



# MariFish News



Strengthening the links between European marine fisheries science and fisheries management

## An Introduction

**MariFish is a five year EC funded ERA-NET project with a budget of €3 million, composed of 18 European partners from fifteen European Union (EU) Member and associated states. It aims to improve collaboration between the funders of marine fisheries research by providing opportunities for fisheries managers to work together in a partnership.**

The project started running in January 2006, with the first 18 months of the project focusing mainly on collecting information on a number of different topics including the shape and content of partners' programmes and existing collaboration. In the next phase of the project, there will be an increased focus on how Partners will be able to collaborate on their shared research projects, to maximise the impact of the research carried out.

## Editorial from John Lock, Coordinator of MariFish

The MariFish project brings together the major European national funders of marine fisheries research. We aim to make this an effective, working partnership which, as reported in this newsletter, is already delivering results. MariFish has meant that for the first time those responsible for funding fisheries research are able to meet and work together on a wide range of issues including the future priorities for research and identifying gaps and overlap in our national programmes. We are seeking ways to achieve better collaboration, including funding joint

research projects.

Research provides essential evidence on which to base fisheries management decisions and our project aims to strengthen the important links between science and policy. We are working closely with our three Observers – ICES, EFARO and EAFE – with other ERA-NETs such as MarinERA and with the wider science community. We are adapting and changing our project as we progress and have recently embarked upon two new tasks – 'Communication' and 'Knowledge Management'. We will keep you up to date on these and other activities in future Newsletters.

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## Collaborative Research Projects planned by MariFish Partners

**MariFish Partners are discussing the practicalities of making their existing research programmes more collaborative and complementary.**

MariFish partners will be working closely together to increase collaboration on existing and planned research programmes to help answer common research questions. Under Work Package 7, partners will identify common research themes or geographical areas of interest and develop five collaborative projects. By discussing their research plans, and working together to solve problems, partners will benefit in many ways. It is hoped that three or more partners will be able to work together in each of the five projects, with partners able to participate in more than one project.

In many cases, this will be the first time at the funding level that European countries have collaborated so closely. Developing ways of working together will be crucial in determining the successful outcome of these projects. One project will be fast tracked to help to develop successful protocols.



**Maurice Heral,  
IFREMER, France**

Maurice Heral (IFREMER), the Coordinator for Work Package 7, explains, "Lessons learned from this fast track pilot project will be invaluable in planning the other four projects."

IFREMER (France) and Defra (UK) have already commissioned research on the ecosystem approach to fisheries

management in the Channel, presenting an ideal opportunity to collaborate. Belgium and Ireland have expressed interest in participating, and other partners (Denmark, The Netherlands and Portugal) who do not have planned work in this area but have projects related to the ecosystem approach, will follow the projects closely as observers.

Maurice will lead this project, developing an MoU to set out the practices and procedures for working together.

## Ten Year Forward Look – International Symposium in Denmark

**A symposium on the future demands for fisheries research was held on 7-8<sup>th</sup> June, hosted by the Danish Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries (DFFAB) at Roskilde, Denmark.**

Speakers from a variety of perspectives - scientists, programme managers and RAC representative - gave presentations to approximately 100 participants on the first day. Workshop discussions followed on the second day, during which recommendations for strategic research priorities were formulated.

More information, presentations and a full report can be found at <http://www.marifish.net/News/2007-08-07.htm>.

**This workshop was developed under Work Package 8, see page 6 for information on the other developments in the work package.**

## The first 18 months: What we've achieved...

### Work Package 1: Programme Management

The first six months proved to be a very busy time for the MariFish secretariat, with the start-up of the project and development of all administrative systems an immediate priority.

A kick-off meeting was organised in London, UK on 17th-18th January 2006 by the MariFish Secretariat, to allow the new Partners to meet, some for the first time; and to develop the work packages in greater detail. The Consortium Agreement was developed and agreed by Partners in September 2006 to define in greater detail the roles and responsibilities of Partners and the practical arrangements of the project.

