

**Newsletter No. 43, May 2013.**  
**Marine Information Network,**  
**Friends of the Earth Local Groups.**

**MARINET AGM: Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> July.**  
*Deepening Our and FOE's Marine Agenda.*

Our **Annual General Meeting** this year will be held on **Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> July**, 6.30 pm, at the Friends of the Earth "Basecamp" event at Hartington Hall, Hartington, Buxton, Derbyshire SK17 0AT.

All members, and indeed those who are not, are welcome at the AGM where we will elect officers for 2013/14, review recent work and plan our future work and campaigns. To attend you need to contact the organisers of the "Basecamp" [http://www.foe.co.uk/events/basecamp\\_2013\\_39459.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/events/basecamp_2013_39459.html) We greatly hope you will attend, even if it is only on the Saturday, and indeed only for our AGM ! We also plan to run an **additional workshop** on where reform of the Common Fisheries Policy currently stands, and what is required to bring the fishing industry and fish stocks back to productive health.

At present, the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reforms agreed in the **European Parliament** are being considered by the various national Fisheries Ministers of the EU (Council of Ministers) of which Ireland is currently chair. The Irish chair is optimistic that the Ministers will agree by the end of June to the reforms that the European Parliament has proposed, but long experience of the politics of fishing suggests that no reform proposals that affect "the rights of the fishing industry to fish" are guaranteed to be delivered. So, there is still everything to play for.

In addition, the CFP and the European fishing industry is supported by a huge subsidy system, over €1 billion per annum from the European Commission alone, and these subsidies are currently driving over-fishing. We will be campaigning strongly on **Fishing Subsidies** during the second half of this year, and you can learn more about this campaign at the AGM and overleaf in this newsletter.

**Next Major FOE Campaign:** National Friends of the Earth are now consulting on new major campaigns for 2014 (the present campaigns expire at the end of 2013). We feel that this is a huge opportunity for national FOE to take on board the central importance of the marine world on our "Ocean Planet". Suggestions are the importance of the oceans in regulating climate at this crucial time of global warming and climate change, or acidification of the oceans (increased CO<sub>2</sub> being absorbed by the sea in the form of carbonic acid) which results from fossil fuel burning and is threatening marine ecosystems worldwide. However, we prefer a campaign which reaches beyond these horizons.

Such a campaign is the current work by Deborah Wright (Marinet Affiliate member) to seek a fundamental change in the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) so that UNCLOS regulates all marine activities on the basis of the underlying principle that all seas and oceans are effectively marine reserves. This means that marine ecosystems have primacy, and all human activities (fishing, fossil fuel extraction, aggregate extraction and so forth) need a licence which is only issued on condition that no damage is caused to the integrity of marine ecosystems. We call this **The Principle of Worldwide Marine Protection**, and you can see a full statement of this principle <http://www.marinet.org.uk/deb-wright-blog/deb-wright-the-principle-of-worldwide-marine-protection.html> on our website.

If you agree, contact [nextmajorcampaign@foe.co.uk](mailto:nextmajorcampaign@foe.co.uk) and Paul de Zylva [paul.dezylva@foe.co.uk](mailto:paul.dezylva@foe.co.uk)

## **EU Fisheries Reform.**

We, with significant help from members (you), have worked hard to ensure that **food security**, the **rebuilding of fish stocks**, and the use of **marine reserves** are now part of the reform proposals that the European Parliament has recommended to EU Fisheries Ministers. Ministers will decide whether to accept these proposals in discussions of their own which are current at the time of writing.

Our campaign has now moved on to tackle an issue that is certainly of equal importance, if not more so, than the reforms listed above. This is the issue of EU and national **Fishing Subsidies**.

The EU fishing fleets are only able to put to sea and fish at their current level of activity – activity that amounts to over-fishing – due to the substantial financial subsidy that they get from both the EU and their national governments (the tax payer). Financial subsidies are recognised by the UN, the World Bank, the European Court of Auditors and numerous independent marine scientists worldwide as producing fleet **overcapacity**, and hence **over-fishing**. This pattern of subsidy is exactly what caused the vast cod stocks off the east coast of Canada to be fished into commercial extinction in the early 1990s, and never to recover.

In the case of the EU, the Commission is currently paying over €1 billion annually to the EU fishing fleets and, when national subsidies are added in, this financial support for European fishing fleets rises to over **€3 billion** annually. This system of subsidies is hugely damaging, and results in political pressure to ignore scientific advice on sustainable fishing levels with Fisheries Ministers and MEPs trying to maintain work for their fishermen by setting excessive fishing levels (quotas) – more details of this and other adverse consequences are set out in a Briefing accompanying this newsletter.

