

Seafish Regulation Alert Monitor 19/02/16 - 26/02/2016

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Food and Nutrition

NL Presidency - Less salt, sugar and fat – Source - Council of the EU - Press Releases

Making healthier foods widely available in Europe, while boosting companies' innovative capacity and strengthening the internal market. This is the main challenge to be discussed by EU member states, food companies and NGOs at a thematic conference on improving food products. The conference is taking place in Amsterdam on 22 and 23 February 2016 and should result in a new action plan for healthier foods in the EU.

EU action for healthier foods can be viewed [here](#)

INVITATION EESC - Building a more sustainable European food system – Source European Economic and Social Committee - Agendas and Events

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is currently preparing an Exploratory Opinion on "More sustainable food systems" at the request of the Dutch EU Presidency. In the past few years, civil society has been increasingly concerned about the multiple environmental, economic and social impacts of food production and consumption, and related public health and nutrition challenges.

The hearing will represent an opportunity to gather and examine experts' and stakeholders' views and initiatives for a transition to more sustainable food systems in Europe. The debate will take a holistic approach by considering the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability as well as the importance of cross-sectoral co-operation across the food supply chain.

The event will take place in the morning of 11 March 2016 (9.00-12.30) at the EESC premises, meeting room VMA3, rue Van Maerlant 2, 1040 Brussels.

For more information and registration please see [here](#)

CFP and Landing Obligation

EU seminar on landing obligation looks at lessons learnt so far

A seminar organised by the European Commission in Brussels today brought together national and European policymakers, scientists, fishing industry representatives and other stakeholders to discuss first experiences with the implementation of the landing obligation. Speakers focused on lessons learnt and next steps. For more details see [here](#)

Onboard cameras vital for fish discard ban to succeed - Source - WWF

WWF has launched a new report which shows that remote electronic monitoring, using a combination of onboard cameras and sensors, is by far the most efficient and cost effective way to monitor fishing activities at sea. The report is officially launched to coincide with a European Commission seminar[i] to discuss implementation of the fish discards ban (Landing Obligation). Between 2010-12, on average 40% (148,765 tonnes) of demersal (bottom dwelling) fish such as cod, haddock, plaice, caught in the North Sea were discarded with certain species being particularly affected – during this period, 43% of whiting and plaice, 25% of hake and up to 91% of dab ended up back in the sea[ii]. The landing obligation[iii] was created to end the wasteful practice of discarding, by requiring boats to bring all fish caught from certain species to land, so they can be fully documented and counted against fishing quotas.

The full report can be found [here](#).

Question for written answer on the prevention of parallel markets in juvenile fish in the context of the application of the landing obligation – Source – EP Register

Regulation (EU) 2015/812 on the landing obligation requires producer organisations to take measures to prevent the establishment of parallel markets in juvenile fish: ‘producer organisations shall ensure, in the production and marketing plans which they submit pursuant to paragraph 1 of this Article, that the landing of marine organisms below the minimum conservation reference size does not lead to the development of activities aimed specifically at the catching of those marine organisms’.

Given that the Commission is the guardian of EU legislation, can it confirm whether producer organisations have indeed taken these measures to prevent parallel markets? Can it provide examples of measures implemented in Belgium, Spain, Italy, Ireland, the UK, Portugal and France?

See the answer given by Mr Vella on behalf of the Commission [here](#)

Question for written on Maximum sustainable yield (MSY) – Source - EP Register

Questions are answered within 8 weeks

The Commission’s Q&A on the proposed fishing limits in the Atlantic and the North Sea claims that ‘the Commission is again proposing to reach maximum sustainable yield (MSY) exploitation rates by 2016 for all stocks where scientists have given MSY advice, except for sea bass’. Yet, despite the advice given by the ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) on the basis of the MSY and precautionary approaches to the effect that there should be no directed fisheries and that bycatch and discards should be minimised in 2015 and 2016 for cod in the Irish Sea, the Commission proposes a total allowable catch (TAC) of 146 tonnes for cod in that sea.

Could the Commission explain how a TAC of 146 tonnes corresponds to the MSY exploitation rate for cod in the Irish Sea?

If you wish to contact the MEP raising this issue they can be contacted on liadh.niriada@europarl.europa.eu

FAO puts sustainability on the menu in the world's fastest-growing food sector: fish – Source FAO

Delegations of fisheries ministries from more than 50 countries are gathering in Agadir for a summit with industry players to discuss emerging governance needs in a sector that provides the world with 17 percent of its animal protein and developing countries with more export revenue than meat, tobacco, rice and sugar combined.

