

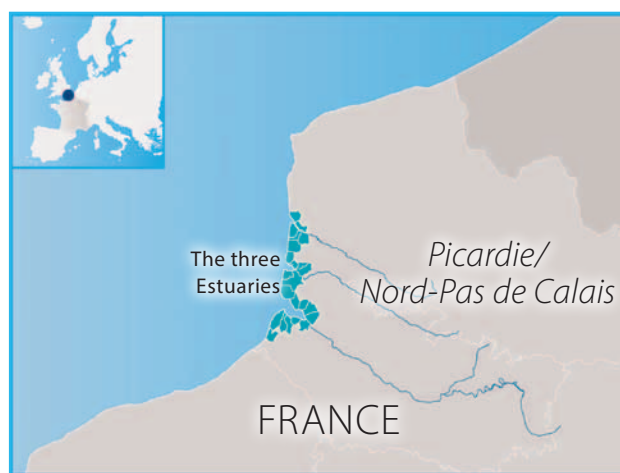
Diversifying captures

FLAG: The three Estuaries (Somme, Authie and Canche)

Picardie/Nord-Pas de Calais, France

Project overview

Bringing together environmental research and fisheries to diversify local production, this project has put fishermen at the heart of a process to develop an economically and environmentally sustainable strategy to ease pressure on their main target species while safeguarding their activity.



American razor clam, *Ensis directus* (CC BY-SA 3.0 – Arne Hückelheim)

Cockle picking is an important fishing activity on the shorelines of northern France. Indeed, in the Three Estuaries FLAG area, 340 licenced fishermen depend on this activity. However, in 2012 the revenue generated from their activity fell from €3.6 million the previous year (for a total catch of 1 400 tonnes) to €0.5 million (for a catch of 200 tonnes). This sign of weakening stocks and decreasing profitability was a serious wake-up call to fishermen that change was necessary.

The possibility of diversifying their catch was what some fishermen hoped might enable them to continue their activity.

Given the need to first ascertain which other indigenous species were abundant enough to catch and whether they could be marketed, the local FLAG supported a project that involved fishermen in a collaboration project with a local environmental NGO called GEMEL to study the potential opportunities. This research group spear-headed the project and fishermen were active in suggesting target species to be studied, sampling stocks, providing advice on fishing techniques and seasonality of activities, and raising further questions to be addressed by research bodies on the potential effects on these new stocks.

Axis 4 support helped the project gain credibility in the eyes of public co-financers and, according to fishermen and GEMEL, this meant that instead of studying just one species, a total of eight species could be studied in parallel, including worms for bait, lesser known crustaceans and the American razor clam, *Ensis directus*.

Key lessons

- › **Relevance to FARNET themes:** Environment, adding value, cooperation between fishermen and research
- › **Results:** The study has so far established that a number of the species are less abundant than foreseen while others require further research on fishing and/or processing techniques in order to be commercially exploitable. However, it has also discovered that the American razor clam is abundant enough to market and good sales opportunities have been identified on the Spanish market (which is currently the principal destination for the area's cockles). This led to the association inviting a delegation of Spanish buyers to discover the local razor clams and is helping fishermen better understand and adapt to market demand and obtain the best value for their catch. The involvement in this particular study has, moreover, prompted fishermen to become more open to other initiatives in the future and take a more proactive role in marketing their catch.
- › **Transferability:** This project is a good example of cooperation between fishermen and environmental research. This sort of cooperation can be extended to those fisheries areas around Europe where environmental organisations are addressing marine and fisheries issues.
- › **Final Comment:** Fishermen and GEMEL considered the speed and effectiveness of Axis 4 support a major asset in addressing the urgency of the fishermen's situation.

Total cost and EFF contribution

Total Cost: € 62 564

Axis 4 contribution: € 31 282

National co-financing: € 31 282 (Regions of Picardie and Nord-Pas de Calais: € 10 427 each; *Départements* of La Somme and Pas-de-Calais: € 5 214 each)

Project information

Title: Diversifying captures

Duration: 3 year study 2011-2013

Case study date: December 2012

Lead Project promoter: GEMEL (Groupe d'étude des milieux estuariens et littoraux)

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FLAG details

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[FLAG factsheet](#)

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