as part of the World Aqua '97 Conference in Seattle, Washington, US.

The two-day conference will concentrate on four topics of interest: integrated coastal zone management; policy guidelines, regulations and environmental impact statements; sustainability indices and the quantification of sustainability; and best management practices.

In conducting this conference, WAS hopes to bring together the broadest possible spectrum of perspectives and interests on the subject.

Giant moves

Growing into a fishing giant is Resource Group International (RGI), based in Norway and steered by partners Kjell Inge Rokke and Bjorn Rune Gjelsten, who took the company to a turnover of US\$ one billion last year.

On the heels of a spate of acquisitions, RGI's recent US\$ 28.5 million issue of shares was heavily oversubscribed.

Especially strong in the surimi market, RGI has vessels operating from the Russian Far East to the South Atlantic.

Rokke believes that the seafood business is a cyclical one and RGI's strength lies in its diversified product range.