



No 8 | Spring-Summer 2013

ISSN 1831-5720

farnet

M A G A Z I N E

Marketing the local catch





Contents

Photographs (pages):

iStockphoto (1), Apollo Media (5), Jean-Luc Janot (6, 8, 9, 21, 23, 24, 27), Seafood Cornwall (6), Brian Sherwen (7), Stockholms Fiskmarknad (10, 11), Anna & Dariusz Moczulscy (12), Gmina Milicz (13), Górecznik (13), Partnerstwo dla Doliny Baryczy (14, 15, 16), Aleksander Kowalski (15), Aigars Laugalis (17, 18, 19), Cooperativa Sant'Anna (20), Giuseppe Scordella (21, 22, 23), Alentejo FLAG (25), North & West Cumbria FLAG (25), Taste South East (25), Jan Kegels (25), Groupe FEP varois (27), ETAL S.A. (27), Kainuu-Koillismaa FLAG (28), Costa da Morte FLAG, Cofradia de Pescadores de Caion (30).

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FARNET Magazine is published by the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission. It is distributed free on request.

FARNET Magazine is published twice a year in English, French, German and Spanish.

Editor: European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Director-General.

Disclaimer: Whilst the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries is responsible for the overall production of this magazine, it is not responsible for the accuracy, content or views expressed within particular articles. The European Commission has not, save where otherwise stated, adopted or in any way approved any view appearing in this publication and statements should not be relied upon as statements of the Commission's or the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries' views. The European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this publication, nor does the European Commission or any person acting on its behalf accept responsibility for any use made thereof.

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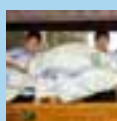
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Marketing the local catch 4

Faced with the prospect of rising costs, strict limitations on catch sizes and increasing competition from cheaper imports, more and more fishermen are re-evaluating the market potential of their catch and looking for new and more profitable distribution channels. Zoom on the future Stockholm fish market (Sweden)



Report: The FLAG fish 12

Carp is a flagship product and a driving force for sustainable local development in the Barycz valley (Poland).



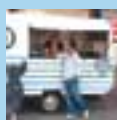
People: Aigars Laugalis 17

An entrepreneur and member of the board of the Liepāja FLAG on the Latvian coast, Aigars Laugalis has developed his fishing business with the help of Axis 4.



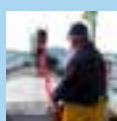
Report: An emotional business 20

In Salento (Italy), tourism brings some great opportunities for a local fishing sector in search of added value and diversification.



Trade winds 25

Four innovative, area-based development projects in fisheries areas.



Spotlight: Delivering results 26

FLAGs have to provide evidence that Community-Led Local Development – Axis 4 in the current period – can foster socio-economic development in a way that cannot be delivered by top-down policies.

FARNETwork 31



Editorial

"Axis 4 is the human face of the EFF"

Stephanos Samaras is one of the main architects of Axis 4.

In February he was seconded from the European Commission to work in the cabinet of the Greek Prime Minister, leaving the following messages for FARNET.

The first experience of local development in fisheries areas came with the Pesca Programme in the late nineties. This worked well in some countries but not so well in others. The main problem was that local projects were selected centrally in a top down way and there was a lack of ownership and involvement by fishing communities. This is why, in this period, we decided to transfer the famous "holy trinity" of local development from Leader to fisheries areas through Axis 4 of the EFF.

The "trinity", referring to the three pillars of bottom-up, local development, meant reinforcing *local partnerships* and their capacity to define their own *strategies* over coherent *areas*. But while many Member States were familiar with these concepts others were not, and even in the more experienced Member States, the fisheries administrations were unused to thinking in this way. In the design of Axis 4 we tried to achieve a balance between clear criteria and guidelines and allowing Member States and local areas the flexibility to develop solutions which responded to their own needs. Unfortunately, however, some of the principles were watered down in the negotiations and the final budgets available for Axis 4 did not always correspond with the need or potential of fisheries areas.

Another issue was that most of the local action groups were new and there was little time to develop capacity and trust between them and managing authorities. As a result, some Member States introduced additional rules and regulations after the approval of the operational programmes and this added to the complexity and administrative burden.

