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Adding value to local fisheries products



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Photographs (pages):

Brigitte Ruiz (1, 15), European Commission (3), Jean-Luc Janot (5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19), Sam Morgan Moore (7), Zuidezeezilver (10), De Boet (11), Committee of the Regions (12), Jean-Michel Labrousse (17), IFHVP (20), Regione Sardegna (20), Gilles Bondaz (20), Laurence Hartwell (20), FLAG Zied Zeme (21), Valdis Kudins (22), FLAG Talsi (23), FLAG Liepaja (24), Serge Gomes da Silva (25, 26).

Cover: Oyster farming in the Arcachon basin.

Journalists:

Jean-Luc Janot, Eamon O'Hara.

Other contributors:

Urszula Budzich-Szukala, Monica Burch, Serge Gomes da Silva, Valdis Kudins, Paul Soto, Gilles van de Walle.

Production:

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Contact:

FARNET Magazine, FARNET Support Unit,
rue Saint Laurent 36-38, B-1000 Brussels
+32 2 217 44 60
info@farnet.eu
www.farnet.eu

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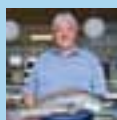
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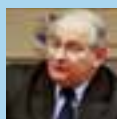
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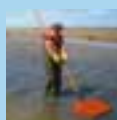
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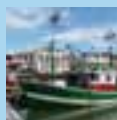
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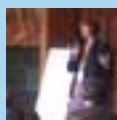
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Editorial

“Bringing together local stakeholders is essential to forge a common vision and the only way to ensure that future development is really sustainable.”

The Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth lays the foundations for a more integrated policy approach at European level. To foster this approach we need to establish a supportive framework for policy coordination at local, regional and Member State level.

Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund is a particularly important and exciting development in the EU's fisheries policy. This new initiative gives local people, and in particular those from the fisheries sector, a chance, for the first time, to really get involved in shaping how our Common Fisheries Policy is implemented. It also helps to ensure that developments within the fisheries sector are better integrated within the wider local development process.

Fisheries local action groups (FLAGs) are key to the success of the Axis 4 approach. Bringing together all local stakeholders from the public, private and civil society sectors is essential to forge a common vision and the only way to ensure that future development is really sustainable.

It is particularly heartening to see the excellent progress that has been made over the last 12 months in the implementation of Axis 4. All 21 of the participating countries have launched the process of selecting FLAGs and about 124 FLAGs across 11 countries are already operational. It is important that we maintain this momentum in the coming months in order to ensure that all FLAGs are up and running by the first half of 2011.

FLAG selection is only the beginning. The real challenge is to move forward with the implementation of local strategies that deliver real benefits to fishing communities across the EU, and help to build a more sustainable fisheries sector.

A priority objective of many of the strategies already approved is to boost income and employment in fisheries areas by adding value to local fisheries products. This is the focus of this current edition of the *FARNET Magazine*, which looks at specific initiatives in France and the Netherlands. These initiatives show the practical benefits of an integrated territorial approach, which brings together different sectoral interests to market an area and its products. They also show how mobilising local assets and resources around a common vision and strategy helps to ensure a better integration of sectoral policies at local level.

As the recently appointed Director-General of DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, I would like to congratulate those involved in the initiatives featured here, and to wish them further success for the future. In the next few months we will be looking at how we can help build on the successes from Axis 4 so far, and I would encourage those with a good success story to get in touch so we can compare notes.

Lowri Evans,
Director-General

Getting more from less:

AREA-BASED DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ADDING VALUE TO LOCAL FISHERIES PRODUCTS

By exploiting local or niche markets, or by adding value through processing, packaging or other marketing initiatives, fishing businesses can boost their revenue and profitability without necessarily increasing the size of their catch. This provides an opportunity to sustain local fishing businesses, while also reducing pressures on the marine environment.

The fishing industry in Europe is undergoing a profound transformation. In the context of declining fish stocks and downward pressure on prices, many fishermen are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain viable businesses. With limited scope to increase the size of the catch or to raise prices, one option available for reversing this trend is to look at new ways to increase the value of the existing output.

This approach aims primarily to differentiate local fisheries products from the mainstream offering and to exploit new market opportunities, often linked to emerging consumer expectations in relation to quality, freshness, and the environmental standards adhered to by the producer. Properly executed, this can open up new revenue streams which help to deliver a better financial return for the producer.

A tried and tested approach

Adding value through product differentiation has long been applied in the farming sector, where individuals and groups of farmers have successfully developed different strategies for increasing the value of their primary output. The simplest of these involves selling directly to consumers through farm shops or farmers mar-

kets, thereby cutting out intermediaries in the distribution chain. More sophisticated approaches have combined investment in quality and standards with labelling or branding to respond to new market opportunities. A good example is the Glenbarrow Farms brand, which was developed by farmers in the Irish midlands in response to consumer demand for greater reassurance about food quality and safety (see box).



Glenbarrow Farms: adding-value through branding

In 2003, farmers in County Laois (Ireland) came together, with assistance from the Laois Leader group, to develop the Glenbarrow Farms product brand. Over 300 farmers are now benefiting from the initiative, which responded to consumer demand for greater reassurance about food quality and safety.



▲ Direct sales at the Wieringen fish market in Den Oever (Netherlands).

There are some useful lessons to be learned from developments in the farming sector, but there are also many specific challenges associated with adding value to fisheries products. In particular, the extreme perishability of fresh fish, the irregularity of production, and the challenge of dealing simultaneously with species of very different characteristics and market potential.

The key ingredients

While there are many different ways of adding value to local fisheries products, most approaches have a number of common features. Firstly, any attempt to add value must be market-driven, targeting a clearly identified market need or opportunity. In general, the focus is on local or differentiated markets, targeting specific groups of consumers, with specific preferences and attitudes towards fisheries products.

Secondly, a focus on quality and the adherence to certain production standards is essential for producers that are heavily dependent on local or differentiated markets. This not only justifies the premium status (and usually, higher prices!) of these products, but it is also key to building and maintaining customer confidence and loyalty. Fisheries prod-

ucts, especially in their fresh form, present many challenges in terms of hygiene and sanitation which must be given top priority.

Thirdly, there is a strong connection with the local territory, which sometimes develops, or has already developed, a reputation for the production of the product in question. The marketing of the product is, therefore, strongly linked to the marketing of the area and often benefits from links with other local sectors, such as the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Finally, there is the question of achieving the right scale of production to ensure viability and, either individually or collectively, gaining access to the appropriate technology and marketing tools and resources.

Strategies for adding value

Integrating these features, strategies for adding value generally involve one or more of the following:

1. *Improving the organisational process*, which looks at the different functions within the organisation and seeks to identify opportunities to add value through improvements or modifica-

tion in how these are structured or delivered;

2. *Adapting the distribution chain*, which focuses on ensuring a fair distribution of margins by, for example, reducing the length of the chain or working more closely with the different participants in the chain to ensure that as many activities as possible are based locally and add value to local production;
3. *Processing*, which involves modifying a basic product in some way in order to prolong its shelf-life, increase its convenience and open up new market opportunities;
4. *Branding or labelling*, which seek to attract and retain customers by promoting product recognition and loyalty based on key product strengths or attributes.

Initiatives in any of these areas can be undertaken by individual producers or groups of producers, and sometimes a combination of the two. Group initiatives have the advantage of spreading the expense, and therefore the risk, between a greater numbers of operators. They also facilitate the pooling of knowledge and resources and the achievement of the critical mass or economies of scale required for certain initiatives.



▲ Catch of the day – fishermen sell directly to consumers at the fish market in the harbour of Olhão (Portugal).

Smarter fishing

Simple improvements or modifications in the way things are done can add value without necessarily having to modify the product itself or make substantial investments of time or money. It is worth taking the time to look at all aspects of how a business is organised and managed (production, storage, distribution, marketing, etc..) to identify such opportunities. For example, grading the catch/production according to specific criteria (extra freshness, special sizes, flesh colour) or finding ways to exploit by-products or waste are examples of areas with potential for adding value.

Selling through short chain distribution circuits generally requires an important time commitment. This is particularly true for direct sales, which involve direct contact with every consumer. However, the return on each fish sold can be considerably higher, which can make this a good complement or alternative to long chain distribution, depending on the time available and the market potential.

If the focus is on the local market, it is important that the area concerned has a sufficient population to constitute a viable market. This should include not only permanent residents, but also tourists and other visitors to the area.

New products for new markets

Short chain distribution can include processed as well as fresh products. Processing options include, among others: preparing (gutting, filleting), cooking, curing (drying, salting, smoking, pickling) and packaging (freezing, canning, vacuum packing). These processes can help to prolong shelf life, increase convenience or improve visual or sensory appeal, thereby creating essentially new products that are better suited to the needs of certain groups, such as tourists or visitors, or for distribution over longer distances.

