

“IMPACT FISH”

Maximising the value of EU-funded research in fisheries, aquaculture and seafood processing

The development of European aquaculture, fisheries and seafood processing has benefited considerably from EU-funded research efforts. Reforms in European policies and programmes, accompanied by changing public priorities, have affected the way in which the fisheries sector is perceived and hence its further development.

The Fourth and Fifth Framework Programmes (FP4 and FP5) of the European Commission in aquaculture, fisheries and seafood processing RTD were built upon specific objectives for the continued development of the sector over the period 1994-2002. But what have been the actual impacts of these programmes?

As part of the integration and strengthening of the European Research Area, the specific support action **IMPACT FISH** has provided an **impact assessment of both programmes** on the research areas mentioned above and on the fisheries industry (including aquaculture production systems). The project has brought together the diverse sources of information on the projects, and has sought direct feedback on RTD impact from a wide range of stakeholders who carry out and use the results of the projects/programmes. The assessment was divided into two phases – one of monitoring current information (including those FP5 projects that terminated in 2004) and one of collection and quantification in the form of questionnaires.

The questionnaire had an overall return rate of 19%, which is comparable to other studies but lower than the ambitions of the partners undertaking this study. Out of the 209 respondents, 43% worked in the aquaculture sector, 30% in fisheries, 15% in the seafood processing sector and 12% were considered as being “cross-sectorial”. The scientific community represented the majority of respondents, although individual companies, associations and NGOs were also well represented. After ranking

the participating countries based on the number of returned questionnaires, the United Kingdom, Norway and France made up the top-3, reflecting these countries’ involvement in both research programmes.

There seemed to be a fair awareness of how the European Commission supported research in fisheries, aquaculture and seafood processing and of the objectives of the Framework Programmes; there was a **lower awareness of the results that came out of both Programmes, especially for the respondents of the private sector** (professional organisations and individual companies). While the general perception of the impact of EC RTD funding on networking and cooperation between countries was high, the seafood processing sector had a lower general perception on cooperation and communication from science to industry and society than the other sectors. In fact, the seafood processing sector generally had a lower perception of the impact of research in both aquaculture and fisheries, which might have been the direct result of a communication gap in the dissemination of RTD results.



Project acronym:

IMPACT FISH

Full title of Project:

Impact assessment of the FP4 and FP5 research programmes on fisheries, aquaculture and seafood processing research area and the fishery industry

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**“THE IMPACT FISH
QUESTIONNAIRE SHOWED
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RESULTS IN THE PRIVATE
SECTOR”**

As to communication tools, all respondents felt that the tools currently available, and especially the internet, had to be used more in the future and that the **level of communication needed to be better adapted to the target audience**. It was perceived that most dissemination activities taken by project coordinators primarily targeted the scientific community, with little, if any, effort to reach a wider non-scientific audience. This was confirmed by the results of the survey of the outputs of research programmes, showing that most project outcomes had been disseminated in the form of peer-reviewed scientific papers.

All results and conclusions from the questionnaire were compiled into a report, which can be downloaded from the EAS website. The report also contains some recommendations that have been proposed for consideration by the European Commission, DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, and that relate to the validation of proposed research, dissemination strategies for different types of research projects and communication tools.

Impact assessment is being built-in to RTD and especially policy development programmes as a tool to monitor the effects of the research and the need for policy change – especially the latter in

accordance with COM(2002)276, “Communication from the Commission on Impact Assessment, published in June 2002.

IMPACT FISH has identified trends and tendencies and provided a basis for the comparison of both framework programmes, with respect to their continuity related to original programme objectives, and their impact on both research and the industry. The project has therefore provided valuable information for stakeholders involved in research planning, relating to the lessons to be learned for full multi-disciplinary RTD. The conclusions and recommendations provided guidelines for future actions and policies throughout the European aquaculture and fisheries sector, at a time when planning of the FP7 programme was reaching an advanced stage.