Nevertheless, when we look at the 3 000 mainly small projects approved by the FLAGs so far we can see that Axis 4 is really the human face of the EFF. Many of the other axes deal with issues like scrapping and engine sizes, which have quite technical and even negative connotations in the mind of the public. On the other hand, behind every Axis 4 project there is a story which shows that Europe does care for ordinary people.

The next generation of Axis 4 will allow us to take this one step further. It has been an immense achievement to create over 300

groups which have brought together the diverse, often conflicting parts of the fishing sector around the table with other local stakeholders. The priority now is to build on this by investing in human resources and capacity at local level. This will allow us to take a big step forward in terms of the quality of projects. We need more innovative solutions and cooperation across Europe on issues of strategic importance to fishing communities.

This is why I am particularly pleased to introduce this issue of the *FARNET Magazine*, which focuses on a very practical issue of central concern to nearly all fisheries areas: how fishing communities can get more value out of marketing the local catch.

The first article provides an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of different commercial circuits. This is one of the areas where Leader had most impact in rural areas, but marketing fish has certain additional complications. At the same time, "short-circuits" are being revolutionised by changes in consumer preferences and new technology.

The Magazine includes two reports – one on the "Carp Valley" in Poland and another on the now popular tourist destination of Salento, in Italy. They both show the enormous diversity of challenges faced by fisheries areas and the often overlooked potential that fisheries represent for the territory. An interview with a fisheries entrepreneur and member of a Latvian FLAG provides an example of just one of those personal stories I mentioned earlier. Finally, this edition rounds off with an article reviewing some of the key results achieved by the 3 000 FLAG projects approved so far. These are the kind of results we need to build on to ensure that the second generation of Axis 4 within the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) takes a step forward in terms of quality and impact on the ground.

Stephanos Samaras,
*Head of Unit, Directorate-General
for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries*

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR FISHERIES AREAS

Marketing the local catch

Faced with the prospect of rising costs, strict limitations on catch sizes and increasing competition from cheaper imports, more and more fishermen are re-evaluating the market potential of their catch and looking for new and more profitable distribution channels.

This issue of the *FARNET Magazine* builds on previous work on adding value to local fisheries products and takes a closer look at the specific challenge of maximizing added value locally through improved marketing. In this context, we define marketing as the action of placing a product on the market, i.e. choosing the right distribution channel.

As local bodies, with multiple links and partnerships within the territory, FLAGs are well placed to support local producers in their work towards increasing value added locally. There are many different ways to sell a product. What matters, is to choose the one most suited to the product and the type of consumer targeted. Despite often having a special product to offer, fishermen do not always have the motivation to go beyond the task of catching the fish. As a result, their products can disappear into long and complex distribution channels, where most of the value added is extracted by intermediaries.

In parallel, market conditions are becoming increasingly difficult. The cost of inputs (fuel, nets,...) are on the increase, capture possibilities are limited, and prices are under pressure due to mass production and competition from imports.

Many of these issues (such as quotas or fuel costs) are beyond the control of local fishermen, and cannot be dealt with at local level, so for those wishing to improve their financial situation, one of the few options remaining is to try and find ways to maximize the market potential of their catch.

Identifying the best possible options for marketing local fisheries products requires an analysis of:

- > *the current market situation*: How are local products currently sold? Under what circumstances do local producers receive a fair price for their catch? Are there issues in terms of demand? Can local producers sell their products at a reasonable price throughout the year? Are there seasonality issues? Does part of the production sometimes have to be thrown away or sold at a loss?
- > *what can be done better*. Can the current situation be improved? Should certain things be done differently? Or should a radically new marketing system be explored? What are the market opportunities? What are the unique features of the product that can be exploited? In short, there is a need to analyse both the demand side (who is your market? and what does the market want?) and the sup-

ply side (what do you have to offer?) to ensure the best possible match.

- > *the practical implications*: How much will it cost (what new investments are necessary)? What are the requirements in terms of time (extra activities involved,...) or specific skills or knowledge (communication, trade skills, legal requirements,...)? A trial period or pilot project can help to minimise the risk associated with a new venture of this kind, by allowing time to assess its potential, without incurring the full investment requirement.

While the possibilities to improve the marketing of local fisheries products are very much context specific (i.e. dependent on local conditions, markets and the type of products), we have identified below some elements and initiatives that have been used successfully by local producers to better market their products.





▲ Fish being sold directly from the boat in Denmark.