The long and the short of it

Long and short chain distribution circuits are distinguished by the number of intermediaries between the producer and consumer. Short chain distribution circuits have at most one intermediary, and include selling direct at the place of production or landing, at local markets, through one's own shop, over the internet, as well as through specialist fish shops or restaurants. This approach is already used by some fishermen to sell part of their fresh produce, to diversify their sources of revenue.



◀ Skagenfood, a company based in the port of Strandby (Denmark) sells fish and seafood packs to individual customers via the internet (see issue n°1 of the FARNET Magazine).



▲ Founded by Jamie Oliver, the "Fifteen Cornwall" restaurant in Watergate Bay (UK) offers local fisheries produce prepared by young apprentice chefs.

Informing the consumer

Regardless of where a product is sold, or in what form, product differentiation requires that customers are aware of its unique attributes or added value. For direct sales of fresh fish on the port or at a local market, this information can be imparted directly by the producer. However, for processed products or for longer chain distribution some form of labelling or branding is usually necessary.

Labelling and branding are distinguished by the fact that labels generally require some sort of independent certification. Labels can be used, for example, to certify a product's quality, its geographical origin or the adherence to certain ecological standards during the production process. Examples include the EU's Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) or the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), or national quality certification schemes such as the Label Rouge in France, which can also be awarded to products from other countries that are sold in France.

Ecological standards can be verified by organic certification in the case of fish farms, or, for fisheries, by ecolabels such as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Friends of the Sea, the German Naturland or the Swedish KRAV label for organic food. The MSC certification is one of the better known ecological labels.

Labelling can sometimes be used to create a brand, as in the case of Cornish Sardines (see box), or can be used to add credibility to a brand that is developed separately. Branding can be undertaken by individual enterprises or on a collective or regional basis. The latter generally includes some kind of internal certification or charter, which ensures consistency in terms of quality standards. Regional brands can relate only to fisheries products and aquaculture (e.g. Cornish Sardines or the PescadeRías brand in Galicia, Spain) or they can include a range of local food products (e.g. "Fuschia" brand in the region of Cork, Ireland).

The power of provenance

Adding value to local fisheries products can, and is already helping to sustain many small fishing businesses across the EU. A variety of different techniques and approaches are being applied by these businesses, which demonstrates the variety of different pathways that are available to local businesses and communities to add value to the resources in their territories. In this edition of the FARNET magazine we take a closer look at some examples in France and the Netherlands.



▲ Scottish farmed salmon became the first fish and the first non-French product to obtain the prestigious French government's Label Rouge award in 1992.



▲ The Cornish sardine fishery (UK) has been awarded the MSC certification as well as the PGI as 'Cornish Sardines' (see page 20).



▲ PescadeRías, the mark of Galicia – the PescadeRías brand was launched by the Region of Galicia in 2008 and seeks to add value to the fish and shellfish caught or farmed on the Galician coast.

Capitalising on the unique strengths and attributes of the local territory can help to differentiate and open up new market opportunities for local products. However, embracing this opportunity requires new skills and a new openness among fishing businesses to better integrate themselves within their territories and within the territorial development process. ■

Report

FRESH FISH AND A QUALITY MENU AT FLAG FLEVOLAND [NETHERLANDS]

Closer to the consumer

Changing Dutch eating habits mean that there is a growing market in the Netherlands for fresh seafood products and fish-based pre-prepared dishes. The various players in the fisheries sector have begun to take advantage of these opportunities. We look at examples of initiatives in Flevoland and North-Holland.



"Everyone comes here for the quality," said Sandra Crommentuyn, who runs a stall at the Wieringen fish market in the port of Den Oever, in the province of North-Holland. Sandra sells Italian wine, not fish, which she buys from her family in Lake Garda, as well as high-quality tinned seafood from Quiberon in France. "The market is open to anyone selling high-quality food products produced on a small-scale," explained Gertjan Sneekes, manager of this unique market in the Netherlands, which is held on Saturday mornings, forty weeks of the year. Gertjan added: "In 2003, Den Oever was stagnating in terms of its social and business life. Something had to be done. The fishing cooperative considered what steps could be taken and that's how we came upon the idea of organising a market. It was an immediate success. We saw visitor numbers rise from one week to the next." Thanks to word of mouth and good press coverage, the market now attracts around 1 000 people a week on average, from a 100 km radius. "Customers come from all walks of life. One thing they have in common is their love of good fish."

Fifteen fishermen sell around forty different varieties of fish at the market, all of which are caught in the North Sea. Gertjan continued: *"The turnover has been stable for several years at around 200 000 euros. A quarter of our catch is sold on the market. We estimate that each fisherman makes*



▲ The Wieringen fish market has a strong impact on the local community.

1 000 euros more a year through direct sales compared to selling everything wholesale. While this may not be an enormous amount, what matters is the impact on the local community as a whole. The market has attracted various businesses to Den Oever. See those cafés, hotels and restaurants? They didn't exist seven years ago. The port has become a tourist attraction. It's vibrant. During the season, trips out to sea are organised every day and next week we are holding one of our 'open-doors days for the fishing sector', with 40 of our boats going on show."

Urk

Den Oever controls access to the Afsluitdijk, the impressive barrier dam which has separated the North Sea from Zuiderzee since 1932, transforming the latter into a freshwater lake, the IJsselmeer. The southern part of the IJsselmeer was drained between 1942 and 1968 to create two polders which, since 1986, form the province of Flevoland. "The entire area of the province lies below sea level, except for Schokland and Urk, which were islands at the time of the Zuiderzee," said Fred Jonkhart, head of European programmes in the province. He explained: "Urk has always been an important fishing port. The closing off of Zuiderzee and the creation of Noordoostpolder did not destroy the industry, far from it. In terms of the value of the landings, Urk

remains one of the leading fishing ports in the Netherlands, which is why the municipality of Urk was chosen as an area eligible for assistance under Axis 4 in Flevoland."

You only have to reach the outskirts of the town to realise that fishing is a major local industry. In the business parks, every third building has the words "fish" or "sea-food" in its name. "80 boats and 800 fishermen are involved in fishing in Urk, over a thousand jobs are associated with the sector, it represents around 65% of local economic output, and there are around 40 companies operating in fish processing and the fish trade," explained Philip ten Napel, policy officer and secretary of the municipal fisheries platform (BPV). He added: "Urk is a hub for the fishing industry in the Netherlands, even if the port is no longer situated directly on the open sea. Most of the local operators continued to fish in the North Sea after the disappearance of the Zuiderzee and the import-export business has actually grown strongly in Urk. Much of the imported fish is landed in the North Sea ports, but is then transported here by lorry for processing."

Sea Fresh

"Urk has an irreplaceable expertise which most certainly must not be lost," said Jan Ras, general manager of Sea Fresh. He founded this marketing and processing company in 1999 before being joined by his two brothers a year later. He revealed: "We initially sold typically Dutch products, in particular all the flat fish found in the North Sea – sole, turbot, plaice and dab. Then, in light of the reduction of quotas, we adapted our strategy to enter the import markets of Russia, Estonia, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. We opened a frozen department and now work both upstream and downstream of the sector. We have to go further to get as close as possible to the end consumer."

Sea Fresh supplies fresh fish to major retail outlets in France, Belgium and Germany, "because, unfortunately, there are no fishmongers in the supermarkets in the Netherlands," Jan says. He added, "The Dutch consume 5 kg of fresh fish a year per capita, compared to 25 kg in France. However, that could change because consumers here are also becoming more demanding and are looking for more sophisticated products. And the supermarkets are following suit. In the countries where we are at present, even the hard discounters are adopting this approach. In Germany, two of them want to sell more upmarket fish. One asked us if we were able to supply it."

In 2009, the company, which has around 20 staff, decided to focus on making better use of its fresh products by producing pre-prepared meals based on local fresh fish (30%) and imported fish (70%). This initiative is now well underway with the construction of a new building costing EUR 750 000. The "Sea Fresh Retail" project will involve, *"producing, packaging and marketing around 40 different dishes: marinated tuna steaks, salmon skewers, fish for oven cooking, tapas and gourmet ranges, as well as seasonal variations, such as for barbecues in summer and Christmas hampers in December. We anticipate beginning production in autumn 2010,"* its manager, Yvonne Baarsen, explains.

The total investment is EUR 1.5 million, *"a significant amount, even for a company like ours, which is why we applied for Axis 4 funding,"* adds Jan Ras. The company applied for and obtained a EUR 300 000 grant, which will pay for some of the equipment: packaging and labelling machines and furnishings, which meet



▲ A new building for more added value.

