

---

## THE DIFFICULT BALANCING ACT OF EUROPE'S FISHING SECTOR

-

10.05.2016

---

10.05.2016

EurActiv

The European fishing sector faces the challenges of rising demand and increasing global competition. This environment is putting the EU's aspirations of sustainability under severe strain. EurActiv France reports.

Europe has yet to strike the right balance between sustainable fishing and the sector's economic development.

In the 1970s, European countries took measures to guarantee the sustainability of the sector, as much from an environmental as an economic and social standpoint, and to prevent fishing activities from wiping out fish stocks.

This balance between the preservation of resources and economic activities is difficult to master, said Annick Billon, a French senator (UDI) and the president of the Sea and Coastline study group, at a conference on fishing in Paris on Wednesday (4 May).

Since the year 2000, the EU's fish stocks have actually been growing, according to Ray Hilborn. The Canadian scientist and professor has established a correlation between stable or high fish stocks and good fisheries management.

### **Sustainable fishing**

The fishing industry itself is on the front line of efforts to improve sustainable fishing practices. For Jean-Pierre Duval, a photographer, we have to trust in the knowledge of fishermen to better understand fishing practices [...]. It is time to turn to sustainable fishing, he said.

Annick Le Loch, a Socialist MP for the coastal Finistère region, stressed the need to manage fisheries correctly to guarantee their future productivity.

### **A sector for the future**

Fishing is an important part of the French economy. With 7,000 commercial fishing vessels, the French fleet is the fourth largest in Europe. The sector creates 21,000 indirect jobs and is worth 11 billion in France alone.

This is an ecosystem that extends from boat design through naval engineering, construction and fishing right to the sale of fish. Fishing is not just about fishermen. One job on the sea brings three more on dry land, said Frédéric Moncany, the president of the French Maritime Cluster.

In France, there are 15 maritime schools. Fishing is a career that pays very well, but that has trouble recruiting. But it is a real career for the future, he added. France currently counts 23,000 fishermen.

### **Rising consumption**

The European fishing sector must also address the challenge of increasing global consumption.

In 1960, the global population of three billion people consumed an average of 10kg of fish per person per year. Today, the planets seven billion inhabitants each consume an average of 20 kg of fish per year.

Without fishing, we would lose 18 billion tonnes of food products, said Hilborn, who is one of the most cited authors in the area of fishing.

### **Need for investment**

But the fishing sector must adapt to fierce international competition, and needs money to do so. European production accounts for only a small share of the continents fish consumption. France imports 75% of the fish it consumes said Le Loch.

The fishing sector is a real paradox, according to Billon. The French people love the sea but have little interest in its economy, and we have no ministry for the sea, she said.

At the European level, in April, the Commission announced plans to invest 1000 million in a European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. Through this fund, the executive hopes to invest in innovation, technology and jobs in the blue economy.

The European Commission is taking another step to create the conditions for blue growth in Europe. We are developing skills. We are rewarding creativity. We are boosting technology. Armed with these assets, I am convinced that the European maritime industry can become a global pioneer of blue growth, said Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

---

Kaynak/Source: