

## “MariFish”

### Strengthening the links between European marine fisheries science and fisheries management

*As many of Europe’s coastal regions are dependent on fisheries for a living, fundamental research in fisheries science is of vital importance. Research also helps fisheries managers adopt appropriate ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management in order to protect the wider marine environment. At present, however, project managers across Europe responsible for fisheries research funding do not always work closely together, despite facing shared challenges and problems. An ERA-NET project called MariFish aims to correct this situation and encourage the development of lasting working partnerships between the organizations that fund fisheries research.*



**MariFish brings together the major national funders of marine fisheries research from 15 European countries to form an effective, working partnership.**

The total combined annual fisheries research budget of all partners amounts to approximately €160 million and represents a very significant European research resource and body of scientific knowledge.

In fisheries science, much of the work is geared towards providing a better understanding of the biology and dynamics of fish stocks and the impact of fishing on the marine environment. Fisheries managers use the results of this research to assess the sustainability of fishing levels and, when necessary, to make adjustments to fishing quotas and fishing effort.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) is the key international body advising the European Commission and national governments on scientific issues relating to fisheries. This intergovernmental organisation serves as a catalyst for fisheries research, significantly influencing the research programmes of its member countries. Priorities for research, however, are still largely determined on an individual basis by ICES members,

and there is no formal mechanism for coordination of fisheries research between the funders, which could benefit all partners.

MariFish intends to address this current weakness by improving the coordination, planning and funding of research, and to make the most of ICES expertise. To achieve this aim MariFish will undertake the following key activities over a 5 year period:

- Exchange information on current R&D/research programmes.
- Improve practices in the planning and procurement of research through shared knowledge.
- Identify existing regional, European and international collaboration.
- Enhance coordination between fisheries research and other disciplines.
- Compare and analyse national research programmes to identify areas of common interest, gaps and possible duplication.
- Develop and commission shared research programmes.
- Identify innovative, strategic research needs and develop a jointly funded programme.

**Project acronym:**

MariFish

**Full title of Project:**

Coordination of European Marine Fisheries Research

**EU contract number:**

025989

**Web-site:**

[www.marifish.net](http://www.marifish.net)

**Coordinator**

Dr. John Lock  
Government of the United Kingdom  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)  
Eastbury House, 30 - 34 Albert Embankment  
London, SE1 7TL  
UK

Phone : -

Fax : -

Email : [marifish@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:marifish@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

**“MARIFISH WILL FOCUS ON THAT RESEARCH WHICH PROVIDES EVIDENCE TO MANAGERS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES, INCLUDING LINKS WITH AQUACULTURE, SET WITHIN THE ECOSYSTEM BASED PRINCIPLE”**

To help MariFish achieve its many challenging goals the following statement of overall purpose has been adopted by the partners: “MariFish will focus on that research which provides evidence to managers for the development of strategies for sustainable fisheries, including links with aquaculture, set within the ecosystem based principle.”

The project has now been running for over two years during which partners have focused on the collection of information on a number of topics including the shape and content of partners’ programmes and existing collaboration. Several reports have come out of this, such as **an analysis report of the fisheries management drivers and priorities of MariFish partners**. In addition, **guidelines for successfully identifying, commissioning and managing fisheries research programmes** have been developed. These and other publications can be downloaded from the project web site.

In the next phase of the project, there will be an increased focus on how partners will be able to collaborate on their shared research projects to maximize the impact of the research carried out. Emerging problems facing fisheries management will be identified and it will be decided which of these problems would particularly benefit from

collaborative programme management at the European level, through MariFish. This will eventually lead to the development of shared, jointly funded and managed research programmes, a very important outcome for MariFish.

Good-quality research provides the sound knowledge base which policy-makers need to promote sustainable levels of fishing in the seas around Europe. Therefore, robust science plays a key role in the European Union’s Common Fisheries Policy and other (non-EU) fisheries management programmes. There is, therefore, a strong sense of overall purpose for fisheries research – that of providing evidence for achieving sustainable fisheries management, set within the ecosystem based principle.

Through the development of an effective partnership, MariFish will bring much needed dialogue and cooperation between national programme managers of fisheries research. This way, MariFish will certainly contribute to the building of the European Research Area (ERA).