

# News Round-up

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## **Wives talk**

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Several Women, most of them wives of fishermen from **Ireland**, the UK and the **Netherlands**, gathered at Plymouth on 16 December 1994 to discuss the future of fisheries and fishing communities in Europe. According to Cornelia Quist of the Netherlands, who took part in the workshop, the women criticized the narrow outlook of policy-makers who see only the economic aspects of fisheries, for getting that most fishing units are community-bound family enterprises. The women also decried the tendency to portray fishermen as enemies of the environment. Their efforts at more sustainable fishing practices have been thwarted by government policies, the women pointed out.

## **In the red**

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Government, in another part of the world, is propping up big business. The government of **Galicia, Spain** is thinking of subsidies to bail out Pescanova the huge Spanish fishing company, one of the world's top five fisheries TNCs. The

leading Spanish daily *El Pais* recently reported the company's financial trouble and how it is deep in debt, to the tune of US \$285 million. Pescanova has 140 fishing vessels in 20 joint ventures in 20 countries, such as Mozambique, Namibia, Australia, South Africa, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and France.

## **How to be heard**

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Transnational character of a different sort was evident in March at the first Atlantic Canada conference on women and fisheries, reports Chantal Abord-Hugon from **Prince Edward Island, Canada**.

Seventy participants, including women from the three maritime provinces of Canada and others from Labrador and the eastern US, shared their experiences on how to make women's voices heard in the world of fisheries.

At the end of gathering, most of the women realized how similar were the problems facing their sisters around the world. They felt they are not alone in facing social justice.

"In the long term", says Chantal, "coastal communities and fishworkers' organizations will be strengthened when women are more involved in decision-making and the building of community alternatives". The encounter was supported by the Cooper Institute and

OXFAM-Canada/Project Acadie.

## **...And be briefed**

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Another prominent institute, Panos, based in **London**, has just published a briefing paper called 'Fish: a net loss for the poor'. It is part of a series meant to aid informed debate on issues of environment and development. Designed especially for the media, the briefing lists recent and forthcoming UN

conferences on fisheries and also highlights key facts on fisheries, in addition to suggesting local angles for fisheries stories.

## **Watery ranches**

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Angling to raise the total quantity of farmed fish production, the industry in **Australia** is fast turning to 'ranching'. Southern bluefin tuna, almost exclusively caught from the ocean until five years ago but now getting harder to find, are being ranched in south Australia to the annual value of over Aus \$50 million

Juvenile fish are caught in the world, put in pens, fed for four to nine months and harvested as huge, metre-long specimens. These fetch nearly Aus

\$1,500 each or Aus \$50,000 a tonne. The Japanese are the main buyers.

## **Salmon-friendly**

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Will American consumers buy the idea of salmon friendly dams? That is the hope of the National Marine Fisheries Service of the US. It recently issued two 'biological opinions' meant to protect badly depleted stocks of north-west Pacific salmon. The idea is to get the Columbia River hydroelectric power dams to generate less power as well as ensure greater protection of salmon habitat. Fisheries Service officials told reporters that this two-pronged effort would make the hydropower system more fish friendly. Three stocks of Snake River salmon are listed as endangered.

## **Fishy lyrics**

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Far from endangered are the songwriters of **Newfoundland** who,

true to the culture of Canada's poorest province, sing off their troubles. The collapse of the cod fishery has inspired them to come up with lyrics which talk of the social effects of the destruction of cod stocks.

Songs like 'Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's' and 'The Fisherman's Lament' help Newfoundlanders cope with the tragedy of the obliteration of a way of life that sustained the

province for centuries. Peter Narvaez, a folklorist and musician at Memorial University, says that for every artist who has put out his own song on a cassette, there could be eight or 10 more people who have made up their own songs and simply sing for their own pleasure or for the family and neighbours.

### ***Fast in protest***

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No Pleasure came their way as fishermen in India agitated against the government's policy to encourage joint ventures in deep-sea fishing.

To pressure the government to rethink its priorities, Thomas Kocherry, convener of the National Fisheries Action Committee

Against Joint Ventures, went on a protest fast in Porbunder in the state of Gujarat.

The government has since invited the committee for talks. As a result, the activists announced that they were suspending their agitation but made it clear that it was only a temporary withdrawal, to give the government a chance to prove its commitment to the traditional artisanal sector.

### ***Blockade blues***

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Commitment to fishermen in south **Lebanon** has come from the Lebanese government in the form of financial assistance to

help them recover from the economic losses due to the Israeli blockade of south Lebanon ports. Fishermen in Tyre, Sidon, Surfenda and other port cities have got this aid, the equivalent of US \$120 per single fisherman and US \$250 per married one. The month-old embargo imposed by Israeli naval units has forced over 1,800 fishermen to stop working.

### ***Trying to agree***

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Working to ease tension between **Vietnam** and **Thailand** is a joint fisheries committee of the two south-east Asian countries which hopes to come out with a 'Common control system'. The Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister, Vu Khoan, said that Vietnam has agreed to end the violent attacks on Thai fishing vessels by armed Vietnamese boats.

Thai fishermen have often been arrested and badly treated for violating Vietnamese waters, especially around Vietnam's southern coast. Thailand has long asked Vietnam to abide by international norms when seizing vessels and arresting crew. Both countries have also agreed to launch a one-year joint survey of maritime resources by their fisheries departments and the South-east Asian Fisheries Development Centre.

### ***Tidy 3-D***

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Catchy is the apt way to describe the cover of a slim new publication from the UNEP Environment Library. Titled 'The Impacts of Climates on Fisheries', the well-designed and readable book features a glossy cover of a shoal of coloured computer-generated images of fish. Held close to the eyes and then slowly moved away, the fish appear to float in space at different distances in a three-dimensional effect.

The book, whose text is written by Michael Glantz, makes an integrated assessment of the potential implications of climate change and variability on fisheries and on the societies that depend on them. Continuing the creativity displayed on its cover, the book introduces the catchy term, 'seacosystems', for the marine environment.

### ***Victoria defiled***

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Environmental concerns prompted the Journalists Environmental Association of **Tanzania** (JET) And the London-based Panos Institute to join forces to enlarge the public debate on the problems facing Lake Victoria, the second largest fresh-water body in the world, shared by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Sewerage, industrial and agricultural wastes and siltation from massive clearance of forests have been polluting Lake Victoria's waters for a very long time.

The journalists spent a month researching the problems of the lake and writing reports based on their analyses. They finally presented

their findings to an audience of policymakers, representatives of the lakeshore communities, NGOs and others concerned about the future of Lake Victoria.

### ***Helpful Survey***

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A recent survey from the OECD reviews the status of fisheries in the richer countries, reports Brian O'Riordan from the UK.

The review contains statistics and reports from member countries, including information on production, processing and marketing, and international trade. OECD comprises 21 coastal states, including 13 EU countries and major fish producers like the US, Japan, Iceland, Canada and Norway.

The review highlights the need to continue a policy to reduce fishing effort and notes that fishermen's income levels can be maintained only through structural adjustment.

Regarding effort reductions in member countries, the report notes that between 1985 and 1992, the number of powered boats in Norway dropped by 31 percent, in Denmark by 22 percent, in France by 44 per cent, and in Spain by 26 per cent. However, the OECD countries maintained their share of the catch with 15 million tones in 1992.