European standards. *"Axis 4 has given us a boost which will help us to proceed more quickly,"* underlined Yvonne Baarsen. Fred Jonkhart and Philip ten Napel justified the FLAG's decision: *"This is a project which will benefit the entire local community. It is innovative, will provide around 12 jobs and is also part of a network strategy involving other local players and project partners."*

Yvonne Baarsen is excited that Sea Fresh is also cooperating with Urk's most highly regarded restaurant, "Mes Amis", owned by Cees and Zwanie Kramer. *"The dishes which we will produce industrially were first designed, cooked, tested and validated by the restaurant. The scope of this collaboration will become even wider with the 'De Boet' project."*

The Zuiderzee Silver

To enhance the value of fish from the former "South Sea", professional fishermen have created a local quality label.

The closing of the Zuiderzee ("South Sea") in 1932 transformed this gulf of the North Sea into a freshwater lake with an area of 1 800 km² made up of IJsselmeer, Markermeer and internal expanses of water, known collectively as Randmeren. *"IJsselmeer has various problems,"* explained Derk Jan Berends, secretary of the Dutch Fishing Federation. *"Owing to the purification of the water which flows into it, IJsselmeer is increasingly poor in nutrients for fish. We have also noticed the build-up of mud from the polders. All of this means that the eel, our flagship fish, is in crisis. We therefore asked ourselves, how can we help fishermen to focus on other types of fish like the pike-perch or the perch, which are abundant here? One solution was to create a local quality brand."*

Launched in 2008, with the help of a EUR 250 000 grant from the European Fisheries Fund, the "Zuiderzeezilver" (Zuiderzee Silver) branding initiative is a sectoral approach, based on three pillars: quality, traceability and sustainability.

Fishermen, distributors and retailers adhere to a strict quality charter, which contributes to ensuring responsible management of the resource and provides a certification process, controlled at all stages of the chain by independent bodies. As soon as it is caught, the fish selected is tagged on board. Identified with bar codes, it then enters into a traceability system, "from the net to the plate", which allows the end consumer to find out its origin using the zuiderzeezilver.nl website.

Twelve of the IJsselmeer's major fishing companies have already signed up to the brand, which, for the moment, only covers pike-perch. Seven wholesalers distribute the branded fish to around fifteen fishmongers and restaurants, which are themselves certified, across the Netherlands.

For further information visit: www.zuiderzeezilver.nl/





▲ The De Boet project: today...



▲ ...and a few months from now.

De Boet

At the port of Urk, just alongside the “Mes Amis” restaurant, is a square building whose run-down state is in stark contrast to its surroundings. Frans Brouwer, a retired fish trader, inherited it several years ago. He said: “As you can see, this building, which was the headquarters of the ferry-boat company, has a great location. I wanted to do something with it, but I didn’t know what. Then I found out that Cees and Zwanie Kramer, who own the “Mes Amis” restaurant next door, were looking to expand to move upmarket but didn’t have the space. I contacted them and our plans coincided. But the estimated cost of 1.5 million was too high based on the anticipated turnover and that’s where Axis 4 came in.”

Together with the FLAG, Frans, his wife Geertje, Cees and Zwanie revised the project, now called ‘De Boet’ (the Shed), in order to widen its scope and enhance the potential spin-off benefits for the area. A year and a half later, a EUR 300 000 Axis 4 grant was awarded to what is set to become, in spring 2011, a genuine centre of gastronomic innovation for Urk and its surroundings. In addition to the restaurant, the building – most of which is too dilapidated to be renovated and, therefore, will be rebuilt in an identical style – will contain a conference room and a second kitchen with eight cooking units. “Cooking classes will be organised here. Negotiations are taking place with catering colleges and the job centre. The touristic dimension is also important: yachting enthusiasts will be able to come with their fish and prepare it themselves using the facilities. We are going to organise tasting events and plan to adopt an approach to promote fish. And then, of course, there are all the recipes we are developing for Sea Fresh,” said Cees Kramer.

Heavily dependent on fishing, Urk’s economy is very fragile, but there is considerable potential for adding value. The European Fisheries Fund in general, and Axis 4 in particular, have a major role to play in realising this potential, which the secretary of the Nederlandse Visserijbond (Dutch Fishing Federation), Derk Jan Berends, confirms: “In terms of value enhancement, Axis 4 can facilitate all sorts of key strategies, such as raising awareness amongst consumers and developing alternative forms of distribution. I’m thinking of

local, short-circuit networks and bundling with the distributors of bio-products, for example, as well as mail order of fresh fish. We are in the process of overcoming some difficult hurdles, but fish is a very popular product for which there will always be opportunities.” ■

VISSERIJGEBIED FLEVOLAND (Netherlands)



Area:
12.5 km²
(30 km² including the internal waters)

Population:
18 100 inhabitants (2008)

Density:
1 448 inhabitants/km²

Axis 4 Budget	EUR			
	EU	Province	Municipality	Total
Total (2010-2015)	600 000	400 000	200 000	1 200 000
Annual average	100 000	66 700	33 300	200 000

CONTACT

FLAG Flevoland
a/s Fred Jonkhart,
BP 55, NL-8200 AB Lelystad
+31 320 265 472
fred.jonkhart@flevoland.nl



Interview

“Cooperation between FLAGs could become part of integrated macro-regional strategies.”

A former French minister, with portfolios covering employment, spatial planning, transport and maritime affairs, Michel Delebarre is an elected representative in a maritime region (Dunkirk and Côte d’Opale) and President of the Territorial Cohesion Commission (COTER) at the Committee of the Regions (CoR). In April, the CoR adopted a first paper on the future of cohesion policy after 2013 which advocates an approach more centred on the region and on intra-regional disparities.

FARNET Magazine: *Some people argue that, to ensure budgetary discipline, cohesion policy should be reserved for underdeveloped regions and Member States, as it does not make sense to provide funding for already wealthy regions. What is your view?*

You’ve put your finger on the issue of renationalisation. In the current programming period, 18.5% of Community regional policy funds are allocated to regions with a GDP exceeding 75% of the European average in terms of purchasing power parity. The United Kingdom, Sweden and the Netherlands argue that the European budget could be reduced and simplified in terms of management if the wealthiest Member States were given exclusive responsibility for regional development policies in “their” regions. However, this approach would be at odds with the finding that disparities tend to be greater within rather than between Member States. “Rich” regions, such as the Ile-de-France, can also have real pockets of poverty. Even the notion of rich regions has to be put into perspective.

The nationalisation of regional state aid mechanisms also raises the issue of fair competition between “rich” regions in the “rich” Member States and disadvantaged regions in the “poorer” Member States.

Politically, renationalisation would mean exclusive dependence on the national level for regional development policies. This kind of dependence could potentially be very harmful to peripheral and border regions.

Finally, the position of some net contributors is based on a misunderstanding: European regional policy is not a redistributive or equalisation policy based on the German “Länderfinanzausgleich” model. Rather, it is a development policy, which should enable all regions to freely consider their development in a



Michel Delebarre
*Former French minister and
President of the Territorial Cohesion
Commission (COTER) at the Committee
of the Regions (CoR)*

European context and to contribute to achieving the Union’s economic, social and territorial cohesion objectives.

FARNET Magazine: *What role should territorial cohesion play in your view? How can this new concept be balanced with the more traditional concepts of economic and social cohesion?*

I believe the elements of this new triple focus of cohesion complement each another perfectly. European regional authorities interpret the objective of territorial cohesion as a guarantee of maintaining a regional policy for all Member States in the European Union. At the same time, the establishment of a territorial


cohesion objective provides a legal basis for the requirement of territorial impact analyses upstream of the presentation of Community legislation.

FARNET Magazine: *The Commission is currently considering a wider use of local development methods to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. Do you believe this offers the potential to mobilise European citizens to achieve these common objectives? Do you think better coordination of actions is required to improve the clarity of European policies at local level?*

A number of European states – including France – remain fundamentally distrustful of territorial authorities and are losing out on the leverage effect which would result from a policy that ensured greater involvement of local elected representatives. An additional problem regarding relations between the State and the regions is the lack of importance given to specific local circumstances and proximity within the regions. The requirement for greater subsidiarity should not stop at regional level.

The regions should be better equipped to take over strategic planning and local authorities better equipped to handle the

planning of projects on the ground. I also find that most of the European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) which have been set up to date, in particular on the Franco-Belgian border, are combining local cross-border cooperation initiatives. In short, we still have to get rid of an approach which is too focused on competencies and the protection of functions and instead promote more partnership-oriented approaches based on "multi-level governance", to use the terminology of the Committee of the Regions.

 **You are President of the Cross-Border Operational Mission (MOT) and the extension of this, the European Network of Cross-Border Local Authorities (EUROMOT). Do fisheries local action groups (FLAGs) have an interest in becoming part of cross-border, transnational or interregional cooperation initiatives?**

Through their partnerships with local and regional authorities, FLAGs allow citizens, associations and private businesses to develop integrated approaches, reconciling the objectives of competitiveness and sustainable development of maritime policies. Sectoral integration goes hand in hand with territorial integration of policies to ensure actions implemented are effective.