IDENTIFYING THE BEST OPTIONS FOR MARKETING LOCAL FISHERIES PRODUCTS

Assessment: Are you happy with the marketing of your products right now (are margins ok, is demand stable, both in terms of volumes and prices, do future prospects look good,...)?

YES

Business as usual is an option, but **keep a close eye on market developments** (changes in demand, tastes, lifestyles, price competition,...)

NO

Look for ways to improve on the current situation:

1. Analysis of issues (demand and supply)
2. Identify possible responses
3. Feasibility studies
4. Trials, pilot actions
5. Commercial implementation

Are you in a FLAG area?

YES

Take advantage of the **FLAG** partnership's knowledge, resources and contacts to develop your project

NO

Learn about inspiring examples of Axis 4 projects that can help you develop your project (see **good practices**)



▲ Fish shop in the Baie de Somme (France).



▲ Fish market in Cornwall (UK).

Local fish products and their specificities

Selling fish is about more than just selling the fish itself; you are also selling a whole range of other benefits to the consumer. Consumers see fish in many different ways. Fish and shellfish can be seen as a healthy source of protein, as one of the last wild foods, as a special product that brings back memories of holidays by the sea. In short, there is much more to fish than meets the eye. These different characteristics that consumers associate with fish are parameters that producers can build on to improve its marketability.

In addition, local products also benefit from their close connection with a particular place and its people. Their image is one of a product that is produced by passionate people who have a mastery of the specific skills needed to extract/craft the product from its environment, while also applying the special care required to protect its quality, and the ecosystem from which it is derived. Local products are considered to be more wholesome and naturally healthy, without the need for "short-cuts", i.e. the addition of chemical preservatives or flavour enhancers. What you see is what you get. Local products are also often associated with freshness, as the product is produced and sold locally, without the need for transportation over long distances.

Combining the positive characteristics of both fish and local products can be a very powerful marketing tool, but one should also be aware of potential negative connotations. Fish, for example, can sometimes be considered as slimy, smelly, full of bones and difficult to prepare and cook. Fish products have also suffered from bad press with regard to the sustainability of certain fishing practices, and their potential to retain heavy metals. Local products on the other hand can have the reputation of being too basic/rustic, and not always adhering to the highest hygiene standards. The challenge, therefore, is to highlight and capitalize on the positive aspects, while mitigating any potential negative perceptions. These perceptions can vary from one consumer to another, as well as being linked to the local culture, as described in FARNET's [Adding Value Guide #3](#). Fish products are perceived very differently in the United Kingdom than in Spain, for example.

Specific marketing channels for local fisheries products: short chain initiatives

Some distribution channels are better suited to local fisheries products than others. These are predominantly channels that enable the maintenance of the link between the producer and the consumer. Indeed, this link is fundamental to developing trust and knowledge in local products. In the case of fish products, one can also add the "last wild food" image to create a very powerful narrative. The direct connection between the consumer and the producer becomes a marketing tool in itself.

The more intermediaries there are in the chain, the weaker the connection between the consumer and producer. Short chains schemes are, therefore, the best placed to allow local producers to derive maximum added value from the local image. In addition, these schemes respond well to the market trend towards renewed contact with producers and the growing demand for reassurance in terms of traceability ("know your producer, know your food"), a trend that has been strongly influenced by the various food scares of recent decades (BSE, foot and mouth, dioxins, horse meat scandal,...).



▲ Chef Jean-Christophe Novelli (middle) being taken to sea by local fishermen to promote a Cumbrian FLAG funded project (UK).

Short chain schemes include direct sales, where producers sell their fish directly to consumers (off the boat, through market stalls, or through their own shop,...), but also schemes involving a special relationship/partnership between a producer and a restaurant, fish shop, or community supported scheme, where there is a maximum of one intermediary between the primary producer and the end consumer.

The need for specific channels for local fisheries products is reinforced by the fact that locally caught fish can often be of superior quality. This is due to the shorter

duration of fishing trips and the fishing techniques favoured on smaller boats, which enable the landing of really fresh¹, high quality fish. It is, therefore, a missed opportunity to market these superior quality products through the mass market trade channels, where local producers cannot compete on price with larger scale operators.

Local producers should, therefore, be looking at schemes that enable them to extract the best value from their catch. This requires differentiating their product and making sure it stands out from the crowd. Choosing the right distribution channel is essential to achieving this.

