

FAO GFCM meeting highlights growing profile of Mediterranean aquaculture Italy and Greece top producers

Dateline - At the 5th meeting of the Committee on Aquaculture (CAQ) of FAO's General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 5-7 June 2006) representatives of 11 countries met to review recent trends in the fish farming sector and discuss ways to promote its continued sustainable development.

FAO figures show that the aquaculture sector is of increasing importance as a food production activity, both in the Mediterranean as well as worldwide.

Globally, it generates around US\$63 billion of revenues per year and supplies over 35 percent of all fish consumed as food.

In the Mediterranean, aquaculture production stagnated during the 2000-2002 period but then grew by over 10 percent during year 2003 totalising more than 370 thousand tonnes a year, according to FAO.

Top producing countries

The top Mediterranean aquaculture producers are **Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and France** with a combined share of 96 percent of all production. (Italy and Greece account for 40 and 26 percent of this total, respectively).

In Western Europe the leading producers are **France and Italy**, which together produce over 179 thousand tonnes of Mediterranean aquaculture produce per year, representing 47 percent of all Mediterranean production.

Central Europe (**Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia**) currently produces just 0.5 percent of the total (almost 1.6 thousand tonnes a year).

To the east, **Croatia, Greece, Malta, Cyprus and Turkey** produce about 145 thousand tonnes a year, nearly 39 percent of regional production. However the bulk of this production (95 percent) is from Greece and Turkey.

With the exception of Egypt (12% of the regional production), North African and Middle Eastern production is low (**Algeria, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia**) contributing about 5 thousand tonnes a year or 1.4 percent of the total.

Key finfish species are **Flathead grey mullet**, the European **seabass**, and the Gilthead **seabream**. The profile of **Atlantic bluefin tuna** in Mediterranean aquaculture is growing. This species is now being caught in the wild and fattened in large marine netcages.. The **Mediterranean Mussels** and the **Japanese Carpet Shell** are the most important molluscs species

FAO body promotes sustainable aquaculture

The CAQ is a subsidiary body of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, a regional fishery body established by FAO in 1949 which meets on an ongoing basis, share information on fisheries trends, conduct joint scientific studies, discuss policy and agree on recommended management strategies.

Some 20 delegates representing 11 different countries, two intergovernmental organizations and one non-governmental organization participated in the CAQ meeting in Santiago.

During the meeting the CAQ established three ad hoc working groups of experts which will undertake ongoing work related to the responsible management and development of Mediterranean aquaculture.

The first will concentrate on marketing issues, undertaking market assessments and proposing marketing guidelines and a strategy for improving aquaculture's image among consumers. The second will focus on sustainability and will try to develop guidelines for integrated aquaculture management in the Mediterranean. The third working group will focus on developing methodologies for responsible aquaculture site selection and coastal management issues.

The ad hoc working groups are expected to initiate their activities during autumn 2006 with the financial support of GFCM Members. Their work will be overseen by a smaller coordinating group chaired by the newly appointed CAQ Chairperson, Spyros Klaoudatos of Greece.

LINKS:

Documents for the CAQ meeting in Santiago:

<ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/gfcm/caq5/Default.htm>

GFCM Website

<http://www.faogfcm.org>

News feature: Mediterranean fisheries: as stocks decline, management improves

<http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2005/105722/index.html>