However, disturbingly, since 2007 the European Commission has **ceased to properly audit** the payments made under this subsidy system. Thus who is getting exactly what, and for what reason, is no longer clear. For example, subsidy payments are being paid in some cases to modernise a vessel (improve the engine capacity or upgrade the nets) and then, a very short time later, the same vessel is being paid a subsidy to be scrapped (in order to reduce fleet capacity). Anomalies like this are many, and the European Commission has delegated financial auditing of such payments, since 2007, to national governments who are meant to submit the audited details to the Commission – but the process is chaotic, and no clear accounting of the use and purpose of subsidy payments is available.

Subsidies could be enormously beneficial – for example, if they were used to fund a conservation-based fisheries management regime where marine reserves were set up to protect nursery and spawning grounds (to rebuild stock levels and thus restore lost food security) with fishermen and their vessels employed as the managers of these reserves, thus ensuring that fishermen continue to receive an income whilst the fishing industry and fish stocks are rebuilt. This would clearly be a good use of tax payers' money, with not only the fishing industry being rebuilt and its capacity to generate income greatly strengthened, but also the whole marine ecosystem would be reinvigorated.

Alas, at present, the EU fishing subsidy system is in a great mess. It is unaudited, unaccountable and is likely to foster intentional and unintentional mis-spending, and even criminal behaviour.

We have therefore launched a new arm to our EU Fisheries work – a campaign **to secure the proper auditing** of the EU fishing subsidy system and the **reallocation of subsidies** so that they fund a new conservation-based Common Fisheries Policy which is promised for the future **if** the European Parliament and EU Council of Fisheries Ministers can agree on the direction of the CFP's reform.

We are taking these issues up with the President of the European Commission, Fisheries Ministers, MPs and MEPs; and, we will shortly be asking you to quiz your political representatives (MEPs/MP) on their commitment to **EU Fishing Subsidy Reform**. Please support this action.

## European Union Fishing Subsidies.

### **Are payments causing more harm than good ?**

Fishing subsidies for EU fleets are very substantial – over €1 billion annually direct from the European Commission (European tax payer) and over € 3 billion annually when concealed national payments are included.<sup>1</sup>

Subsidy payments – tax money – should serve a “public good”. However in the case of fishing subsidies, the history of 10 years of payments reveals the opposite. They are guilty of:

- Causing **over-fishing**, keeping at sea a fleet that has too many vessels relative to fish stocks in the sea.
- Causing **illegal fishing**, with too many vessels chasing too few fish and limited annual catch quotas.
- Causing the **collapse of fish stocks**, as each year stocks are fished beyond their ability to reproduce.
- Causing the **loss of food security**, as each year stocks diminish with the result that the seas are less able to meet our needs – to the point where we now only meet our needs for 6 months of each year from EU seas.

EU fishing subsidies are administered by the European Commission via the European Fisheries Fund (to be renamed the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund from 2014). The European Commission also administers the EU’s fishing system – the Common Fisheries Policy.

**Key Question:** Is the Commission operating a subsidy system that is fully open and accountable ?

Unfortunately, the answer is that:

- The Commission has abandoned, since 2007, its own system of full accounting and transparency for fishing subsidy payments. Clear and comprehensive data on value for money is no longer available.
- The Commission has delegated, since 2007, this accounting responsibility to Member States that are, in many cases, failing to provide the Commission with this data. There has been a severe loss of transparency.
- The Commission created, in 2007, the European Transparency Initiative (Regulation 498/2007) which requires Member States to reveal such data but has **never** applied Regulation 498/2007 to fishing subsidies.

Fishing subsidies are therefore in need of **urgent reform**.

The opportunity for fishing subsidies reform is now – the rules of the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (operational from January 2014) are currently being drawn up by the European governmental institutions (the Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of European Fisheries Ministers) We therefore need you to **engage with** this new reform process for Fishing Subsidies. Please see our letter <http://www.marinet.org.uk/campaign-article/letter-to-the-president-of-the-european-commission-regarding-fishing-subsidies> to Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, on our website.

Subsidies can be for good or ill, with the future of our fisheries depending on this reform. Which is it to be ? You can contact Marinet via [john-stansfield@virginmedia.com](mailto:john-stansfield@virginmedia.com) or [stephen.marinet@btinternet.com](mailto:stephen.marinet@btinternet.com)

---

<sup>1</sup> The European Union and Fishing Subsidies, Published by Oceana, September 2011  
[http://oceana.org/sites/default/files/reports/EU\\_Subsidies\\_Report\\_FINAL\\_FINAL-1.pdf](http://oceana.org/sites/default/files/reports/EU_Subsidies_Report_FINAL_FINAL-1.pdf)