

A BETTER WAY TO SHARE THE FISH?

As it chairs the Nordic Cooperation in Fisheries and Aquaculture for the first time, the Faroes places issues of marine ecosystem management and rights based fisheries on the joint agenda, highlighting problems related to changes in migratory resources.

THE FAROE Islands has been given a golden opportunity to influence the Nordic fisheries agenda as the country is taking the chair of the Nordic Cooperation in Fisheries and Aquaculture for 2010. Denmark is responsible for the duties of executive committee of the Nordic Council of Ministers this year, however the Faroes has in this connection accepted responsibility for the fisheries policy cooperation, according to the Ministry of Fisheries.

“It is an historic occasion for the Faroe Islands that for the first time we have taken upon us the chairman’s cap for one of the sectors under the umbrella of the Nordic Council of Ministers,” said Minister of Fisheries, Jacob Vestergaard. “This is a long overdue opportunity for us to actively influence, shape and implement the agenda of the Nordic fisheries cooperation, in which we have been participating for many years.”

Making sure the sea is included among principal areas of focus and cooperation in the overriding program of the Danish Chairmanship in 2010, the Faroese Government will be hosting an international conference at political level in the autumn. The conference, entitled



‘Seas the Future’ will be organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and held from 5 to 7 October at the Nordic House in the Faroe Islands. The Conference will provide a general platform to explore the main challenges in ensuring sustainable management of marine resources in the context of global food safety, adaptation by coastal nations to climate change, developing marine-based renewable energy production; and ensuring future safety and sustainability of shipping activities in the Nordic and North Atlantic region.

In accordance with the main themes emphasized by the Faroese fisheries chairmanship, two additional conferences will be held in Tórshavn’s Nordic House throughout the summer, ‘The Pelagic Complex’ on 8-9 September, and ‘Rights-Based Management to the Benefit of Society’ on 10-(11) June, while another one will be held on 26-27 May in Ilulissat, Greenland under the heading ‘Marine Ecosystem Management—How to Make it Sustainable.’

“For small island populations like the Faroes, the importance of the sea around us may seem obvious,” said Rógvi Reinert, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Fisheries. “However, for those living in larger cities the outlook is very different. Policy-making on some levels doesn’t seem to pay much attention to the interests of small fishing nations and communities. We are aiming to raise awareness of the sea at the Nordic level, in the hope that this may make it easier to shed light on issues of crucial



Ulla Svarrer Vang, 2010 chairperson of the Nordic Fisheries Cooperation, right, with science coordinator Jákup Mørkøre; longliner Thomas Nygaard landing at Toftir (bottom left).

importance for all those communities that are highly dependent on sustainable marine resources.”

‘BILLIONS’: The ‘Pelagic Complex’ will focus on approaches to managing shared fisheries in the face of changes increasingly occurring in the migratory patterns of pelagic species. It will highlight the question of science-based alternatives to political negotiations over quotas of herring, mackerel, blue whiting, and capelin.

The commercial pelagic fisheries of the northeast Atlantic are managed

jointly by the coastal nations—Faroe Islands, EU, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Russia—through the NEAFC (North-east Atlantic Fisheries Commission).

Research indicates that the migration patterns of major pelagic species have changed significantly in the last few years.

“Several of the species have increased substantially in biomass and have started to migrate over considerably greater areas than was the case just a few years ago,” said Ulla Svarrer Wang,

coordinator and 2010 chair of the Nordic Fisheries Cooperation. “This poses huge challenges for the organizations and arrangements whose task it is to manage and distribute rights to the stocks.”

With high values at stake, disputes over the allocation of fishing rights cannot be ruled out. For example, Iceland has stayed outside of the shared mackerel management regime.

In the Faroes, a debate has emerged over the country’s small share of the mackerel quota, with some voices ad-

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The Minister of Fisheries is responsible for fisheries and maritime affairs, including marine resource management, marine research, fisheries inspection, marine safety and rescue.

The Minister is also responsible for agriculture and emergency services.

Policies and regulations are coordinated and implemented by the Ministry of Fisheries and its associated agencies.

Permanent Secretary:
Rógvi Reinert

General Secretary:
Katrina Michelsen

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Director: Andras Kristiansen

Agencies:

- Faroe Marine Research Institute (Havstovan)
- Faroe Islands Fisheries Inspection (Fiskiveiðieftirlitið)
- Maritime Rescue and Coordination Center (MRCC)
- Marine Safety Inspection (Trygdarmiðstøðin)
- Faroese Fire Inspection (Brunaumsjón Landsins)
- Equal Pay Office (Lønjavningarstovan)
- Agriculture Agency (Búnaðarstovan)

vocating that the Faroes set their own quota. Others have warned that such a step could prove potentially damaging for the country’s vital interests.

“We’re talking about billions worth of pelagic fish,” Mr. Reinert said. “Any change in the management regime could have vast economic implications and affect thousands of people. Perhaps the time has come to explore the possibility of developing non-political, ecosystem-based approaches to the shared management of such resources.”