The next important milestone was the launch of the website to allow Partners to communicate effectively, with a private site for internal communications, and a public site for disseminating information at <http://www.marifish.net/>.



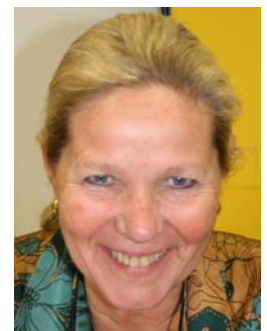
Robin Cook, FRS

An analysis report of the fisheries management drivers and priorities of MariFish Partners was published in November 2006. Opinions were first gathered via questionnaire, then a workshop was held in London on 9-10th May 2006 to discuss and summarise the results. The author of the paper, Robin Cook, Director of Fisheries Research Services in Scotland, used statistical analysis to give an insight into the answers he received, "The history, economics and geographical characteristics of each country influences it's policies on fisheries management. I've tried to summarise these drivers on a matrix, grouping countries by motivational factors." The report can be found at <http://www.marifish.net/publications/default.htm>.

In the next issue, there will be an update on two new tasks, "Communication" and "Knowledge Management", which are both in the early stages of development. **More information about these tasks can be found at** <http://www.marifish.net/about/wp1a.htm>.

### Work Package 2: Good Practice

Guidelines for successfully identifying, commissioning and managing fisheries research programmes, have now been developed. The first stage, an analysis of each Partner's methods for commissioning research, has been completed and the report is available at <http://www.marifish.net/publications/default.htm>. Then the findings were discussed between partners and recommendations for good practice have been summarised in a second report, which is available at the address above. These recommendations will be used when collaborating on joint calls for research.



Nina Hedlund,  
RCN

### Work Package 3: Collaborative links

In order to improve collaboration between Partners, first a summary of the existing collaboration between Partners, at the regional, European and International level, is needed. Christian Dorrien, from the Federal Research Center for Fisheries (IOR) in Germany, visited each national programme manager to gather detailed information via interviews using a questionnaire to structure the questions that he asked. A summary report on the strengths and deficiencies of the fisheries research programmes at the European and international level was finalised and the findings were presented to Partners at the Steering Committee meeting in September 2006.

Two regional workshops were held in January 2007, one covering the Mediterranean region and one covering the Northern region. The results of the workshops and the findings from the first report were combined to form a final summary report on the strengths and deficiencies of the fisheries research programme coordination at the European, international and regional level, which can be found at <http://www.marifish.net/publications/default.htm>. **This output will feed into work carried out under work package 5, see below for details.**



**Costas Papacontantinou,**  
organiser of the  
Mediterranean workshop

### Work Package 4: Related disciplines

One of the priorities identified by MariFish Partners was to take stock of the wide range of existing research which is relevant to fisheries, but outside the main focus of traditional fisheries research.

Of all possible disciplines, socio-economic research was considered to be the highest priority topic and this was investigated in more detail. A database containing almost 1000 titles, some with full texts, was created and made publicly available at <http://www3.lei.wur.nl/marifish>. A technical report was produced that summarised approximately 200 research papers, explaining their relevance to fisheries management, which can be found at <http://www.marifish.net/publications/default.htm>.

A study on the linkages between fisheries and other research subjects has been undertaken; the draft report was reviewed by Partners on the private MariFish website and it has now been incorporated into the report on the socio-economic report described above. "This is the first attempt to assess the relevance of non-traditional research such as added-value products, food engineering and pharmaceuticals to fisheries management" explains Carlos Vale, from IPIMAR (Instituto Nacional de Recursos Biológicos).

A meeting between the leading socio-economics research institutes was arranged to examine the socio-economic report and improve the dialogue between policy-makers and economics researchers. Pavel Salz, who organised the meeting on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in the Netherlands (LNV), said, "The summary of socio-economic research covers an enormous body of work that is of great relevance to fisheries management. We hope that work on collating all the socio-economic papers will continue beyond the life of the MariFish project, so that policy-makers can keep up to date with the research and communicate with researchers on their needs. The database allows an easy search for any relevant topic related to economics and social sciences."

