

MARINET AGM : *Can the CFP be reformed to deliver “food security” ?*

On **Saturday, 10th September, 6.00 pm** we will be holding our **Annual General Meeting** at the FOE Local Groups Conference in Nottingham¹. All members, whether Full or Affiliate, are invited and welcome to attend, as are non-members who are attending the Conference. We will be electing new officers for 2011/12, reviewing our work and finances, and planning the strategy for the delivery of our **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Reform campaign** over the next 12 months.

MARINET is at the forefront of the European-wide CFP Campaign, and our members and supporters are currently lobbying both EU and UK parliamentarians with a clear message – Reform of the CFP must restore health to our fisheries because we are in the “last chance saloon”, and *The Ocean Planet* booklet (see overleaf) is central in our explanation of this to parliamentarians and the public.

Sometimes environmentalists are criticised, justifiably too, for explaining a problem with great clarity whilst failing to advance the solution. In other words, simply being a prophet of doom. This is most certainly *not* the case with our CFP Reform campaign.

Whilst it is clear that discards – the practice of throwing unwanted fish back into the sea – is a scandalous practice and must cease, this is not actually what the real CFP Reform campaign is about.

The *real issue* – and this is where we apply the solution – is that fish stocks have been so over-fished that they are on the point of collapse and can no longer feed us. The situation is now so bad that we can only catch enough fish from our own seas to feed ourselves for six months of the year, with fish for the rest of the year being imported from other seas. This is the “*food security*” issue – the ability to feed ourselves - vitally important in a world where the human population continues to grow.

To conserve stocks, the EU has brought in quotas to try to restrict fishing, and this is where discards arise - fish are discarded because they exceed the quota, are too small or are simply unwanted. However banning discards will not solve the problem because the real problem is that there are *too few* fish in the sea, due to over-fishing. So, the *real solution* is not to land every fish that is caught (i.e. ban discards) but rather to stop fishing so fish stocks can be rebuilt to a sufficient size – somewhere approaching their historic levels when stocks were abundant – see MARINET Briefing². When fish are abundant once again, then we will have enough fish to eat all year round and fishing fleets can be sized and managed so that quotas become genuine acts of conservation rather than acts of expediency.

To rebuild fish stocks to somewhere near historic levels – and so regain food security – we have to create fisheries-based marine reserves centred on the spawning and nursery grounds of fish stocks. The closure of fisheries is a hard truth, and fishermen will lose income and traditional rights. Yet there is a positive outlook too. These fishermen can, most importantly, be re-employed in a new role as the managers of the reserves, patrolling them, and assisting in the monitoring and collection of scientific data. *Here* is the solution – jobs for fishermen and fish to eat. ***This is real CFP Reform.***

¹ For venue and other details, contact Stephen Eades stephen.marinet@btinternet.com, tel. 01249 653972

² MARINET Briefing on historic levels of North Sea fish stocks <http://www.marinet.org.uk/rocfp/northsea1880-2010.pdf>

The scope of MARINET's Activity.

We give below some further details about our CFP Reform campaign and how you can be involved, but first let us review the full range of work that MARINET does.

Website: We run a website of high quality, full of background information on campaigning areas, educational aids with photographs and explanations of the nature of marine life, and probably the best news service on marine issues in the UK, see www.marinet.org.uk. This quality is now recognised by the British Library who document our website.

Booklet: Our publication, *The Ocean Planet*, sets out fundamental proposals for the reform in the management of our seas in simple, everyday language. We explain the crisis, and the need to treat all our oceans as if they are a marine reserve where all extractive activity has to be licensed to halt the relentless degradation which marine scientists are documenting and issuing dire warnings about. Hard copies are available free of charge, or from our website <http://www.marinet.org.uk/mreserves/oceanplanet.pdf>

Marine Reserves: There is no more important tool in marine management than the marine reserve. Their ability to both protect and restore the productivity of our seas e.g. for fisheries, is well documented and their use should be beyond argument – but few governments, and certainly the not the UK, are using them in any effective manner. We are at the forefront of the campaign to try to secure their use a key tool of marine protection, both within the UK and in EU fisheries management

The Ecosystem-based Approach: Respect for the integrity of the marine ecosystem, and the life it sustains, is at an all time low. This key concept in the management of our seas has been defined for OSPAR by ourselves, see <http://www.marinet.org.uk/eatmm/definition.pdf>

OSPAR: The Oslo-Paris Commission for the Protection of the NE Atlantic is a European inter-governmental body working to restore health to our seas. We sits on committees of this organisation and evaluate its work, see <http://www.marinet.org.uk/eatmm/osparproceedings.pdf>

Marine Aggregate Dredging: the mining of sand and gravel from our seabed in offshore locations around the UK is an exceedingly harmful activity. Not only does it physically remove and destroy marine habitats, but also leads to coastal erosion. The UK government and the aggregate companies deny this, and MARINET is virtually the only marine organisation contesting this travesty of the truth See our video <http://www.marinet.org.uk/mad/video.html>

Bathing Water Quality: Swimming in our seas can be a dangerous delight because of sewage contamination. Although regulated by law, bathing water quality remains very uneven and if you want to find out the dangers, and the best/worst places to swim, see <http://www.marinet.org.uk/ukbw.html>

Renewable Energy: Tidal, wave and offshore wind could, if we committed the investment, provide us with all the energy we need – our seas have been likened to the “Saudi Arabia of renewable energy”. Alas, marine renewable energy remains a Cinderella industry compared to North Sea oil and gas, see our website <http://www.marinet.org.uk/refits.html>

CFP Reform Campaign: This is our major campaign at present, and it is imperative our fisheries are restored to a sound condition. The Common Fisheries Policy has long been the province of disastrous backroom deals by ministers from the EU nations, but since the Lisbon Treaty the EU Parliament has rights of co-decision on the CFP. So, we are asking *you* to *lobby MEPs* to restore common sense to this long saga of madness. For details, contact Stephen Eades stephen.marinet@btinternet.com