

Collaborating Together

The partners of MariFish, a five year EC funded ERA-NET project, have begun working together on a number of exciting new programmes, which will bring greater value to marine fisheries research on several strategically important topics.

MariFish has recently announced a €4.3m joint call for research on fisheries management indicators (covered in more detail on page 2). MariFish has also commenced work on the development of collaborative programmes of marine fisheries research, with partners working more closely together on their existing research projects. Other achievements include a study on communication between fishery managers and scientists and a database of national projects that is integrated with other EU funded project databases, providing an extensive summary of fisheries management research projects.

Editorial from John Lock, Coordinator of MariFish

This second MariFish newsletter reports on the significant progress that has been achieved after nearly three years of hard work by the project's 19 partners. "Collaboration" has been the key theme. We have just launched a €4.3m call, supported by 10 partners. Our aim is to fund research into the important topic of fishery management indicators.

We are also making good progress in developing collaborative programmes. The aim is to bring existing research together on specific topics such as discards and the ecosystem approach, in order to achieve added value, both for the funders of

research and the researchers themselves. MariFish partners are mindful of the considerable investment that is made in marine fisheries science.

We have therefore also focussed on three areas of science management – knowledge, communication and the development of shared databases – all of which will help ensure we gain maximum value from our investment.

The lessons we have learnt from working together in MariFish will be taken forward beyond the end of the project in early 2011, possibly through a new ERA-NET on Marine Science.

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Joint call for research to be announced soon

Operational indicators to help develop sustainable long term fishery management strategies will be researched under the call.

Denmark, Iceland, France, Cyprus, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom have agreed to fund research on the development of operational fisheries management indicators that will help fishery managers to develop long-term management plans. A total of €4.3m is available to consortia of three or more research organisations. Several consortia may be funded, covering a number of topics that will contribute to the development of operational indicators, as required by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg 2002) resolution “to maintain or restore stocks to levels that can produce the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)”.



Why develop fisheries management indicators?

Future demands for fisheries managers were identified during an international symposium in Denmark in June 2007. The changing priorities for fisheries management were discussed, with today's management strategies focused on the avoidance of stock collapse but now increasingly moving towards more complex long-term management strategies that would be able to deliver profit without unacceptable damage to the environment. Although some scientists feel the MSY concept may not be achievable, most agree that a management approach that considers the social, economic and biological

interactions of fishing would require robust indicators to allow managers to apply effective management strategies.

Possible topics

A wide range of topics could be investigated, for example the relationship between stock size and recruitment to establish the underlying links between recruitment, environment and stock composition. An investigation into multi-species indicators would benefit fishery managers, who at present are setting targets for single species without taking into account the effect of population changes of one species or the interactions between their prey and their competitors.

A definition for an acceptable environmental impact of fisheries on the environment would be important for fisheries managers, to help assess the long term functioning of the ecosystem. A new definition of fishery yield, taking into account economic factors such as benefit to regional economies and conflicts of land use would be welcomed to provide a more effective resource value for a stock.

Applications

The implementation of the call is managed by the call secretariat of the Work Package 8 leader, DFIA (Danish Food Industry Agency). The call was officially announced on 15th December 2008 and will close on 2nd March 2009. The call secretariat will check applications against general criteria and then an international expert committee will evaluate the projects against specific criteria.

More information can be found at <http://www.marifish.net/wp8call/default.htm>, including a detailed description of procedures for the call.

Collaborative programmes bring partners together

Partners are collaborating on planned or existing national research projects to achieve broader and more significant results

The 19 partners of MariFish have a collective yearly marine fisheries research budget of €190m, making collaboration an important way to avoid duplication and gain a better outcome from the investment of each country.

Under Work Package 7, partners identified the most important topics in marine fisheries management and selected five to be developed into collaborative research programmes by a group of interested countries. Four programmes are now running, with the fifth delayed due to organisation changes within the core group leader's organisation. Two programmes focus on a particular region and three focus on a particular issue since this gives all partners a chance to participate. Some programmes aim to collaborate without providing any new research funding and some will use additional funding to strategically link the programmes together.

Maurice Heral, from IFREMER (France) is leading on this work package and also leading on the Channel regional collaborative programme.

Regional Case Study –Developing the Ecosystem Approach in The Channel – led by IFREMER, France

This programme will develop the ecosystem approach to fisheries management, specifically investigating the spatial characteristics of the Channel. France, The Netherlands, Belgium and England & Wales

(Defra) are full partners. Ireland, Spain, Greece and Norway are participating as Observers (interested in the development of the ecosystem approach but not the region). The collaborative programme will focus on habitat mapping and the effect of fishing on the ecosystem. Management actions such as modification of gear types will be assessed and socio-economic factors will be included in the programme.

A meeting will be held on 18th December in Bologne Sur Mer, France to develop the detailed plans for the programme.

"Reducing discards" – led by Defra, UK

14 of the 16 funding partners are now participating in this collaborative programme. This very high level of interest demonstrates how important the issue of discarding is to most European nations.

Gear technologists and discards experts met in Lyon at the end of October 2008, to agree on practical collaborative actions. With such a large group, a first action was to improve the management of information relating to discards, with details of the research projects to be held on the website and regularly kept up to date.

The expertise of a knowledge management consultant was used to explore new ways of working together and sharing knowledge. Scientists agreed to form expert groups on a number of topics, keeping in touch more regularly to share their progress.

Several collaborative agreements were reached during the meeting, with a full description available at <http://www.marifish.net/progress/wp7.htm>.

Defra will monitor the progress of the collaborative agreements and help to encourage communication between the

participants to assist and build on the existing agreements.

Regional Case Study – The Mediterranean – Fish Habitats and Trophic Interactions

The Mediterranean region was identified as an area that would particularly benefit from collaboration under the MariFish project. Greece, France, Spain (and Cyprus acting as Observer) have agreed to focus on fish habitats and trophic interactions within the Mediterranean area. It is hoped that Croatia and Italy will join the programme at a later stage to achieve a greater coverage of the region.

Developments

An inventory of research programmes has been developed and the next step is to incorporate details from universities and other institutes. Partners have agreed to make data available in a restricted access database funded by DG MARE to give access to the GFCM working group. Data will be provided on request and then become freely available after 3 years.

Partners plan to work on the identification of essential habitats for large pelagic species to model seasonal spatial trends in blue fin tuna and swordfish abundance in the Mediterranean as functions of environmental, spatial and temporal variables. Since this is relevant to the WP8 joint call there are plans to submit a proposal for consideration.

Another collaborative project is to identify and map the essential fish habitat of small pelagics (anchovy and sardine) in the Mediterranean Sea, again with potential to submit a proposal to the WP8 call.

There are also plans to collaborate on two projects on demersal fisheries and trophic relationships (AMPED, France and IDEADOS, Spain) with Greece collaborating at a methodological level.



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Impact of Climate Change on Pelagic Fish Distribution – led by MECINN, Spain

The impact of climate change on herring, sprat, sardine and anchovy will be investigated under this collaborative programme. A

meeting of fishery managers and scientists was held in Madrid on 19-20th November to develop plans and the scientists will meet again on 9-10th January 2009 in Spain to develop the programme in detail. It is hoped that some additional funding will be secured with potential for the joint call for research to fund some research that could be included within the collaborative programme. The minutes of the meeting will soon be available.

At the meeting it was agreed that the general goal was to gain understanding of how climate variability is affecting small pelagic fish.

Information on WP7 can be found at <http://www.marifish.net/progress/wp7.htm>.

Developing a network of national fisheries managers

The MariFish project has helped fishery managers from different European countries to meet and build good working relationships. The first 18 months of the project involved developing databases of existing research projects and programmes, identifying possible barriers to collaboration, identifying key topics in fishery management that would benefit from collaboration and agreeing on how to work together. The first MariFish Newsletter covered this in detail and is available at <http://www.marifish.net/publications/MariFish-Newsletter-No1.pdf>.



Some of the main outputs from the project are described below and a full list can be found at <http://www.marifish.net/publications/default.htm>.

Communication between fishery managers and research scientists

Good practice guidelines have been developed as part of a study of how fishery managers and scientists communicate their research questions. John Holmes, a communication expert, was commissioned to conduct interviews of a fisheries manager and a research scientist within six MariFish partner organisations. The information from the six 'paired' interviews was augmented by a literature review and a questionnaire sent to MariFish member organizations. Highlights of the report are summarised below:

With regard to **establishing evidence needs** the study highlighted the importance of:

- close interactions between the research organisation and the fisheries managers, building understanding and trust,
- being based on an effective 'system' rather than being unduly reliant on individual personalities.
- having sufficient in-house scientific capacity to be an intelligent customer for research and advice,

- having in place a long-term strategic plan for research with the research institute, the fishing industry and other stakeholders

Effective **communication of research results and advice** requires:

- appropriate communication channels for the issue and the audience, with research reports made readily available on web sites and easily retrievable:
- adequately resourced communication activities, with testing and debate of research results via face-to-face interactions
- researchers to pass on tacit knowledge to customers via the provision of advice, and to be rewarded for their efforts
- non-technical summaries and updates to be provided to interpret the results of detailed technical reports in the context of the issues of concern to the audience.