A summary of the future priorities for economic research was drafted by the core work package participants. The summary formed the basis of a workshop held during the Work Package Management Group meeting in April 2007, in which the wide range of views on the subject were highlighted. The discussions from the workshop and the final summary of priorities document were combined into one report which is available at <http://www.marifish.net/publications/default.htm>. This will be used when considering the strategic collaborative research projects under work package 8.



**Workshop on priorities in economic research**

## **Work Package 5: National research programme analysis**

An inventory of the fisheries research programmes funded by each of the Partners has been completed. It will provide an important starting point from which the collaborative joint calls (Work Package 7 and 8) can be planned. To present the results in a user-friendly format, a database for comparing key facts about the research programmes was developed and is available at <http://www.marifish.net/default.aspx> in the 'Quick Links' box.

The next steps will allow other funders to check what research is currently being funded by MariFish Partners, so that this information can be considered when developing their own national programmes and considering collaborative opportunities. Key criteria will be used to analyse the

research programmes, in order to establish common interests, gaps and possible duplications. Then a strengths and weakness analysis of the national programmes database will be developed and key areas identified for improved cooperation, collaboration and coordination.



**Christian von Dorrien, BMELV**

Christian von Dorrien, from The Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection and the Federal Research Centre for Fisheries (BMELV) explains, "The MariFish team hope that this tool will be used to identify important gaps in European fishery research programmes; if we are successful then countries outside of MariFish may want to contribute to the inventory so that their research plans are considered."

## **Work Package 6: Analysis of research topics**

This work package has recently started, and builds on the output from other work packages. Findings from Work Packages 3, 5 and 8 will be considered, to identify the emerging problems facing fisheries management and decide which of these problems would particularly benefit from collaborative programme management at the European level, through MariFish. Discussions with

other organisations, such as FEUFAR, MarinERA, CRUE and Biodiversa have provided useful material and discussions are ongoing.

The material gathered together under this work package will be assessed and will aid the collaborative work in Work Package 7.

**Your comments or contributions on candidate areas of research which would benefit from increased collaboration, are welcomed. Please contact Dr Anna Dannielsdottir at [anna@rannis.is](mailto:anna@rannis.is) (Work Package 6 leader).**

### **Work Package 7: Shared Research Programmes**

Shared, jointly funded and managed research programmes will be developed under this work package; a very important outcome for MariFish. The emphasis for this work programme is to foster practical cooperation between Partners on existing or planned research programmes, and also we hope to improve the collaboration between scientific institutions in Europe where appropriate. A 'virtual pot' funding method for additional relevant research may also be adopted, with each contributor retaining a degree of ownership over the use of the funding they contribute and the resultant research.

WP7 will use the output from WP3, 5 and 6 to decide which current and planned research projects supported by different countries could be enhanced by collaborating more closely.

**The article on page 2 covers the recent developments in greater detail.**

### **Work Package 8: 10 Year Forward look and Strategic Research Programmes**



**Charlotte Mogensen,  
DFFAB**

What research will prove to be the most useful to fisheries managers in 10 years time? This work package aims to answer this question and will help identify the strategic research evidence that will best meet the needs of fisheries managers in the future.

The first step is to consult a wide range of experts, to elicit ideas and opinions. An international symposium took place in June 2007, further details are described on page 2 and the full report can be found here:

<http://www.marifish.net/publications/D8.1-Report-of-workshop-Future-Demands-for-Fisheries-Research.pdf>

MariFish Partners are now discussing the results of this symposium to identify the strategic requirements for a jointly funded research programme managed by several MariFish Partners. It is hoped that this joint call will operate under the 'common pot' approach in which money is allocated by several Partners and the resultant research is owned by all as a collaborative venture.

The collaboration between partners in WP7 will forge stronger links between fisheries managers in each partner country, invaluable when working together, and the outcome from WP2 (Good Practice) will also be utilised by partners when considering practical arrangements for the joint call.