The globalization of the fish trade, driven in large part by fast growth in aquaculture, raises challenging needs for better rules and practices regarding traceability, labor conditions and the protection of biodiversity as well as commercial preparations for shifts in demand, consumption habits, climate change impacts, and the rapid rise of supermarkets with their corollary supply chains.

"Trade in fish is much more important than people think, both in absolute and relative terms," said Audun Lem, Deputy-Director in FAO's Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Resources Division as well as secretary of the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade whose biennial meeting is being held in Africa for the first time.

For more details see [here](#)

European Fisheries Fund (EFF) ex post evaluation and the possible future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) after 2020

The ex-post evaluation open public consultation will examine the general public opinion on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Operational programme (hereafter OP) and its impact in relation to the objectives set out in the European Fisheries Fund (hereinafter 'EFF Regulation') as well as the guiding principles. The consultation will also look into the general public's opinion concerning the possible programming period after 2020. The results of this consultation will be used to provide the basis for future impact assessment of the possible programming period after 2020.

Please see [here](#) for more information.

DG MARE - New Advisory Councils – Source - European Commission - Press Releases

The Commission announced the start of the functioning of three new Advisory Councils for: Aquaculture, Markets and the Black Sea.

The Advisory Councils are stakeholder-led organisations that provide the Commission and EU countries with recommendations on fisheries management matters. They are composed of representatives from the industry and from other interest groups such as environmental organisations. With the addition of the three new ones, the total of the existing Advisory Councils is now 10.

For more information about advisory councils, please see [here](#).

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

European Roundtable of Industrialists - Business Alliance reiterates importance of ambitious TTIP

The 12th round of negotiations for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement between the EU and the US takes place from 22-26 February 2016 in Brussels. Ahead of this critical round, the Business Alliance for TTIP – which represents key industry associations and was formed in 2013 – reiterates its strong support for a comprehensive TTIP deal that could boost growth, competitiveness and jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

As part of this continued commitment, the Alliance highlights six important ways that TTIP could benefit businesses and citizens in the EU and the US, and urges the conclusion of negotiations in 2016:

1. An Opportunity to Lead
2. Enhanced Regulatory Practices
3. An Investment Boost
4. Access to Public Contracts
5. Gains for SMEs
6. Consumer Benefits

For more details see [here](#)

DG TRADE - Speech: Vienna visit on TTIP – Source - DG TRADE - Speech: Vienna visit on TTIP

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström visited Austria today, where she met Vice Chancellor Reinhold Mitterlehner, the heads of political parties, several parliamentarians and representatives of trade unions and industry.

During her visit to Vienna, she participated in a public debate on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) taking place at the Austrian Chamber of Labour. In her opening remarks she acknowledged the concerns of many Austrians about the negotiations and gave examples of how the EU's approach to the negotiations has shifted in response, including on transparency, investment protection and regulation. She also made again the case for why trade deals like TTIP will benefit Austrians and stressed that the Commission would continue to listen and engage with the public debate in Austria and elsewhere.

For more details see [here](#)

Ethics and Integrity

Slavery and trafficking in Thai fishing industry - Source

Slavery and trafficking continue in Thai fishing industry, claim activists

Slavery, trafficking, murder and corruption at all levels of government still pervade Thailand's billion-dollar fishing industry, activists claim, despite recent arrests linked to human rights abuses and the threat of an EU-wide boycott.

The Thai government has implemented measures to crack down on trafficking and arrested more than 100 people since the EU issued its “yellow card” last April, threatening a ban on seafood imports unless Thailand cleaned up illegal fishing and labour abuses.

But activists claim too little has changed in the industry, which is estimated to be worth \$7bn (€6.35bn) a year, despite Thai authorities and private businesses claiming they are confident they are on the right track to avoid the ban.

“Our investigations at sea and across the Thai seafood sector continue to find extensive violence, corruption and abuse,” said Steve Trent, director of the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), an NGO that has been working with the Thai government on the issue.

To read the full article please see [here](#)

Seafood fraud - Source - Ian Duncan (ECR, UK) -

Seafood Fraud – When you ask for haddock, let's make sure you get haddock"

"Seafood Fraud: The practice of misleading consumers about their seafood in order to increase profits, for instance, by mislabeling a fish as a different one, often cheaper, or even illegal”.