For example, the MOT is closely following the set-up of macro-regions, large cooperation areas at cross-border, transnational or European interregional level. Fishing represents one of the strategic issues being addressed, in particular for the maritime macro-regions (Baltic Sea, North Sea, etc.). The long-term aim is that decision-making, and the implementation of actions in different sectors, including the fisheries sector, are based on integrated planning and administrative procedures. Cooperation initiatives between FLAGs could be established in these macro-regions and become part of integrated macro-regional strategies.

 **What benefits can the FLAGs draw on to tackle the specific challenges facing them?**

The environmental damage caused in maritime areas can be seen as the result of poor management, which adopts an overly short-term approach to our common natural heritage. Too many policies at national and international level have been implemented in isolation. If applied to maritime affairs, the approaches of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation become an integrated and cross-sectoral strategic approach. We hope this will replace previous visions and ways of thinking, both sectoral and national, which are the cause of many current problems.

 **In which specific areas can cooperation be a real plus?**

The economic players in coastal areas operate in a competitive environment. However, taking account of the resources shared by maritime territories, cross-border cooperation could focus on issues such as fishing and aquaculture, logistics, tourism (eco-tourism, sailing, cruises, coastal tourism, joint marketing), the conservation of aquatic flora and fauna and the development of cross-border clusters based on marine resources.

 **The theme of this edition of FARNET Magazine is adding value to fisheries products. What are your views on this?**

Adding value to fisheries products is vital if we are to save what remains of the industry. Everyone agrees that fish stocks are in danger. This means that if we want to preserve stocks and the industry, we have to focus on sustainable fishing, which can be summed up as "fishing less but fishing better."

Enhancing production must now mean providing the means to increase the selling price of fish by improving the quality, guaranteeing traceability and providing confirmation that it is the product of responsible fishing (certification, labelling). It also involves finding new outlets for by-products (waste, bones) and, in this way, increasing the market value of fish. Finally, it is a matter of finding the right balance between fishing and aquaculture in terms of standards and markets.

Low-cost fish farming constitutes unfair competition, which causes the sale price of wild fish to fall, even though it is of better quality. A qualitative approach to aquaculture should be developed and, at the same time, the issue of industrial fishing to produce fish meal to feed farmed fish needs to be seriously scrutinized. Is the use of a natural resource to feed farmed fish acceptable, especially when you consider that, in some cases, 5 kg of wild fish are required to produce 1 kg of farmed fish? ■

**Interview conducted (in French)
in June 2010**

Report

FISHERMEN, OYSTER FARMERS AND PROCESSORS FROM THE ARCACHON BASIN [FRANCE] WORK TOGETHER TO ADD VALUE TO LOCAL PRODUCTS

From a partnership to a network

Having brought together elected representatives, local stakeholders and maritime professionals, the Bassin d’Arcachon – Val de l’Eyre Axis 4 group now aims to develop and promote the work of local food producers through the creation of a regional network.

From their long flat-bottomed boats, gliding between the posts which mark the boundaries of the beds, the men shout out percentages: “I’m at 60%!” “It’s at least 80% over here....” And there are sighs and grumbles. Clearly, this is not profit margins they are discussing. On the contrary! 60%, 80% and sometimes even 90%, are the percentages of dead oysters found by the oyster farmers in their ponds over the last few weeks... The blame lies with several infectious pathogens, which have sporadically afflicted the oysters since the early 1990s. It is a catastrophe for French oyster farmers in general, but it is even more disastrous for the 350 oyster farms of the Arcachon basin, as here oyster farming is about more than the production of oysters intended for direct human consumption. Young oysters, known as “spat”, are also produced: the aquatic characteristics of the basin, combined with the mild weather, provide the *Crassostrea gigas* oyster with optimal breeding conditions, making the



▲ Shellfish gathering at low tide in Arcachon.

Arcachon basin a giant incubator and the first European breeding centre for oysters.

“Axis 4 is very good news but it’s not coming at the right time,” laments Olivier Laban, president of the regional shellfish association and co-president of the Bassin d’Arcachon – Val de l’Eyre fisheries local action group (FLAG).

“When you have a problem like this, it’s difficult to focus on a territorial project. Axis 4 can’t do anything about the oysters dying...”

Can’t do anything? Not exactly! In the territorial strategy (see box), Axis 4 is complemented by the planned creation of an “Arcachon Basin natural marine park”, allowing for the shared and sustainable management of this unique marine area, to the benefit of both its water quality and its biodiversity. “It’s not a coincidence that one of the first actions approved and funded under the Axis 4 programme was an educational visit for the fishermen and oyster farmers to the parc d’Iroise in Brittany, which is the first and still the only natural marine park in France,” said Jean-Michel Labrousse, president of Local Fisheries Committee and the other co-president of the FLAG.

This view is shared by Jean-Charles Mauviot, director of the Arcachon-Aquitaine regional shellfish division: “Axis 4 is acting in synergy with the marine park project. The pilot was missing in the plane, meaning that we were lacking an overall water management plan. For the maintenance of beaches, for example, each municipality is responsible for its own area, but who takes



▲ Oyster farming harbour with boats and cabins.

Oyster farming and fishing in the Arcachon basin mean:

- > 26 oyster farming harbours
- > 780 hectares of oyster parks (4 000 beds)
- > 350 oyster farming businesses (turnover: EUR 40 million)
- > between 8 000 and 10 000 tonnes of oysters per year (France: 120 000 tonnes)
- > first European spat centre (oyster larvae)
- > 11 netters, 7 trawlers, 8 launch boats for coastal fishing
- > 85 boats for intra-basin small-scale fishing
- > 1 807 tonnes of fish sold (EUR 12 million) at the Arcachon auction
- > fresh artisanal fish is a speciality
- > sole, cuttlefish and eels are the flagship products

care of the central body of water? With the park, that will change. And then we must leave corporatism behind. Bringing oyster farmers and fishermen together, which is what we do in Axis 4, is very important because it is tied to the very survival of the basin and the resolution of conflicts over water use. The more maritime professionals come together, the better our chances of ensuring its survival."

Marine quality, maritime heritage

"The sustainability of marine activities depends on the quality of the environment and the local stakeholders who work in this sector," stresses Marie-Laurence Inchauspé, coordinator for the Bassin d'Arcachon – Val de l'Eyre area. "The Community of the Bassin d'Arcachon Sud area, which has statutory responsibility for Axis 4, has just launched a call for proposals for a "clean boat", the first flagship action of its cluster for creative maritime industries. Entirely environmentally friendly, this boat, in its design, construction, propulsion

and on-board life must bring together local stakeholders and involve them in a more general reflection on transport within the basin. In initiating this innovative project we are attempting to promote local expertise and to highlight the competitiveness of local businesses in the provision of services of general interest."

"In the same vein, our marine tourism project is also exemplary as it connects the economy with sustainable development, fishermen with oyster farmers, maritime professionals with tourists, producers with consumers..." added Jean-Michel Labrousse, who is about to take his first group of tourists out to sea. "Four or five of us fishermen and nearly as many oyster farmers are taking part in the project. The Intercommunal Syndicate for the Arcachon Basin (SIBA) provides logistical support and produced a promotional brochure with the financial assistance of Axis 4. Our names and contact details are registered with the local tourist offices." Everything about the service and the fees (between EUR 50 and 60 per person) is explained in the brochure: the fishermen and oyster farmers greet the tourists and demonstrate how their products are prepared.

New partnership for the “inside-out island”

Located about thirty kilometres south-west of Bordeaux, the Arcachon Basin is a true inland sea, connected to the Atlantic by only a narrow channel, three kilometres wide. This is a salt water sea, 182 km² in size at high tide and 49 km² at low tide. Its entire coastline is urbanized, making the basin a kind of “inside-out island”, with an economy based on fishing, oyster farming and tourism.

On the 1st of February 2010, the “Pays Bassin d’Arcachon – Val de l’Eyre” launched a new European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Axis 4 programme. The Pays brings together 17 municipalities, four cantons, three inter-municipalities and the Basin’s 130 000 inhabitants (double what it was forty years ago). It is not a formal administrative structure but rather a territory across which projects characterised by their geographic, economic, cultural and social links are carried out.

The functioning of the Pays Bassin d’Arcachon – Val de l’Eyre is based on a three-tier system: an operational committee, made up of three elected members representing each inter-municipality; a technical committee, bringing together representatives of the three intercommunal administrations (the Arcachon Basin Mixed Syndicate (SIBA), the Bassin d’Arcachon-Val de l’Eyre Syndicate (SYBARVAL) and the Regional Natural Park of the Landes de Gascogne (PNRLG); and a board, composed of interested parties involved in the implementation of local projects. The Pays principal areas of activity include tourism, culture and urban development. However, it is also carrying out a sustainable development process, through the implementation of local Agenda 21, and a Leader rural development programme, intended to strengthen the links between the coast and the inland areas.