More information and the full report can be found at <http://www.marifish.net/progress/wp1.htm>.

Knowledge Management in Fisheries Management

MariFish has commissioned a study into the management of the information related to fisheries management, asking questions such as 'how do I keep up to date with the latest developments', 'how can I find out who is the leading expert on a certain topic'.

The contractor, Alister Scott, started by conducting a literature review on work already published on knowledge management, particularly in the field of fisheries management. A short report, which is very accessible and easy to read, offers some advice on good practice when managing knowledge and commissioning fishery management research.

His findings resonate with the work carried out on communication (see above), since both recommend commissioning more literature reviews or audits of evidence available on a specific topic. This is vital because although research tends to be commissioned to answer a specific management decision the results should also be placed in the wider context. For policy customers there is a clear benefit if the context of the research and its implications are explained in simple non-technical language.

Alister provided a valuable input to the Work Package 7 Discards meeting in Lyon by applying the knowledge management practices outlined in his report to enhance the outcome of the meeting. Since 17 organisations were represented at the meeting, it was important to encourage and develop communication between these organisations to ensure the success of the collaborative programme. Alister will use the Discards programme as a case study, continuing to provide input over the coming months to help build an expert community.

Alister will also study what fishery managers and policy staff need to do to get up to speed when they start a new job, how they keep themselves up to date on key developments and how they pass on their knowledge to others. He will use Defra and Defra's fisheries research agency Cefas as case studies. The results will be used to generate best practice guidelines that will help the MariFish partners with their own challenges.

Research programme database developed

A database holding details of the fisheries research programmes funded by each of the MariFish partners is now complete. The information can be displayed on an interactive map.



“This tool will allow fishery managers to check what research areas are currently being funded by the other MariFish Partners, and they can quickly find out which nations are working in a particular sea area.” explained Christian Dorrien from vTI (Germany), who developed the database. This information can be considered when developing their own national programmes and considering collaborative opportunities. “We plan to add details of the collaborative programmes of Work Package 7 to the Collaborations section once their details are finalised.” said Christian.

The database can be accessed from the home page of the MariFish site from the ‘Quick Links’ box at <http://www.marifish.net/default.aspx>.

Research project database also developed

A database to hold details of the research projects of the MariFish partners has also been developed. Partners were keen to be able to find details of work carried out under specific topics, particularly when developing the collaborative programmes under Work Package 7.

Harry Strehlow (vTI, Germany) explained “One of our main concerns with this database was its fate once the MariFish project had ended in January 2011. We decided to link our data with that of the EuroOcean and MarinERA databases which would allow users to search all three databases using one online portal, providing a comprehensive list of marine research projects”. The MarinERA database contains details of over 900 current marine research projects being funded by MarinERA partners, amounting to over €275m. The EuroOcean database provides details of over 750 marine science and technology projects funded by the different European mechanisms (related to either the European Commission or other supporting marine research organisations).

The MariFish database is currently available at <http://marifish.addition.pt/index.jsp> and holds details of over 250 projects, which were contributed by three MariFish partners to date. The database will shortly be added to the MarinERA/EuroOcean portal which is currently found at <http://marinedb.marinera.net/> and all three databases will be managed and maintained after the life of the MariFish project.

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 €190 million.

MariFish currently has seventeen 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 partners 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 Institute for Rural Areas, Forestry and Fisheries (vTI)
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: Danish Food Industry Agency (DFIA)
Portugal: Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries
Cyprus: Research Promotion Foundation
Greece: General Secretariat for Research and Technology, Ministry of Development
UK/Ireland: Marine Institute
Belgium: Agriculture and Fisheries Department/ Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research
UK/Scotland: Fisheries Research Services
Spain: Ministry of Science and Innovation (MICINN)
Poland: The National Centre for Research and Development (NCBiR)
Portugal: Portuguese National Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture Research Institute

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