At the end of last year a seafood scandal broke in Brussels. An organisation by the name of Oceana went deep undercover. The organisations operatives gathered DNA samples from 280 fish dishes being offered by Brussels leading restaurants (as well as the canteens of the three EU institutions). The purpose of the investigation was simple: was the fish on the menu actually the fish that arrived on the plate?

The results were shocking. In a capital city that prides itself on seafood, a third of all the fish sampled were not as the restaurant claimed. Oceana found that 95% of Bluefin tuna was fraudulently labeled and frequently substituted, in most cases by the common, cheaper yellowfin tuna of cases but also, more worryingly by the overfished bigeye tuna. 11% of sole tested was found to be replaced by other, cheaper, flatfish species such as catfish or yellowfin sole. Incredibly, there was a 13% fraud rate in cod- replaced by as many as 7 different species, most often coley and hake.

Not only were consumers being conned into paying ‘top €’ for lesser quality fish, but diners were suffering ‘palate abuse,’ being led to believe what they were tasting was the higher quality fish. Who would dine on cod again if all they had ever eaten was coley labelled as cod? A reminder again of how often fish is smeared in a sauce which masks the taste of the fish. Where on earth was this mislabelled fish caught? Was it being labelled as sustainable when it was anything but? Oceana's report was ostensibly on the sins of the restaurant trade, but it found huge weaknesses of seafood labelling and traceability systems across Europe.

There are of course other issues. British fishermen are striving to ensure that all the fish they land is traceable back to an exact grid co-ordinate. Not all fishermen are necessarily quite so scrupulous. Mis-labelling fish either as false species or declaring the fish to having been caught in a false geographic area are the two most common fraudulent techniques in the fisheries sector as found in a previous Oceana study in 2013. For example, low-value catfish fillets sold as high-value sole fillets or cod caught in the Baltic masquerading as North Sea cod can have serious implications for the

wellbeing of the stocks, the reputation of the industry or the ability to meet sustainability targets. When such scandals are uncovered the implications can be serious. At the height of the horse meat scandal, Tesco (the UK supermarket strongly implicated in the debacle) found £360m wiped from its share value. People do like to know what they are eating.

So where does the problem lie? Given that the EU is awash with regulation you might assume that there were laws to deal with this sort of thing. You would be wrong. Despite the fact that the Commission regulates the geometry of a fishing net to the nearest millimetre it seems that no authority is actually responsible for overseeing traceability and labelling across the EU. The Commission conceded as much back in a report back in 2011 entitled, 'Combatting Cod Fraud in Europe,' which concluded that it was near impossible to determine whether the responsibility for mislabelling lay at a retailer or supplier level. This is despite a push for fish products to carry a unique approval number to allow them to be traced back to the supplier.

Troubled by the situation, I spoke with folks at the Edinburgh-based UK Seafish Industry Authority. They explained that last year scientists from the University of Salford tested a number of fish species from retail outlets across 6 EU countries to ensure that they were what they claimed to be. The found that only 5% of fish were mislabelled, with the figure in the UK just 3%. Perhaps a more realistic assessment of the scale of the mislabelling phenomenon, and a welcome reminder that Brits know their fish, and can tell the difference.

The UK seems to be ahead of the curve in terms of ensuring what you order is what you eat. How so? Well according to the Food Standards Agency (Scotland) in Aberdeen, it is the network of local authority Environmental Health inspectors that make all the difference. The inspectors are responsible for ensuring both the edibility of the fish and the truthfulness of the labelling. Spot checks are carried out, without warning, in shops and other retail outlets. Environmental Health inspectors are to be found at every fish market, a familiar sight to all fishermen.

However, obviously not all of EU conforms to the standards we take for granted in the UK So, something needs to be done. For some time I have been pushing for the Commission to get a grip. However, I have had no joy there. That is why, together with colleagues in the European Parliament, including the Fisheries Chair Alain Cadec, I have lodged a Resolution to address the issue. It includes the following statement -

It is time for the rest of the EU to meet the gold standard set by Great Britain. The ultimate ambition is to get Europe eating more fish. Let's ensure that folks can do so with confidence. When you ask for haddock, let's make sure you get haddock.

The Article can be viewed [here](#)