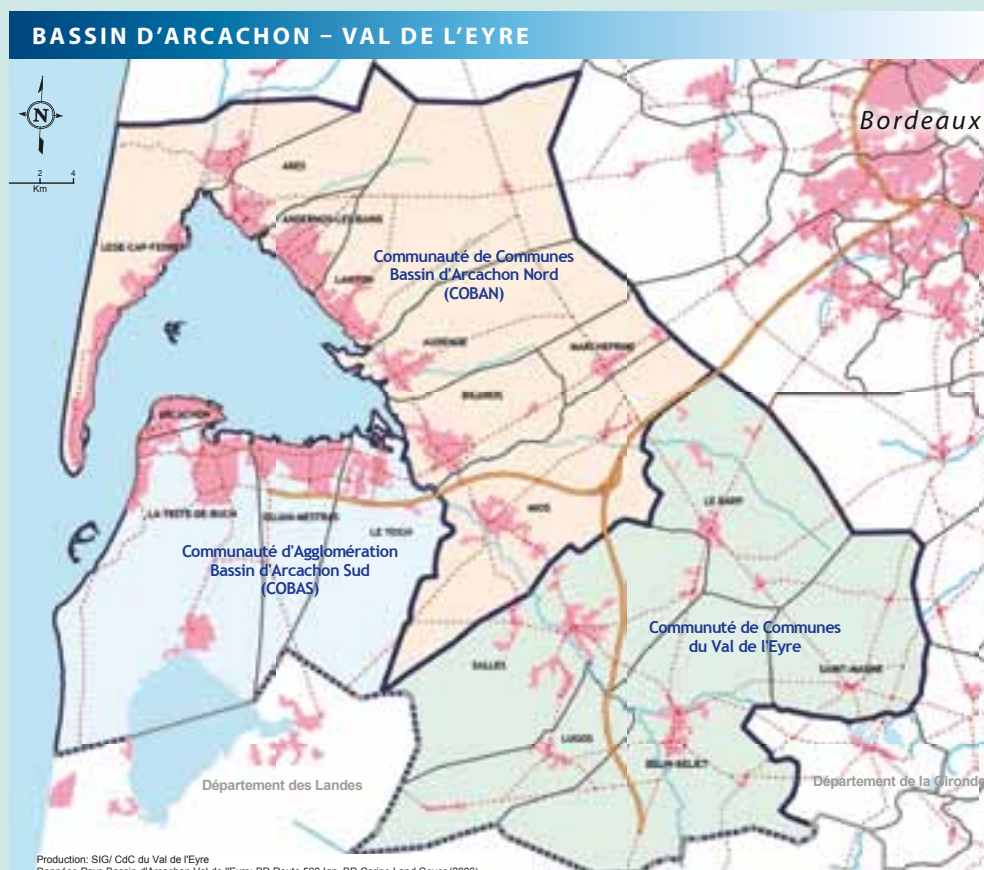
Maritime solidarity

Legally constituted by the Community of Bassin d’Arcachon Sud (COBAS), the local EFF’s Axis 4 programme lays the groundwork for a renewed territorial dialogue by creating a new partnership between maritime professionals and local elected representatives. By giving private members a greater voice, and through a dual presidency made up of a representative from the fishing community and a shellfish farming representative, the programming committee of the fisheries local action group (FLAG) has established a new form of governance, in the local context.

Aiming to “create links, strengthen the synergy between activities, pool the expertise of maritime professionals and meet the challenges facing an exceptional, but endangered environment”, the development plan of the Bassin d’Arcachon – Val de l’Eyre FLAG aims to build “a new type of maritime solidarity”. The plan focuses on three priorities:

1. “Maritime solidarity in order to preserve and enhance heritage and the environment” (budget: EUR 360 000).
2. “Maritime solidarity for responsible economic development” (budget: EUR 720 000).
3. “Maritime solidarity in order to renew territorial maritime dialogue” (budget: EUR 153 000).

To find out more: www.coban-atlantique.fr/article/archive/12/





▲ Jean-Michel Labrousse is ready for pescatourism.



▲ Oyster tasting at the cabin.

They then leave the port and travel to the fishing or oyster farming area. The tourists are then shown the techniques of the trade and they learn about the quality of the products. The tour ends with a tasting session. The first marine tourism project, beginning in June 2010, aims to develop a "Maritime Heritage Trail". This should be completed in 2011. The project will also integrate and develop the "Oyster Route", which was launched in 2000, but put on hold due to a lack of resources.

Cabins

"What we need is to offer true immersion in the authentic maritime world, a complete educational package with boats, cabins and gîtes," says Hervé Bojon, a fisherman who along with his wife, an oyster farmer, runs an oyster cabin in La Teste de Buch. Oyster cabins are one of the main features and attractions of the Arcachon basin. Each oyster farmer has a cabin in which he stores his equipment, but many are also used for tasting sessions as well as for direct sales. *"In-cabin tasting sessions are clearly a good way to promote the product,"* says Hervé. *"A dozen oysters normally sold for 4.30 euros can make 9.50 euros in the cabin. But this is not enough. We need a more comprehensive approach."*

Angelika Hermann and Thierry Beaugendre have already travelled this road. Angelika, an oyster farmer, sells her produce directly at the Toulouse market, but also has a tasting cabin at La Teste. Thierry is an oyster farmer, fisherman and he runs a passenger transport business. Together they have developed a tourist package which combines tasting, education, promotion and awareness: *"We welcome groups, not individual tourists,"* specifies Angelika. *"The tasting session begins with a detailed explanation of oyster farming. This helps people to understand the challenges and the standards of our work. They also hear our message, namely that we must defend traditional oyster farming, which uses oysters born at sea, not in a test tube. Axis 4 must ensure that the Arcachon basin remains a breeding site!"*

Four examples for one network

A new territorial partnership, marine conservation and the promotion of an authentic heritage and products, are all potential assets and opportunities for Axis 4, which is emerging as a promising initiative involving the networking of new, small food producers in promoting local seafood. *"By combining Axis 4 and Leader, for example, we could develop artisanal prod-*

ucts through a network. Direct sales are not enough because in that scenario, each producer would focus solely on selling his own product and there is no multiplier effect," said Jean-Charles Mauviot.

Aurélien Lecanu, the FLAG co-ordinator, has started to identify a number of small food processors who could be integrated into such a network: *"For several years, oyster farmers have been organising cabin tasting sessions, which are truly institutions in themselves, allowing excellent oyster promotion work to be carried out and the Basin's various ports to be revitalised. At the same time, fishermen and other stakeholders have developed some seafood processing projects. Several projects are already underway and new ideas are emerging. These initiatives represent potential added value for the area."*

The goal of the Bassin d'Arcachon – Val de l'Eyre FLAG is to foster development by providing project support and local know-how. Innovating, creating networks and pooling skills are essential actions for the future for the maritime professionals of the Arcachon basin. The requirements for this are already being discussed and support is being put in place, thanks to Axis 4." This support will reflect the diversity of the area's characteristics, as shown by the four scenarios that follow.

The women's co-operative

Angelika Hermann is one of the founders of the association "Femmes de mer en partage" (Maritime Women Together), which works to promote the role of women in the fishing and oyster farming industries, as well as to "promote fishing and marine products in terms of both quality and traceability."

Since 2000, the association has carried out several education and training activities which have, for example, enabled around fifteen women from the maritime community to achieve different degrees and diplomas. *"The successful results of our actions and the needs we become aware of every day have led to us wanting to create a cooperative for the processing of seafood products,"* says Monique Philip, president of the association. *"In order to structure this project, both economically and socially, we have examined the experiences of different fishing communities belonging to the AKTEA¹ network: a processing business focusing on fish species caught in Vasa in Finland, a clam cooperative in Galicia, various examples of fishery product diversification activities in Ireland, a semi-intensive aquaculture unit near Sines, in Portugal... Here in Arcachon our objective would be to establish a cooperative making a special fish soup and a mussel soup, as well as producing vacuum-packed dishes using shellfish. In order to do this, we first need to invest in cooking equipment, but with regard to other less tangible elements, Axis 4 could also certainly help us..."*

¹ AKTEA- European network of women's organisations in fisheries and aquaculture: www.fishwomen.org/



▲ Delphine Brin.