## Interview

**Simon Jennings, from Cefas (Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science)**

As reported earlier in this Newsletter, the first MariFish collaborative project is planned to take place in the Channel. The project will involve researchers from at least two partner countries investigating the ecosystem based approach to fisheries management. Simon Jennings is leading the CEFAS team that will participate in the project. Simon was also a keynote speaker at the Roskilde Symposium.

**Question 1: What areas of fishery science are you currently working on?**

Our research currently focuses on the effects of fishing on the environment and the development of an ecosystem approach to fisheries. We will be working with stakeholders in the South West of England to identify management objectives for the region and to develop and test indicators to describe the relative impacts of fishing. We hope that this work will lead to the development of “decision tables” letting stakeholders see the consequences of different management options for the fishery and the marine environment and helping to inform choices about desirable options.

**Question 2: How will the MariFish project help your research?**

Increased collaboration with France and other countries through MariFish will broaden the scope of our findings. Two specific research tasks that would help improve our advice on fishing impacts are to map habitat and species sensitivity (sensitivity to fishing disturbance and mortality) for entire management regions and to systematically compile international fishing effort and catch data on the same scale. We have made progress with these types of analysis on local scales. Applications at larger scales are now technically feasible given the on-going development of methods of assessing sensitivity and vulnerability to fishing, the growing coverage of fleet activity by Vessel Monitoring Systems and expected revisions to the Data Collection Regulation. MariFish will help stimulate collaborative research in the Channel, enabling us to obtain an improved picture of both habitats and fishing effort, at the regional level.

**Question 3: You participated in the MariFish Symposium where we discussed the challenges facing scientists working on fisheries management. What do you think are the main challenges?**

There are many, but I would like to highlight these in particular. The main challenges relate to the availability of data, the use of these data and the effective integration of environmental concerns into fisheries management.

The second challenge stems from the first; how to give the most useful and reliable advice with such limited data. For example, some current work aims to show how relatively easily obtained information on body size of fish and other species might inform us about vulnerability, food web function and biodiversity.

The final challenge is to effectively integrate environmental concerns into fisheries management. Relevant research includes the development of analytical tools and decision support tables to describe and to manage the tradeoffs between fisheries and environmental objectives. These tools include mitigation measures, incentives and spatial planning. In the longer term we also need to determine how the changing marine environment should best be managed to provide a reliable and sustainable food supply while ensuring that other ecosystem services are still delivered.

## MariFish Partners and Observers

The purpose of the MariFish project can be summarised as follows:

“MariFish will focus on that research which provides evidence to managers for the development of strategies for sustainable fisheries, including links with aquaculture, set within the ecosystem based principle.”

MariFish brings together the major European national funders of marine fisheries research, whose total combined annual fisheries research budget is approximately €160 million.

MariFish has eighteen Partners (see Box 1 below) and also three international/multinational bodies have joined MariFish as Observers: International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), European Fisheries and Aquaculture Research Organisations (EFARO) and European Association of Fisheries Economists (EAFE).

### **Box 1: List of participants in the MariFish project**

**Coordinator: UK:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
**Norway:** The Research Council of Norway  
**Germany:** The Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection and the Federal Research Centre for Fisheries  
**Netherlands:** Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Department of Fisheries  
**Sweden:** The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning  
**Iceland:** The Icelandic Centre for Research  
**France:** French Research Institute for the Exploitation of the Sea  
**Denmark:** Directorate for Food, Fisheries and Agri Business  
**Portugal:** Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries  
**Poland:** Sea Fisheries Institute in Gdynia  
**Cyprus:** Research Promotion Foundation  
**Greece:** General Secretariat for Research and Technology, Ministry of Development  
**Ireland:** Marine Institute  
**Belgium:** Agriculture and Fisheries Department/ Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research  
**UK:** Scottish Executive, Fisheries Research Services  
**Spain:** Ministry of Education and Science/Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO)  
**Poland:** Ministry of Science and Higher Education  
**Portugal:** Portuguese National Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture Research Institute

MariFish is coordinated by Defra, UK:

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