

FAROE'S FAMED EFFORT SYSTEM IN FOR UPDATE

Combining a traditional culture of sustainability with contemporary research and development in biotech, fish harvesting and seafood processing, the Faroese seek to build a 'showcase' management system, according to the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs.

THIS year marks the tenth anniversary of the current Faroese fisheries management regime, the acclaimed Fishing Days System, a purely effort-based management system devoid of quotas or TACs (total allowable catch), however using extensive technical regulations.

While the 10-year anniversary provides an occasion for the Minister of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, Björn Kalsö to initiate a re-evaluation of the Fishing Days System, the broad consensus is nonetheless that the system offers a well-functioning management framework for the fisheries of the Faroe EEZ (exclusive economic zone), featuring such glorious advantages as full cooperation between industry and authorities, community-wide support, and complete absence of problems such as misreporting of catches or discards of marketable fish.

Pushed by the sheer smallness of the Faroese economy and the total dominance of seafood on the exporting side, the fishing industry and the scientific community enjoy a working relationship on many levels. Meanwhile, with the global adoption of concepts like sustainable fisheries management, international seafood purchasers are set to place growing emphasis on responsible harvesting and chain traceability in order to provide consumers with information on product origin and fishing method used, in addition to nutritional data.

Said Jákup Mörköre, Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs coordinator of fishing industry research:

"Whereas our written tradition may not be the greatest, our oral tradition is the envy of the world. This is something that may partly explain why we haven't been so outgoing in publishing management reports to present proofs of the sustainability and responsibility of our fisheries."

Mr Mörköre added: "To a great extent, the Faroese are still 'nature people' and we have strong traditions in managing natural resources sustainably

and responsibly. In fact the very notion of sustainability and responsibility can feel unnatural to some of us—because traditionally, nobody in their right mind would even consider anything detrimental to that. The sustainability of the resources and the environment, on which our livelihood would be, and still is dependent, has always been elementary and crucial. This mentality permeates most every tradition we have preserved—from harvesting wild eggs or birds from the

Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs permanent secretary Rógvi Reinert (left) with Jákup Mörköre, coordinator of fishing industry research.



seacliffs to the non-industrial farming of sheep or cattle, to small-scale whaling, to household fishing. For instance, during the financial melt-down of the early 1990s, self-supply had a profound importance and helped make possible the quick recovery of our economy. As to commercial fishing, the traditional, ever precautionary approach is largely integrated in our management—which however, by no means, would imply that it shouldn't be developed further."

This is where science steps in. From developing new energy saving and environmentally friendly cod harvesting methods to building effective sorting devices to eliminate unwanted bycatch in

trawling, to finding out how to optimally process extracts of collagen and gelatin from the skin of Faroese groundfish, the demand for scientific research and development is constantly growing, according to Mr Mörköre.

About two years ago, the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs established three new research and development centers, dedicated to marine biotech, fish harvesting and fish processing technology. The R&D centers are all hosted by and based upon existing infrastructures of government agencies and public institutions including the Faroese Fisheries Laboratory and the Food, Veterinary and Environmental Agency. Another R&D program coordinated by Mr Mörköre aims to stimulate scientific and industrial R&D projects in order to "develop Faroese fisheries industry, harvesting, processing and trade, with regard to biologically, economically and socially sustainable use of the ocean's resources."

One of the research projects funded, the 'Digital National Traceability System' is about to become a promising joint venture between vessel operators, seafood processors and the Ministry, with the purpose of building an industry-wide platform for chain traceability.

"There are many promising avenues of research to pursue," Mr Mörköre said, "such as deeper surveys into fish behavior or the relevance and significance of currents, food supply, predators and ecosystem conditions in a wider sense. It wouldn't surprise me, for instance, if the protection of spawning areas would have a beneficial effect on the genetic diversity as well as the stability of cod

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Headed by the Minister of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs represents the Faroese Government's authority in overall charge of fisheries and maritime affairs of the Faroe Islands.

Agencies under the responsibility of the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs:

- Faroese Fisheries Laboratory
- FMA (Faroese Maritime Authority)
- Fire Protection Agency
- Fisheries Administration
- Fisheries Control Agency and Coast Guard
- MRCC (Maritime Rescue and Coordination Center)
- Ship Registry

stocks. Looking into that particular effect could be one candidate subject of research, too. Ultimately, to underpin the Prime Minister's Vision 2015, we want to build a showcase system of fisheries management."

In the Faroese management regime, technical regulations include minimum mesh size directives as well as fishing gear and vessel category restrictions plus marine protected areas—the area inside the 12-mile border is closed year-round for all bottom trawling except for small inshore vessels under a limited period only; most of the surrounding area is likewise temporarily closed for trawling with engines greater than 500 hp; additionally, eight identified spawning areas are temporarily closed for all fishing; and areas containing coral reefs are closed year-round for all trawling.