The entrepreneur

"Unlike Brittany, we don't have our own identity. We would need everyone to help out to create an image or a collective 'Bassin d'Arcachon' brand. It would be easier if we were all under the same flag," says Delphine Brin, who in 2008 launched her own artisanal cannery, 'Le Brin d'Océan'. Delphine's story is the story of a highly dynamic individual: being an excellent cook, Delphine decided to launch her own business in 2005. *"There were no canneries for the fish from the basin, so that's what made up my mind."* In 2006, she purchased a lot in the business park of Le Teich and took cooking classes in order to obtain the qualification required to undertake this activity professionally. In 2007, she won two regional awards for entrepreneurship, just as the construction and equipping of the building was completed.

In 2008, she began production and today offers a range of products made from various types of fish (soup, rillettes), from monkfish (soup, liver) and from cuttlefish (curried, in its own ink and in a tomato sauce). Direct sales account for 10% of her revenue, with the bulk of the produce being sold to about a hundred customers (delicatessens, wine stores...). *"It's not an easy task to handle both production and marketing, especially as, apart from my mother who helps me occasionally with bottling, I have to do everything myself."* Today,

after two years in existence, the cannery is entering the critical phase of a business reaching adulthood, which now has no other option but to move up a gear in order to survive. Hence, Delphine's interest in a network.

The explorer

EUR 300 000 is roughly what the establishment of "Le Brin d'Océan" cost its owner. On the other side of the Arcachon basin, in the wonderful little village of L'Herbe à Lège-Cap Ferret, Marc Leguiel chose a rather different strategy, one consisting of small steps. This chef also launched a canning business in 2008, primarily in an attempt to promote the produce of his brother, Jean-Jacques, an oyster farmer, but also because of his frustration that, *"there are all these fish species which we throw in the bin and yet they can be delicious with a little preparation."*

Marc's production of oyster rillettes and "white fish soup à l'Arcachonnaise" is still a very small operation, and the produce is sent to an external facility for packaging (a centre for disabled people around 130 km away). But he has plans to expand and *"improve the sterilisation process to be able to store produce for longer and increase the amount produced, because the tapas market is growing very quickly, but it's*



▲ Marc Leguiel.



▲ Yann Orion and Jean-François Giese.

important to be able to ensure the production volume." Marc Leguiel is, therefore, also very interested in joining forces with others to reach critical mass and economies of scale through sharing a hatchery, website and sales force.

The retiree

"I'm slowing down now and passing the baton on to my son, a fisherman, and my daughter, who just obtained her business certification." Jean-François Giese, a former coastal fisherman whose boat was withdrawn from the fleet in 1998, trained in aquaculture. In 2000, he began fishing shrimp and cuttlefish in the Arcachon Basin, and eels in the old salt basins in Domaine de Certes, an area belonging to the Conservatoire du Littoral, the French coastal protection agency. In 2005 he bought an old warehouse that he converted into a hatchery and a shop to sell cuttlefish in its own ink, smoked eels in oil and various other seafood products. "I realised that if I want to have something to leave to my children, I need to increase production, as well as to upgrade and expand the facilities," said Jean-François, who, in order to do this, intends to submit a funding application to the FLAG. "I think that a cooperative would be the right economic formula, and forming a network of processors in Arcachon, yes, absolutely!" ■

BASSIN D'ARCACHON – VAL DE L'EYRE (France)


Area:

 1 494 km²
Population:

130 000 inhabitants (2009)

Density:

 87 inhabitants/km²

Axis 4 Budget	EUR			
	EU	National	Private	Total
Total	598 200	598 200	598 200	1 443 000

CONTACT

Aurélien Lecanu, Co-ordinator FEP-Axe 4
 Pays Bassin d'Arcachon – Val de l'Eyre
 SRC – 15 Allée Barbotière
 F-33470 Gujan-Mestras
 +33 5 57 73 08 49
fepbassinardachon@valdeleyre.fr



Trade winds

FRANCE

ITSASOA: navigating on agrofuels

Total cost: EUR 569 348 – **EU contribution (EFF Axis 3):** EUR 113 870

"Two fishing boats from the port of Saint-Jean-de-Luz are experimenting with engines powered by pure sunflower oil. The ITSASOA (*Itinéraire Technique de Substitution Agricole pour la Sauvegarde de l'Océan par l'Artisanat*) project was launched in January



2009 in order to establish a local short circuit, linking farmers producing agrofuels and fishermen as consumers of that fuel. The project also aims to bring together farmers working according to the principles of sustainable agriculture and fishermen practising traditional fishing techniques that show respect for maritime resources and the marine environment."

Frédéric Perrin, Project Manager, French Institute of Pure Vegetable Oils.
etudes@ifhvp.fr

FRANCE

Fishing and the sale of wild fish from alpine lakes

Total cost: n.c. – **EU contribution:** n.c.

"The gradual reduction in the number of professional fishermen working on the three French Alpine lakes (Annecy, Le Bourget and Geneva) was reversed by a greater focus on the professionalism of the sector, although it still retains its traditional character. The



stability of, and evident upturn in, the number of fishermen (around sixty) over the past two decades reflect the current dynamism of the trade. The main species caught in the three lakes are lake whitefish, perch, char, turbot, lake trout, pike and, in Lake Geneva, crayfish. The tonnage varies from 400 to 600 tonnes per year, of which more than 80% comes from Lake Geneva. The fishermen sell the fish they catch either as they are through a wholesale fish merchant, or directly to restaurants, fishmongers, wholesalers and shops following processing in facilities which conform to European standards. This work is carried out by private companies, which have invested in the necessary equipment with, in many cases, support from the FIG and the EFF."

Roger Plassat, President of the AAIPPLA (Approved Interdepartmental Association of Professional Alpine Lake Fishermen).

aaippla@orange.fr
www.adapra.org/

ITALY

Fish restaurant and tourism infrastructure

Total cost: EUR 150 000 – **EU contribution (FIG):** EUR 75 000

"A Sardinian fishermen's cooperative established a restaurant near Tortoli, which sells locally caught fish and seafood (sea fish, lagoon fish and molluscs). The restaurant is located within a lagoon and is housed in a renovated old building, offering customers a unique experience in a beautiful setting. The restaurant is only accessible via a wooden bridge that crosses the fish cages, further adding to its special atmosphere. This project is another interesting example of a business developed through the integration of the fisheries and tourism sectors."



Roberto Doneddu, Servizio Pesca, Regione Sardegna.
rdoneddu@regione.sardegna.it

UNITED KINGDOM

PGI "Cornish Sardines"

Total cost: EUR 41 515 – **EU contribution (Pesca):** EUR 3 458

"The aim of this project was to achieve recognition for Cornish Sardines as a product protected by the "Protected Geographical Indication" (PGI) status. The project was part of a larger initiative of the Cornish Sardine Management Association to also gain



Marine Stewardship Council recognition as a well managed and sustainable fishery. The two projects brought together fishermen, processors and the regulatory bodies into one Association whose aims were to promote quality, sustainability and traceability as well as to protect the brand image of Cornish sardines. The certification process took over four years, with Cornish sardines finally gaining PGI recognition in December 2009. This work is another prime example of the successful development of a local label, but in this case taken a step further with the achievement of EU protected status."

Nick Howell, Chairman, Cornish Sardines Management Association
info@cornishsardines.org.uk
www.cornishsardines.org.uk

Spotlight

Counting on experience in Latvia



In the EU country with the highest dependency on employment in the fisheries sector, 24 fisheries local action groups (FLAGs) are drawing on their experience of implementing the Leader programme to ensure the success of Axis 4.

The Latvian government has decided to allocate a large part (23%) of its EFF budget to Axis 4; a total of EUR 38.5 million (EUR 28.9 million EFF and EUR 9.6 million national) has been envisaged for the development of fisheries areas in the national Operational Programme. In the first call for proposals, which was launched in mid-2009, only EUR 7 million, or 18% of the total available budget, was committed. The allocation was based primarily on the number of inhabitants (see table). However, FLAGs that are successful in implementing their strategies are expected to receive further allocations in two years' time.



Funds allocated per FLAG in Latvia		
	Nr of inhabitants in FLAG area (01.01.2008)	Initial budget per FLAG (total public; EUR)
Rīga District Society for Rural Development	42 496	560 247.22
Cēsis District Rural Partnership	35 301	465 391.74
Association "Let's Do It Ourselves!"	35 541	468 555.78
Daugavpils and Ilukste District Partnership "Neighbours"	38 574	508 541.43
Īģe Rural Partnership	6 269	82 647.54
Association "Jūrkante"	14 159	186 665.58
Kandava Partnership	14 814	195 300.78
Rural Partnership "Upe 8"	8 966	118 203.52
Liepāja District Partnership	43 306	570 925.88
Association "From Salaca till Ruja"	24 659	325 092.63
Partnership "Daugavkrasts"	14 938	196 935.55
Partnership for Country and Sea	10 915	143 898.21
Rezekne District Community Partnership	39 784	524 493.49
Association "Seši krasti"	5 790	76 332.63
Talsi District Partnership	38 686	510 017.98
Vidzeme Rural Partnership "Brasla"	23 098	304 513.14
Northern Kurzeme Business Association	15 622	205 953.08
Public and Private Partnership "Zied zeme"	38 573	508 528.25
Public and Private Partnership "Sernikon"	6 013	79 272.55
Gaujas Partnership	8 832	116 436.92
Pierīgas Partnership	40 687	536 398.22
Stopiņi and Salaspils Partnership	13 297	175 301.38
Baldone Partnership	5 419	71 441.54
Ropaži Partnership	6 735	88 791.06
Total	532 474	7 019 886.09

LATVIA



▲ In colour, municipalities eligible for Axis 4 support.



