

MariFish Summaries

Improving communications between fisheries managers and researchers

What is the issue?

The uptake of research in marine fisheries management and policy-making depends on how effectively fisheries managers, researchers and scientific advisers communicate the needs for evidence, and the results and policy implications of research. The MariFish partners wanted to identify strengths and weaknesses of our current system, and how two-way communications can be improved. Our aim is to enhance the effectiveness of generating evidence for marine fisheries policy making and management.

How did we undertake the study?

The study focused on two key stages in the research-policy cycle, seeking to answer the questions:

- How do fisheries managers communicate their needs for evidence to the researchers and scientific advisers?
- How do researchers and scientific advisers communicate the research results and advice back to fisheries managers and wider audiences?

The main part of the study comprised 'paired' interviews in six countries represented in MariFish (Denmark, France, Greece, Norway, Spain, and the UK). In each case, face-to-face meetings were first carried out with the researchers and scientific advisers. These were then followed up by interviewing their 'customers', the fisheries managers. A view from the fishing industry was also sought from the Chair of a Regional Advisory Council.



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MariFish

Strengthening the links between European marine fisheries science and fisheries management



What did we find?

As expected, there are some significant variations between the MariFish member organisations that participated in this study in their approaches to communicating evidence needs, research results and advice. However, there are also many similarities. The study provided a number of consistent pointers towards good practice for establishing research needs and communicating research results and advice.

For establishing evidence needs the study highlighted the importance of:

- close interactions between the research organisation and the fisheries managers, building understanding and trust;
- having sufficient in-house scientific capacity to be an intelligent customer for research and advice; and
- having in place a long-term strategic plan for research with research institutes, the fishing industry and other stakeholders.

Effective communication of research results and advice requires:

- the channels used to communicate research and advice being chosen carefully according to the issues and the audience;
- the emphasis for fisheries managers and fishermen being on the research results and their implications, rather than how the research was carried out;
- face-to-face interactions providing an important opportunity to test and debate research results; and
- advisers playing a key role in bridging the research and policy communities, and being rewarded for their efforts.

What will we do now?

The study has identified a number of areas where we can improve the two-way communication between managers and researchers and we will use the good practice guidelines from this study when managing our jointly-funded and nationally-funded research programmes.

Enhancing communication between fishery managers and researchers