Direct sales

Direct sales initiatives are the most “extreme” forms of short chain distribution, as they include initiatives where the fisherman, or family members (e.g. spouse), sell directly to the end consumer without intermediaries. As there are no intermediaries, these schemes allow for fishermen to set the selling price themselves and retain the full sales margin. Examples of direct sales include selling from the boat, small stands at the harbour side, or mobile fish shops at local markets. They require the direct involvement of fishermen, which can add to an already busy schedule, and it also requires a special inclination towards human contact. However, start-up investments are usually small, and even if volumes sold are limited, direct sales can constitute an interesting supplementary income.

The volumes that can be sold through direct sales initiatives are limited, partly because the catchment area is restricted. Customers in French rural areas, for example, are believed to be willing to travel a maximum of 20 km from their home to get a specific product², which naturally caps the number of potential customers for any local producer.



DIRECT SALES (NO INTERMEDIARY)	OTHER SHORT CHAINS POSSIBILITIES (MAX. ONE INTERMEDIARY)
Off the boat	Privileged relationship with restaurant(s)
Small stall in the harbour	Community supported fisheries schemes
Mobile fish shop	Privileged relationship with fish shop or other local products shop (locally or in an urban centre)
Fresh fish market	Cooperative shop (may include some degree of processing)
Farmers market	Cooperative processing or privileged relationship with a local processor

¹ Many consumers do not realize how far and how long the fish has travelled before being sold as “fresh” in large urban centres via supermarkets or large fishmongers – read more about the specific example of fish consumption in Stockholm in this edition (see page 10).

² [Marketing local products: short and long channels](#), Leader European Observatory.

Other short chains possibilities

There are other types of short chain schemes that allow for an expansion of the catchment area. Community supported fisheries schemes (CSF) are one of these alternative marketing channels, which attempt to bring together local supply and wider demand. These schemes usually manage to go a little beyond the immediate vicinity of the landing area to reach a wider customer base.

There are different kinds of CSFs, but the principles are that customers commit themselves, prior to the fishing season, to buying a weekly fish package at a fixed price. These packages are usually brought to customers at pick up locations (farmers markets, offices, car parks) at set times. The advantage for producers is that they have a guaranteed market and they get a good price for their catch. Consumers get fresh fish from a trusted source. These schemes also reinforce the links between fishermen and their territory by reaching out to customers they would not normally reach through direct sales.

CSF schemes have an important logistical aspect that requires some form of coordination. Fish packages have to be prepared, an order/subscription system must be set up and managed, production planning has to be developed, depending on the species available, and a delivery system is required. So there is a considerable workload to running a scheme like this. This can be managed by a cooperative or community company, set up locally, or through a trusted intermediary (local fish shop, processing company,...) working on a fee basis. The conditions for setting up and running a successful CSF will be looked at in more detail by FARNET in the coming months. The bottom line, however, is that these CSF schemes are set up to ensure a fair and trusted marketplace, for the benefits of both fishermen and consumers (see the *"Basket of the sea"* p.25).

Fish markets, like the one in Stockholm (see *related article*), provide another example of how to connect local producers with new customers, in this case from a large urban centre.



▲ Direct sale of oysters in the Arcachon fisheries area (France).

In the same vein, the fresh fish markets that have sprung up in the Netherlands (described in [FARNET Good Practice 027](#)) show that a coordinated offer can also attract people from further away, with consumers reportedly coming from as far away as Amsterdam (75 km away) to buy their fresh fish at these events.

Another way to market fish through short chain schemes is for local producers to have their products stocked by speciality shops or by selling schemes that use local specificities as a means of reaching the best tables, closer to consumption centres. The Stansted Farm Shop (<http://www.stanstedfarmshop.com/>) is an example of a speciality shop that sells local farm products, emphasizing local sourcing, and it has now extended its range to add local fish to its offering. In addition, some English FLAGs are currently looking to start working with speciality shops in London, to market their products directly in the heart of the UK capital.