▲ Liepaja harbour.

The fisheries sector in Latvia

The fisheries sector plays an important part in the Latvian economy: almost 90% of the total fish production is exported, and it is one of the few sectors in Latvia to have a positive external trade balance. Trade with non EU markets is important for Latvia, which ranks third in the EU in terms of trade with non EU countries and second regarding exports to non EU countries.

1.1% of the country's active population is employed in the fisheries sector, including fishing, processing and aquaculture operations. This equates to approximately 10 600 people, making Latvia the Member State with the highest dependency on employment in the fisheries sector. The fisheries sector is also an important contributor to regional development in Latvia, in particular along the country's 498 km coastline, with more than 20% of the active population involved in fisheries in some regions.

Axis 4 in Latvia, through the work of the 24 selected FLAGs, is seen as an opportunity to address issues such as inadequate port infrastructure, lack of cooperation between fishermen and fish processing companies, and the lack of experience in planning economically sustainable fisheries projects.

Fisheries areas in Latvia are already familiar with integrated, bottom-up development, thanks to their experience in the implementation of the Leader programme² in the period 2004-2006. Indeed, all of the 24 local groups which responded to the call for proposals and submitted local development strategies were already registered as Leader groups. The eligibility of the groups and the quality of the local development strategies were evaluated at the same time (i.e. in a one-stage selection process), and all 24 groups were approved in February 2010.

To be eligible to implement a strategy with EFF support, applicants were required to:

- > be registered as an association or foundation;
- > have a decision-making body with at least 50% of the members from the

economic and social partners, and at least 1/3 of the economic and social partner representatives must be from the fisheries sector;

- > have a management structure that is separate from the decision-making body; and
- > have a separate project evaluation committee.

In general, the measures contained in the local development strategies of the successful FLAGs are linked to one or more of the following activities:

- > the renewal and development of fishing villages (this measure, which includes financing for public investments in infrastructure, is included in 23 strategies and accounts for approximately 52% of the total funding allocated);
- > the development of small-scale infrastructure and services related to fisheries and tourism (included in 23 strategies, approximately 36% of the total funds);

- > restructuring, re-directing and diversification of economic activities (included in 12 strategies, representing about 11% of the total funds); and
- > re-establishing the production potential of the fisheries sector where damaged by natural or industrial disasters (included in 1 strategy, accounting for less than 1% of the total funding).

Since their approval, the successful FLAGs have been actively promoting their local strategies and encouraging potential beneficiaries to submit project proposals. Seminars as well as individual consultancies have been organised. Posters, pamphlets and press advertisements have also been prepared and distributed to ensure that the information is as widely available as possible.



² L.E.A.D.E.R. (*Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale* / Links between actions for the development of the rural economy) is a «Community Initiative programme» launched by the European Commission in 1990.

Featured FLAG: Talsi District Partnership

The Talsi District Partnership FLAG is located in the Western part of the Latvian coast. It has a population of 38 686 inhabitants and covers an area of 1822 square km (population density 21.23 persons per square km).

The FLAG has the legal form of an association, with 26 members, including:

- > 14 representatives of local authorities,
- > 8 representatives of NGOs,
- > 4 representatives of private enterprises.

There are two advisory boards (which play the role of project selection committees) – one for Leader funding and the other for Axis 4 funding. There are 12 members on the Leader board (4 from local authorities, 4 from NGOs and 4 from businesses); the Axis 4 board has 9 members (3 from local authorities, 3 from NGOs and 3 from fisheries businesses).

The local development strategy (fisheries part) focuses on the “sustainable development of the areas dependent on fisheries.” A key objective is “to promote sustainable development and partnership in the areas dependent on fisheries by increasing employment, competitiveness, gender equality, innovation, and regional



and international cooperation”. Activities envisaged in the strategy include:

- > the renewal and development of villages which are dependent on fisheries;
- > the development of fisheries and tourism-related infrastructure and services;
- > the improvement of economic activities and diversification.



▲ Liepājas District Partnership Board meeting and visit to potential project beneficiaries.

By the end of August 2010, ten FLAGs had announced calls for projects, and proposals received are currently being evaluated. According to information from the FLAGs, the amount of funding sought is so far only slightly higher than the funds available. This is mainly attributed to the fact that potential beneficiaries are not yet familiar with the application process and are hesitant about presenting their proposals. This mirrors the experience of the Leader programme, where the absorption pattern was also low in the early stages. It is expected that interest in subsequent calls will be much higher than the available funds, thereby allowing for a greater focus on the best quality projects.

The low involvement of the private sector may be due to the fact that value-added tax (VAT) is not eligible for assistance. This is exacerbated by the fact that the funding provisions for beneficiaries of the Rural Development Programme have been changed, and are at present more attractive than those of the European Fisheries Fund.

Projects focus on tourism

Many of the projects currently under evaluation focus on increasing the attractiveness of fisheries areas to tourists. They include activities such as restoring old settlements, developing water-based tourist routes (a boating trail along the river where people can visit historical settlements and other places of interest), constructing fishing stands around lakes, creating facilities for Nordic walking and even go-karting.

One of the potential challenges for FLAGs could be how to ensure demarcation between projects to be financed from the EAFRD and the EFF. All FLAGs must have separate decision-making bodies and separate project evaluation committees, but the Paying Agency also has to ensure that there is no double funding for projects. This might not be so easy, especially in the case of projects addressing village renewal and development.

Coordination at national level

The Latvian National Fisheries Network was set up in early 2010. This network involves not only the FLAGs, but also other stakeholders from the fisheries sector. It is managed by the same organisation that is responsible for the National Rural Development Network. The Network is currently preparing its activity programme for the period 2011-2013. ■

Contact:

Latvian National Fisheries Network
c/o Gunta Svarce, Head of Unit,
+371 63050220,
gunta.svarce@lkkc.lv



Event

On the move: 90 FLAGs meet in Gijón

More than 150 people, representing 90 fisheries local action groups (FLAGs), as well as Axis 4 managing authorities and other stakeholders from across the EU, met in Gijón (Asturias, Spain) on the 24-26 March 2010. The “FLAGs on the move” seminar provided participants with a first opportunity to network and exchange views on topics of common interest.

The first day of the event saw a number of bilateral meetings, national meetings – including one to launch the Spanish National Network of Fisheries Groups – and informal exchanges between FLAGs. Following a welcome dinner in the evening, hosted by the Spanish Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs (MARM), the main programme of the seminar got off the ground early the next morning at the impressive premises of the *Laboral Ciudad de la Cultura*.

Ernesto Penas Lado, Director at DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission, opened the plenary session by explaining the context of Axis 4 and its importance within the cohesion policy debate, which is at the heart of the discussions on the future of Europe. Mr Penas encouraged FLAGs to work with enthusiasm towards the development of their areas and thus to build Europe “from the bottom up”. In particular, he insisted that Axis 4 funding, targeted at people rather than big companies, should help to pro-

mote organisation and coordination within coastal and fisheries communities and could play a much more important role in the future should it prove effective in the current period.

Juan Ignacio Gandarias Serrano, Director-General of Fisheries Regulation at MARM then addressed the participants, offering an overview of Axis 4 in Spain and announcing the official launch of the Spanish Network of Fisheries Groups. Mr Gandarias Serrano expressed his hope that the network would work closely with other national networks and with FARNET to ensure the high visibility of work carried out under Axis 4. Axis 4, he said, was a key part of future EU policy and could and should link in with the Integrated Maritime Policy and the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, green and inclusive growth.

Marcelino Menéndez Cuervo, Director General of Fisheries in the Regional Government of Asturias, emphasised the need to work towards a sustainable future and

to learn from others – what has worked and what has not worked – in order to adapt effectively to new realities.

Christine Falter and Jean-Pierre Vercruysse from DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries presented the state of play of Axis 4 around Europe, highlighting the broad diversity of approaches to allocating resources to, and implementing Axis 4. In March 2010, 121 FLAGs were already selected and had their strategies approved, while approximately another 100 were still expected. Total public funding per FLAG ranges from EUR 1 million to EUR 11 million for the 2007-2013 period.

