

The state of Italian marine fisheries and aquaculture

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Preliminary remarks by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, at present Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies, published a first report on the state of fisheries in Italian seas in 1931. Today, eighty years later, I am happy to present this publication, which tries to provide a complete overview of Italian marine fisheries and aquaculture, the latter being one of the world's fastest-growing food production activities in the last decades.

Fisheries management also requires the best possible communication tools to inform the various stakeholders in our highly structured society about a production sector with both a long history and an increasing current importance as the centre of an European debate over decisions to be made regarding the conservation of marine ecosystems, in the framework of a sustainable fisheries policy, which represents the pillars of the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

There is certainly more institutional involvement in fisheries than in other primary industries. The reason for this is clear: fisheries are based on the capture of marine organisms, a common resource; fishermen are delegated to carry out this activity and the competent state and regional authorities are required to regulate and control the use and conservation of these resources.

It should be mentioned first and foremost that fishery resources come under EU jurisdiction and that Member States are responsible for the implementation of EU fishery policies. The Italian Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies participates in the European Council of Fisheries Ministers and is required to implement European decisions in his own country, in accordance with the treaties on which the Union is based.

The management of fisheries at a European level is also a very complex matter. 27 member states have seats in the above-mentioned European Council of Ministers and each has to represent a series of particular environmental, sociocultural and economic situations while attempting to define common rules for the implementation of a common policy.

At a European level, the need to highlight the specific features of the Mediterranean Sea was initially answered by the implementation of EC regulations for fisheries in this sea, though the process that still faces much resistance, even from legitimate stakeholders, just started.

The implementation of new fishery policies, shaped by innovative management models with a solid scientific basis, is a much more difficult task in the Mediterranean region, due to the geographical complexity of the area. This sea has coastlines in EU member countries, North Africa and on the western shore of the Middle East, but also provides the shortest and busiest route between the Americas and Asia, via the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal.

For Italy, fisheries management therefore entails operating on two fronts, one within the European Union and one in which living resources are shared in the same fishing areas with the Balkan region to the East and North Africa to the South. In this perspective, fisheries assume the features of an international policy issue, which is now increasingly complex due to the great changes occurring in the governance models of the various countries in the region.

This book presents a picture of fisheries and aquaculture in an analytic and problematic framework, aimed at overcoming the image of a sector composed of people that disrespect rules and "consume" the sea, to enable full recognition of the social, environmental and economic functions it performs.

In regard to this, I wish to mention that I have been involved with fisheries as Department Head of International and Market Policies. I followed the work of the European Fisheries Council and the negotiation of several dossiers, and in most circumstances I have seen how illegal fishing and delays in the applications envisaged by EU planning penalised Italian fisheries as a whole.

For this reason I agree with the various authors in this book on the need for a new commitment to competitive Italian fisheries with greater credibility in Europe, as a reference model for the Mediterranean Region. It is a difficult task, partly because of the accumulation of delays, and to compensate for these constructive commitment from various parties is required. Certain chapters of the book show how Italian fisheries are regulated by rules which call for the active participation of fishery associations, trade unions and the research community, and how these players need to adopt new perspectives and roles in line with the expectations of Europe, in which we play a prominent role. The state of marine living resources, which are generally overexploited, the need to implement policies for the conservation of biodiversity in integral marine ecosystems and to limit public spending are all conditions that call for a renewal of Italian fisheries, to ensure a future for this economic activity of great social importance.

Another recurring theme in the book is the creation of common rules for the Mediterranean Region.

The book, in addition to presenting aspects of international fisheries policy and the international organisations responsible for the implementation of fisheries policies, describes the Italian commitment to responsible fisheries in the Mediterranean Region. I believe that this commitment should be capitalised as much as possible in view of all the investments made and work carried out up to now.

This publication, "The state of Italian marine fisheries and aquaculture", shows that Italy has supported many multi- and bilateral projects for fisheries in the Mediterranean Region, such as AdriaMed and MedSudMed, carried out by FAO respectively for the Adriatic Sea and the Straits of Sicily.

The main objectives of this project are the creation of a common data collection system, collaboration among research scientists and facilitation of dialogue with producers' associations, in order to create common rules that can be respected.

Instruments exist at an institutional level for the definition of common rules for fisheries in our seas. I refer to the GFCM, General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, hosted by Italy according to an established tradition to be the location of FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) and IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), which are amongst the most important international food organisations.

I wish to thank the many authors who contributed to produce this book and I underline the importance that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies lays on fisheries and aquaculture as strategic sectors of our primary economy. I consider this book as a useful tool that will help us to make Italian fisheries better known in Europe and in the world, especially through the English version.

Mario Catania
Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies

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Abbreviations and acronyms

API - Associazione Piscicoltori Italiani	IREPA - Istituto di Ricerche Economiche per la Pesca e l'Acquacoltura
BSE - Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy	ISO - International Organization for Standardization
CAG - Coastal Action Group	ISTAT - Italian Statistics Office
CAQ - GFCM Committee on Aquaculture	IUCN - World Conservation Union
CFP - Common Fisheries Policy	LDP - Local Development Plan
CMO - Common Market Organisation	MAGP - Multi-Annual Guidance Programme
CNR - Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche	MiPAAF - Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies
CPUE - Capture Per Unit of Effort	PO - Producer Organization
DG - Directorate General	POP - Persistent Organic Pollutant
EC - European Commission	R&D - Research and Development
EFF - European Fisheries Fund	RAC - UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centre
EIA - Environmental Impact Assessment	SAC - GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee
EU - European Union	SIPAM - GFCM Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture
FAO - United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization	SMEs - Small Medium Enterprises
FCR - Food Conversion Ratio	SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
FEAP - Federation of European Aquaculture Producers	UNCLOS - United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
FISHSTAT - FAO Computer System for Global Catches and Aquaculture production	UNEP - United Nations Environment Programme
GFCM - General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean	UNEP/MAP - UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan for the Barcelona Convention
GSA - Geographical Sub-Area	WTO - World Trade Organization
HACCP - Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (System)	WWF - World Wildlife Fund
ICCAT - International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas	
ICRAM - Istituto Centrale per la Ricerca Applicata al Mare	
ICRAP - Istituto Centrale per la Ricerca Applicata alla Pesca marittima	
ICZM - Integrated Coastal Zone Management	