Not only fresh fish

Short chains are traditionally associated with fresh products, as the shorter distribution channels have the advantage of being able to reach the consumer faster. Short chains do not have to be limited to fresh products, however. Successful examples of canned or frozen products sold through short chain circuits also exist. This could be the case when a producer, or more often a group of producers, diver-

sify vertically in the production chain by, for example, investing in a facility to add value. Traditional smokehouses or units for vacuum packing fillets are probably the easiest entry points, but there are also many successful examples of the direct sale of canned products (see the [FARNET Good Practice](#) presenting the canned goose barnacle paté of the 27 perceiberos from Galicia, in Spain, or the example of *"La Paimpolaise"* or *"Le Brin d'Océan"* contained in the [FARNET Guide #3](#) on adding value to local fisheries products).

The main advantage of these processed products is their reduced perishability, which has some important benefits: firstly, it allows for a decoupling of the production process from the demand cycle (this is very important when either the supply or the demand is seasonal); secondly, it creates a side channel for unsold volumes of fresh products and therefore minimizes losses; and thirdly, processed products are more stable, meaning they can be transported more easily and, therefore, be shipped to more distant markets, which increases the catchment area. Their packaging can also be used as a communication tool, which is impossible to do with fresh fish.



▲ A fish snack at the Wieringen fish market in the Netherlands.

Short chains and their limitations

There are also risks and constraints associated with short chain systems. Risk elements include the fact that producers are not always certain they will sell their catch (especially as volumes sold can be limited), which means they have to allow for the cost of unsold production. There is also a risk that traditional buyers of the catch such as wholesalers will turn their back on local producers that sell their fish directly or differently. These risks can be limited, however, by looking at short chain schemes not as an alternative, but as complementary to traditional trade circuits.

In terms of constraints, time is probably the main issue: all short chain activities are supplementary to fishing operations and require additional time and effort. Other constraints are linked to food safety and fisheries control regulations, which limit the type of products (i.e. filleted or whole fish, etc.) or the volumes that can be sold through different schemes (limitations of weekly/daily quantities of fish that can be sold off the boat, for example). In some countries, an auction obligation exists, which means most fish has to first pass through an auction, before being sold elsewhere.

While some of these constraints, especially the investment or time required, are common to most short chain initiatives, others

are very much country specific, or even dependent on local conditions. A determining factor is the legislative framework for short chains, which can vary considerably from one region to another. This calls for a thorough assessment of the risks and constraints before launching into these new schemes.

Marketing tools for local producers: new technologies and labels

We have seen above that local producers have some comparative advantages in terms of image and product quality – and that the link between consumer and producer can help capitalise on these advantages. Certain marketing tools can help to strengthen this link.

New technologies, for example, are opening up many market possibilities for local producers. Widespread wireless internet access, smartphones, QR codes³ and interactive packaging⁴ are all powerful, yet easy to use technologies at the disposal of local producers, and which can be used to reinvent the way they connect with potential customers. A good example of how this potential can be exploited is illustrated by the Axis 4 “Fish from the boat” project or INTERREG “Local Catch” (see *Trade wind project p. 25*), which use an interactive website, connected with mobile technologies, to inform consum-

ers in real time of the direct sales possibilities in their local area. Through these new technologies, producers now have the possibility of connecting directly with the wider public.

Labelling schemes are another tool that can strengthen the connection between local producers and consumers, even without direct face to face contact. However, common technical specifications are usually needed to ensure a consistent level of quality, especially when several producers team up to market their products under the same label. The trust in a label is ensured by independent control of the label’s technical specifications and by the implementation of a full traceability scheme that allows customers to track their purchase all the way to the producer. Labels create an image and sometimes a brand that needs to be promoted and rendered visible to ensure recognition by consumers.

Technical specifications, traceability, monitoring and controls, promotional activities, etc., are all elements that either entail additional procedures within the production process (hence time and possible costs) or imply direct costs to the producer (e.g. registration fees). So while labels can be extremely useful and powerful tools, they also require a thorough cost/benefit analysis to assess their relevance. ■

FARNET is working with FLAGs and interested local stakeholders to look closer at the different channels and marketing tools that local producers can use to better market their local catch. The next FARNET seminar, to be held in Stockholm in June 2013, will focus specifically on this topic, so make sure to join us on our [Linkedin](#) and [Facebook](#) pages to share needs and ideas, and to follow the latest developments as we work together towards the better marketing of local fisheries products.

³ Quick Response codes are two-dimensional bar codes.

⁴ Packages which, thanks to a QR code or an ID tag, can link to further information on a website.

