

“INDECO”

Incorporating environmental requirements into the CFP

Fish stocks around the world have been declining for years. In the EU as many as 50 per cent of the commercial fish stocks are overfished. So far, fishery policies have not been able to halt the drop. In addition, they have not provided enough environmental protection from the associated damage to the wider marine ecosystems, including habitats and non-target species.

With the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2002, the ecosystem approach was incorporated into Europe’s fisheries management, meaning that the introduction of ecosystem considerations in the management process has now become a requirement in the EU.

To achieve this goal, the relationships between fishing activities and ecosystems will have to be clearly understood and managed, and ways have to be found to measure the effectiveness of different management approaches. This, in turn, will allow management strategies to be adapted accordingly. Well-designed **indicators** can be valuable tools to help assess progress towards policy objectives, and can provide a basis for adjusting policies and communicating with stakeholders. They are increasingly used to assess the efficacy of EU policies, including the extent to which environmental concerns are integrated into sectoral policies.

The purpose of the **INDECO Coordination Action** was to ensure a coherent approach to the **development of indicators at EU level, in support of environmental integration within the CFP and internationally**. The project’s principal objectives were:

- To identify quantitative indicators for the impact of fishing on the ecosystem state, functioning and dynamics, as well as indicators for socio-economic factors and for the

effectiveness of different management measures;

- To assess the applicability of such indicators; and
- To develop operational models with a view to establishing the relationship between environmental conditions and fishing activities.

In the first phase of the project, a closer look was taken at the EU fisheries management framework and its objectives. In addition, other relevant EU level policies and processes, as well as EU international commitments were considered. Hereby it was noted that while there exist a number of documents specifying the overall goals of the CFP, there are fewer clearly defined objectives and targets. Given that policy targets are a primary starting point for indicator identification, this lack of specific objectives and targets presented problems for the INDECO process. It was however agreed that INDECO had to proceed with the development and selection of indicators based on work already underway in international and regional fora.

Existing population indicators, community and habitats indicators, indicator methods that could be used to identify

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“THE USE OF INDICATORS
TO INTEGRATE
ENVIRONMENTAL
REQUIREMENTS INTO THE
CFP WAS EXPLICITLY
SUPPORTED BY THE
EUROPEAN COUNCIL”

ecosystem status and function, and socio-economic indicators were reviewed and consequently measured against the following criteria:

- Contribution to CFP objectives
- Usefulness for fisheries management
- Practicality
- Ease of stakeholder understanding
- Cost-effectiveness

Some indicators looked much more promising from a scientific point of view and for their potential usefulness to evaluating the performance of the CFP than others. Generally higher scores were given to indicators of fishing effort, fleet capacity, fishing impact and state of commercially targeted (assessed) fish stocks. Other potential indicators gaining a higher score were state of non-assessed stocks, size of fish, abundance of fish and indicators for seabirds. Seabird population abundance scored poorly in their relationship to the CFP as abundance appeared to be affected more by other factors than fishing.

Indicators for effects on reptiles were not recommended, despite these taxa being specially protected in EU legislation and being known to be affected by

fisheries bycatch. A programme to improve this situation could be bought in alongside any other planned improvements in catch and impact reporting. Finally, indicators for ecosystem functioning and for genetic impacts appeared to require more research and development (partly to understand links to fisheries effects) and were found not ready to be used to evaluate CFP performance.

The integration of environmental protection into fishery management policies in general, and the specific need for indicators to monitor progress, have subsequently been expressed in several Commission documents, including the Biodiversity Action Plan for Fisheries (COM(2001)162) and the Community Action Plan to integrate environmental protection requirements into the CFP (COM(2002)186). The use of indicators has also been explicitly supported by the Council in its 2001 report on environmental integration, submitted to the June 2001 Göteborg Summit. Within this framework, the INDECO project, bringing together both scientific and EU policy expertise, offers a scientifically robust contribution that is of maximum relevance to EU policy-makers and other end-users.