



WHO GETS TO FISH?

THE ALLOCATION OF FISHING OPPORTUNITIES IN EU MEMBER STATES

FISH STOCKS ARE OWNED BY NO ONE BUT DESIRED BY MANY. HOW, THEN, SHOULD ACCESS TO FISH STOCKS BE DETERMINED? IN THE EU, MEMBER STATES HAVE ANSWERED THIS QUESTION VERY DIFFERENTLY, WITH MANY DIFFERENT SYSTEMS IN USE. WE ANALYSE 12 COUNTRIES IN DETAIL, AND FIND THAT DESPITE DIFFERENT SYSTEM DESIGNS, NONE OF THEM ARE FULLY MANAGING THEIR FISHERIES IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST. IN THIS REPORT, WE DESCRIBE THESE SYSTEMS OF FISHING OPPORTUNITIES, ASSESS THEIR PERFORMANCE AGAINST DEFINED OBJECTIVES, AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORM.

Much has been written concerning the risks of overfishing and, conversely, the large gains – environmentally, economically, socially – of managing fish stocks at larger population levels to ensure sustained catches. But far less is known, and facts are far harder to come by, on the similarly vexed issue of who gets given the right to fish. This report examines how 12 EU Member States make that decision – and the consequences that this can have.

Whether it is the disappearance of fishing communities around the coast, the controversy over larger and larger factory trawlers, or the alarm over the privatisation of a public resource, many of the concerns about contemporary fisheries management are about how the resource is divided, not just the size.

To explore this issue of allocating fishing opportunities, we analyse 12 EU Member States in detail: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the UK. The systems of fishing opportunities in use vary significantly. Whilst fishers in Belgium and the Netherlands fish many of the same species in the same waters, the government-rationed quotas of the former and market for ownership rights in the latter are worlds apart in management approach.

To assess whether a system of fishing opportunities is successful, we have a framework of 12 objectives (Table 1). Whilst not specifying a precise blueprint for all fisheries, a successful system should achieve these objectives to allow fishers to thrive and the public to benefit, all while ensuring a good process of decision-making.

| OBJECTIVES | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| SECURE | Fishing opportunities provide fishers with a sustained, long-term share of fish stock(s) |
| FLEXIBLE | Fishers can access new fishing opportunities or exchange existing ones |
| ACCESSIBLE | Newly eligible fishers are granted fishing opportunities upon entry to the industry |
| VIABLE | Operations are financially viable and employees are decently paid |
| EQUITABLE AND FAIR | Fishing opportunities are distributed fairly and unique needs are prioritised |
| PUBLICLY OWNED | Fish stocks and fishing opportunities remain publicly owned |
| MEETS GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES | Governments use fishing opportunities to meet national and EU policy objectives |
| LIMITED PUBLIC EXPENSE | The cost of managing the system of fishing opportunities is covered by the fishing industry |
| CAPTURES RESOURCE RENT | As a public resource, some of the resource rent is captured |
| TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE | Decision making on the allocation of fishing opportunities is transparent and accountable |
| OBJECTIVE | The allocation of fishing opportunities follows a systematic and fair process |
| RIGHT GOVERNANCE LEVEL AND REPRESENTATIVE | Governance empowers local institutions and involves inclusive stakeholder representation |

In assessing the systems in use based upon these objectives, there is a spectrum of performance across the Member States analysed; each system with some positive signs of performance, but all systems with serious challenges as well. In all Member States, fisheries management is shown to be costly to administer and generates little public revenue. Obtaining access to the fishing industry for new entrants is difficult, and the transparency of many systems of fishing opportunities is low.

Our proposals for reform vary by Member State, responding to the contexts of each system including any national objectives

for fisheries that have been established. Some of our proposals for Member States include:

- a government statement clarifying public ownership of fishing rights
- a quota reserve for new entrants
- a peer-to-peer quota swapping system
- a landing tax differentiated for domestic ports
- a reallocation of quota using socio-economic and environmental criteria

Fisheries will continue to face questions over access. This framework presents a path towards fishing in the public interest.

WWW.NEWECONOMICS.ORG

info@neweconomics.org
+44 (0)20 7820 6300 @NEF
Registered charity number 1055254

This research was made possible by generous support from the Adessium Foundation, Oak Foundation, and the Calhoun Gulbenkian Foundation – UK branch.

WRITTEN BY:

Griffin Carpenter and Richard Kleinjans

WITH THANKS TO:

Paolo Accadia, Sveinn Agnarsson, Thomas Appleby, Martin Aranda, Manuel Bellanger, Jörg Berkenhagen, Emiel Brouckaert, Jamie Bull, Anna Carlson, Natacha Carvalho, Goncalo Carvalho, Bertrand Cazalet, Igor Celic, Greig Chalmers, Scott Crosson, Ger de Ruyter, Klaas de Vos, Ralf Döring, Edward Fahy, Tom Flannery, Hans Frost, Raúl García, Miguel Gaspar, Andrea Giesecke, Chris Grieve, Jordi Guillen, Olivier Guyader, Stephen Hall, Krien Hansen, Jeppe Host, Ngaio Hotte, Barbara Hutniczak, Steve Karnicki, Ian Kinsey, Markus Knigge, Matthias Kokorsch, Erik Lindebo, Thilo Maack, Claire Macher, Carmen Martin, Sebastian Metz, Arantza Murillas-Maz, Lia ní Aodha, Fernando Nieto, Ciarán O'Driscoll, Anton Paulrud, Jerry Percy, Terri Portmann, David Powell, Raul Puellezo, Erin Priddle, Cornelia Quist, Jesper Raakjaer, Anthony Rogers, Marcin Rucinski, Rosaria Sabatella, Mogens Schou, Massimo Spagnolo, Lisa Ståhl, Edward Stern, Klaas Sys, Thomas Thøgersen, Katrien Verle, Sebastian Villasante, Johan Wagnstrom, Staffan Waldo, Lauren Weir, Lutz Wessendorf, Chris Williams, Ida Wingren, Hanne Winter and several anonymous interviewees and reviewers. Additional thanks to the countless people who helped us access and understand the information used in this report. All content and opinions are the sole responsibility of the authors.