ZOOM

Recreating a Stockholm fish market

(Sweden)

With a population of around two million inhabitants, Stockholm is a vibrant and multicultural European capital, located at the centre of an archipelago of several thousand islands. Most Swedes are fond of local products, but for some reason, when it comes to fish and seafood, demand does not seem to be as robust as you might expect – even among the water-locked inhabitants of Stockholm. In fact, although per capita consumption of fish and aquaculture products is high and rising in Sweden (30 kg in 2007, compared to the EU average of 23.3 kg), this increase essentially concerns frozen fish and dried, smoked and salted fish products. The consumption of fresh fish has been in decline. At the same time, the demand for eco-labelled food products is on the increase. There is, therefore, a growing appetite for traceable and environmentally responsible seafood, as well as a shift from fresh towards more processed products.

However, although the Stockholm region is still home to approximately 100 active fishermen, working in a 250 km radius and landing approximately 800 tonnes of fish every year (a fraction of the 31 000 tonnes of fish products that Stockholm consumes per year), the catch makes a round trip of 900 km to Gothenburg, where it is sold at Sweden's main fish auction, which is also the country's main marketing and processing hub. The fish is then sent back to Stockholm, sometimes a week later, and often frozen for preservation purposes, to be sold by local retailers or restaurants. This system turns a potential local economy based on fresh products, into an elongated distribution chain where fishermen's income, the environment and product quality all suffer.



▲ An artist's impression of the future Stockholm fish market.

Then came the FLAG...

This situation gave Henrik C. Anderson, seafood enthusiast and fisheries expert at the county administrative board of Stockholm (a partner of the Stockholm FLAG), the idea of recreating a local fish market – the “Stockholm Fish Market” – that could supply the region with locally caught fish and raise the profile of local fishermen. Fitting perfectly within the FLAG strategy, the idea was supported for further development.

The project started in 2011 with a survey of Stockholm fishermen, aimed at learning more about the local catch, including its size and seasonality. It also challenged fishermen with a bold new idea: *would they be willing to travel to the city, meet customers, and sell their catch at the “Fiskmarknad” – a fish market selling local fish.* In parallel, potential participants were invited to organise themselves into a “Stockholm fish market association”, a new

structure to support the development of a new marketing approach, and to convince other local actors and businesses to support the creation of a permanent and locally sourced seafood market in the city. The board of the fish market association, composed of five local fishermen and several other stakeholders, such as seafood restaurants, chefs, suppliers and shop owners, looked at many questions raised by this new “marketing paradigm”: *How to ensure a continuous supply? What kind of contracts and regulatory and quality control system would be most appropriate?* For many fishermen, accustomed to selling to one single distant buyer, there was also an important learning process in embracing this alternative system.



By the time local fishermen had responded to the survey and had begun to warm to the idea, a large communication campaign was initiated. Fifteen fishermen took the lead, and decided to invest their catch in a pilot operation. The fish market association also cooperated with "Farmer's Own Market", a consultancy firm with extensive experience in promoting and organizing alternative marketing circuits for local agricultural products (e.g. the [Dream farm](#) project).

Cohesion, communication, innovation

Outreach and a "direct communication" campaign were a key component of the project. Social networks played a particularly important part, with a lively and frequently updated [Facebook](#) page and a visually attractive [website](#) focusing on the people, the rationale and the fishermen behind the initiative. Through this communication campaign, the platform reached out directly to potential customers, without relying solely on traditional media intermediaries: a "short chain methodology" applied to communication.

Of course, traditional media, especially the local press were part of the communication strategy and success, but their coverage of the project was amplified by the online communication, which had already alerted the audience to the "buzz". *"The interest from consumers and the media exceeded all expectations..."*, says Henrik C. Anderson.

On the 21 November 2012, between 15:00 and 17:00, Stockholm's Fish Market went live. This "Flash fish market", not unlike "flash mobs" observed in other cultural events, saw customers crowd into the busy and fashionable Stureplan and Nytorget avenues of central Stockholm, to buy seasonal fish species (pike, smoked flatfish, cod, herring), freshly caught by local fishermen. The decision was taken to sell at auction price, even though the intention was not to attract customers looking for a bargain, but rather to create awareness among the public about the price actually paid to fishermen for their catch, which is sometimes increased tenfold by the time it arrives in supermarkets and seafood shops.

