

# KEY STORIES

## Sustainable Fisheries & aquaculture



### WHY LOOKING AT... FISHERIES/AQUACULTURE?

At a global scale, fish from wild stocks and aquaculture form a major part of the human diet providing essential protein and nutrients to a growing population whilst meeting consumer demand. In many European seas, and for many fish species that are commercially fished, fish stocks have declined. While it is recognised that many factors explain this situation, over-fishing is clearly one key factor to be considered. In addition, current fishing practices can have negative impacts on non-commercial fishes and on marine habitats/the sea floor due to the use of mis-adapted fishing gear.

At the same time world per capita fish supply is at the level of 20kg (2014). To respond to the demand for sea food/fish, to declining fish stocks and to the need to use the ocean more sustainably, aquaculture has developed in different parts of Europe representing a viable source of income and jobs locally and accounts for about 20% of fish production and employs 85,000 people. Fisheries and aquaculture are part of the European Union Blue Growth Strategy that aims at supporting the sustainable development of jobs and growth from the ocean in or so-called "Blue Economy"

Fishing and fish farming are the main activities of the seafood value chain that exerting direct pressure on the marine environment. Environmental

concerns do exist for aquaculture in relation to feeding, the use of health products and other pressures imposed on wild fish and marine ecosystems. Whereas fishing and fish farming are the direct source of pressure, these pressures are also influenced by the other activities of the value chain, whose activities exert (indirect) pressure on fish production activities, such as processing, retailing, equipment manufacturing, labelling and certification, consumption and etc.

### WHICH CHALLENGES FACED FOR ADDRESSING ... SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES?

There have been widespread international, EU and national responses to encourage sustainable fishing practices, and to guide the aquaculture sector to environmentally sustainable practices. These are however not fully delivering a sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors—because of technological, socio-economic and regulatory and policy constraints. Competitiveness of the non-EU countries, higher costs for achieving higher quality standards are some examples of challenges that fishing and fish farming sectors are facing.

The review of current training, capacity building, communication and media initiatives carried out in different European countries stressed the diversity of initiatives addressing sustainable fishing and targeting fishermen, retailers, consumers and the wider public. The majority of them addressed the environmental problems resulting from (over-) fishing with some presenting solutions that help addressing it (e.g. using different fishing gears, selling and buying fish fished more sustainably or from seas with good fish stocks).

Many initiatives did not capture the functioning of the value chain and our collective responsibility



(from the fishers to the final consumer, including policy makers) in shifting to more sustainable practices. The social and economic dimensions of sustainable fisheries, including the benefits it can deliver to fishermen themselves and to actors of the value chains receive limited attention.

### WHAT CAN OCEAN LITERACY DELIVER?

The ocean literacy work has to be carried out along the whole value-chain. It needs to also target both actors in contact with consumers and consumers themselves. Specific trainings addressed and adapted to actors are needed to raise awareness and to allow the seafood sector's actors to communicate on sustainability and make more sustainable choices.

There is also a need of a common vision of what a sustainable fisheries means for all stakeholders in order that the actions are supported by all of them. Thus, specific focus should be on the education about sustainability. One of the successful examples is ocean literacy tool of ProSea Foundation (one of the partners in ResponSEABLE project) who has developed and tested efficiency of the educational package for maritime professionals – 'international sustainable fishing course' in fishing academies in Netherlands and Spain. The course gives students knowledge and understanding of a wide range of aspects of sustainable fishing and empowers them to become more sustainable in their daily actions. Course results show an increase in understanding, awareness, attitude and intended behaviour. After the course, most participants report an

understanding of the need to be involved and a positive attitude towards the sustainable development of the industry, and an intention to participate in sustainable activities when they are working as fishermen.

### TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

Addressing sustainable fisheries in Ocean Literacy initiatives needs to go **beyond describing fish stocks/ecosystem problems** and the factors that explain these problems. In particular:

- Helping to understand the **roles and responsibilities of ALL actors of the value chain** (or value chains connected to fishermen and/or consumers from different countries and fishing regions) as input to collective action.
- Recognising the environmental, social and economic dimensions of mis-practices and good practices (from the fisher to the consumer) that contribute to sustainable fisheries.
- Combining a range of initiatives addressing simultaneously all (interdependent) actors of the value chain—including policy makers and local authorities that support sustainable blue growth
- Adapting initiatives to individual target groups to account for mindsets, (short-term and long-term) interests and solutions that can be seized to change practice and behaviour of each target group so as to empower them - as basis to empowerment and responsible actions