Paul Soto, Director of the FARNET Support Unit (FSU), argued that the network itself should be seen in bottom-up terms as an “ecosystem of people actively working on certain common issues who share knowledge and reinforce each other’s activity”. The Support Unit’s role was to work with them to implement Axis 4 through “the provision of technical assistance, animation, information and capitalisation of experiences”.





▲ Final panel, with list of priorities on the screen.



Diversity

Representatives from fisheries areas in Spain, France and Denmark were asked to discuss the challenges their communities were facing, what they were doing to overcome these challenges – in particular with Axis 4 funding – and how they hoped to see their communities in 20 years time. The panel discussion not only highlighted the diversity of different challenges that fisheries areas around Europe were facing, but also the varying degrees of optimism about overcoming these challenges.

The Regional Minister for Rural Affairs and Fisheries in Asturias, Manuel Aurelio Martín González, concluded the plenary session by praising Axis 4 and the opportunity it presented for fostering endogenous, socio-economic development in fisheries areas. In particular, he welcomed the fact that fishermen themselves would be at the heart of this development process.

Four parallel working groups followed, each repeated once in order to allow participants to partake in the discussion on two of the following topics:

- > how to link project selection to the objectives of the strategy;
- > how to create a dynamic and balanced partnership;
- > how to build links with Leader; and
- > how to encourage viable private investment.

Priorities

The first day closed with a session in which Urszula Budzich-Szukala from the FSU explained the principles of the “Open Space” workshop and asked participants to propose themes they would like to discuss during the following day’s workshop, working in small, informal groups.

The following morning, the Open Space session proved extremely popular. Participants discussed their chosen topics with fellow participants sharing the same interests, and had the flexibility to leave discussions and join others as they saw fit. In total, 18 different thematic discussions took place, ranging from topics as broad as pescaturism to more specialist subjects such as Norwegian salmon aquaculture and its effects on Swedish salmon fisheries.

Based on these discussions, participants identified the following priorities for fisheries areas and FLAGs: 1. diversification; 2. adding value to fisheries products; 3. active project development tools; 4. building networks; and 5. projects for priority target groups – particularly women.

It is worth noting that the top two issues – diversification and approaches to adding value to fisheries products – will be the themes of the next two transnational seminars to be organised by the FSU, one in the autumn of 2010 and the other in the spring of 2011.

Eligibility, support systems and cooperation

Yves Champetier, FSU expert, moderated a final panel discussion. Panellists were asked to give their reactions to the seminar discussions and the prioritisation of support needs, and to consider what kind of support could be provided to FLAGs.

Clarifications regarding eligibility had been a recurring theme over the two days. Dominique Leveil from DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries insisted that the selection of projects should not be based only on eligibility, which is extremely broad. Rather, FLAGs should have selection criteria in place to ensure projects chosen for funding are also in line with the priorities of the FLAG strategy for the area. As well as selecting eligible projects that would contribute to their development strategy, Mr Leveil also pointed out that FLAGs should know how to direct projects to other EFF axes in cases where it would make more sense. Mr Leveil assured participants, however, that the Commission would work to ensure greater clarity on eligibility questions.



▲ Discussion in one of the workshops.

With regards to the support that Member States could offer FLAGs, all panellists agreed that a national network was highly desirable – and that good communication between FLAGs and the national administration was vital.

Finally, a member of the audience enquired about the place of inland fisheries in Axis 4, which the participant indicated, experienced very different issues to coastal areas. This was answered by Mr Vercruysse from the European Commission, who highlighted that this was an example of where transnational cooperation could prove helpful.

The seminar was followed by a study visit to two projects supported by the local Leader group: a centre for the marine environment of Cabo Peñas and the Maritime Museum of Asturias. ■

More information: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/content/flags-move-gijon-spain-24-26-march-2010>

FARNETwork

> **FARNET Support Unit celebrates a successful first year**

The first year of operation of the FARNET Support Unit (FSU) has seen considerable progress in the implementation of Axis 4, with the selection process now underway in all 21 participating Member States and 124 FLAGs already operational. Established in May 2009, the FSU assists the European Commission with the implementation of Axis 4. The Unit comprises a core team of 12 (eight full-time equivalents), 21 geographical experts and a six-person advisory group. Over the past 12 months this team has undertaken a number of important activities, including organising three major events, producing a number of multilingual publications, developing the [FARNET website](http://www.farnet.eu), providing methodological support to managing authorities and FLAGs, holding three meetings of managing authorities and establishing links with existing national networks, organising focus group meetings in nine countries, compiling good practices and methodological tools.

Despite this progress, FLAGs have yet to be selected in ten countries and the lack of technical support systems at managing authority level remains a critical issue. Addressing these issues is a key priority for the FSU in 2010-2011. www.farnet.eu

> **"FLAGs in Business: adding value to local fisheries products"**

At the initiative of the European Commission, the FARNET Support Unit will organise a seminar in Almere (Netherlands) on the 17-18 November 2010 on the role of FLAGs in adding value to local fisheries products. The purpose of the seminar is to provide FLAGs with practical knowledge and skills on how to foster this important Axis 4 theme. It will also facilitate an exchange of experience between FLAGs and provide an opportunity to explore possible avenues for future cooperation. To coincide with the seminar, the FARNET Support Unit will publish a methodological guide on adding value to local fisheries products. This will provide guidance for FLAGs on some of the different strategies and approaches that can be applied in order to facilitate and support this process at local level. For more information please contact the FARNET team at info@farnet.eu

> **Methodological guides**

The FARNET Support Unit has published three methodological guides: a **"Start-up Guide for FLAGs"**, a **"Guide to Starting Cooperation between FLAGs"** and a **"Guide to Adding Value to Local Fisheries Products"**.

These guides are available in 11 official languages of the EU and can be downloaded from the [FARNET website](http://www.farnet.eu)

FARNET Agenda

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
17-18 November 2010	<i>"FLAGs in Business: adding value to local fisheries products"</i>	Almere (NL)
31 January – 2 February 2011	Seafood Summit 2011 <i>"Responsibility without Borders?"</i>	Vancouver (CDN)
4-5 April 2011	International Conference <i>"It's not just about the fish: social and cultural perspectives of sustainable marine fisheries"</i>	Greenwich (UK)
3-5 May 2011	European Seafood Exposition 2011	Brussels (B)

Profile

NAME: Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF)

OBJECTIVE: The EFF may co-finance local projects for sustainable development and improvement of the quality of life in fisheries areas, complementary to other EU financial instruments.

IMPLEMENTATION: Twenty-one Member States implement Axis 4. An important innovation in the implementation of this axis is the emphasis on the territorial approach.

TARGET AREAS: "Fisheries areas" are areas with a sea or lake shore or including ponds or a river estuary and with a significant level of employment in the fisheries sector. The Member States select the eligible areas according to the following criteria: they should be small local territories (less than NUTS 3) that are coherent from a geographical, economic and social point of view. Support should be targeted either to sparsely populated areas or those where the sector is in decline or those with small fisheries communities. Member States can add further criteria for the selection of the areas.

RECIPIENTS: "Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGS)", i.e. a combination of public, private and civil society partners jointly devising a strategy and innovative measures for the sustainable development of a fisheries area. FLAGS are selected by the Member States on the basis of criteria defined in their operational programmes. It is expected that at least 200 FLAGS will be created across the EU.

ELIGIBLE MEASURES: Strengthening the competitiveness of the fisheries areas; restructuring, redirecting and diversifying economic activities; adding value to fisheries products; small fisheries and tourism infrastructure and services; protecting the environment; restoring production damaged by disasters; inter-regional and trans-national cooperation of actors; capacity building to prepare local development strategies; and the running costs of FLAGS.

NETWORK: All the stakeholders concerned with Axis 4 are organised around a "European Fisheries Areas Network (FARNET)", permitting wide dissemination (through seminars, meetings and publications) of innovative projects implemented for the benefit of fisheries areas and fostering transnational cooperation. The network is coordinated by the "FARNET Support Unit".

DURATION OF THE PROGRAMME: seven years (2007-2013), but projects can be implemented until the end of 2015.

EUROPEAN UNION ASSISTANCE: Priority Axis 4 has a budget of EUR 567 million of EFF funding for the period 2007-2013, to which must be added national public co-funding and private investment. It represents just over 13% of the overall EFF budget.

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Send us your news

FARNET publications are resources for all those engaged in building a more sustainable future for Europe's fisheries areas. Please send us news and information on your activities which might be of interest to other groups or actors working in this field. In particular, we would like to hear about your successes and achievements, important events and announcements, and also your ideas or proposals for exchanges or cooperation with other fisheries areas.

info@farnet.eu

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