Even if sold at auction price, the benefits for the fishermen went beyond any financial gain. To see the fruits of their labour attract so many people, some queuing for up to an hour in this busy downtown district, gave fishermen the priceless reward of reinforced self-esteem – something they rarely felt when their catch was sold for the same price 450 km away.

The next steps: opening-up to the wider market

For the fishermen, the Stockholm city and the FLAG, the first Stockholm Fish Market was a resounding success. It created momentum and demonstrated a clear demand for a longer term supply of quality and locally sourced fish, opening up a range of economic possibilities for local fishermen.

The original project promoter, the County board, is now transferring the operational activities of the project to the local fishermen and the private sector members of the association, hence strengthening project ownership. Together, they are now taking an active role in managing the project and strengthening its potential to meet future market expectations: at least 80 fishermen are interested in supplying the future market, and their involvement and commitment will need to be secured; negotiations must also be undertaken with real estate agents, restaurants and business owners that might be attracted by a permanent fish market. The association is thus entering a "product development" phase: protecting the "Stockholm Fiskmarknad" name through a fishermen-owned patent, negotiating with investors, concluding partnership agreements with other fishermen, working with an architecture school to identify and develop the best location for the future fish market while maintaining ongoing communication with customers to keep their interest alive.

Nearby FLAGs are now also looking closer at the project. Indeed, close cooperation between their fisheries communities could grow the project into a "regional" hub for local seafood marketing, opening up opportunities to link the output of local fisheries areas to the demand of nearby urban centres.

The first Stockholm fish market created a buzz and opened up new horizons for local fisheries stakeholders, who are now actively working behind the scenes to lay a solid foundations for the project's future.

Total project cost:	EUR 240 000
Axis 4 support:	EUR 60 000 (50% national/regional + 50% EU)
Axis 1 support (support to small scale fisheries):	EUR 46 000 (50% national/regional + 50% EU)
Other national support:	EUR 135 000
Duration of the project:	2 years (2011-2012)



Report

CARP, A FLAGSHIP PRODUCT AND A DRIVING FORCE FOR SUSTAINABLE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE BARYCZ VALLEY [POLAND]

The FLAG fish

The innumerable ponds in the Barycz valley produce some of the best carp in Poland. Axis 4 of the EFF is helping to reduce the seasonality of this local sector, which is mainly confined to Christmas, by developing new marketing initiatives and enhancing the attractiveness of the area.



▲ Carp is on the menu at the restaurant of Anna and Dariusz Moczulscy.

It is impossible to miss the 'Górecznik' restaurant on the busy Poznań-Katowice road: set in a vast recreational complex, the huge Indian wigwam which sits on the roof can be seen from afar. "Before the fall of communism in 1989 it was a small outdoor area, with a fishery used by the staff of a locomotive factory," explains the manager, Łukasz Kierzek (aged 29). "My boss, Józef Szela, bought it and each year he has added a new attraction, including a restaurant, which had only five tables when it opened in 2003. Today, we serve a hundred tables inside alone and in the summer and on some weekends we can do 3 000 covers a day. That's a lot of people!"

Like a small Disneyland, with stalls and stands, large wooden statues, a mini zoo, a 'pirate island' and cardboard cut-outs positioned around some of the ponds, the entire complex covers 13 hectares, 10 of which are water. The business, which employs between twenty and forty people, depending on the season, has twelve types of mainly local fish on its menu. The manager explains, "80% of what we serve in the restaurant is fish, and particularly carp, which is our main speciality."

"A former fish farmer, the owner of Górecznik was keen to focus his menu on fish," explains Marta Kamińska, the marketing manager of the local action group. "I real-

ise that this type of establishment does not exactly correspond to our idea of a model restaurant – rather high end – supported by Leader or Axis 4, but for us the Górecznik is strategically important due to the volume of fish and other local products it sells, and also because of the direct and large-scale promotion it provides thanks to the large number of customers who dine there all year round."

The Górecznik restaurant-complex received EUR 358 000 in Axis 4 support. "It was quite funny," says Natalia Stankiewicz, the FLAG's marketing manager, "the managers of the complex first submitted a project on dinosaurs... We suggested the project should change to create an educational



▲ The land of a thousand ponds.

experience based on fishing and fish farming when we noticed that the owner had a large collection of objects and tools related to fish farming. While walking around the ponds at the complex, visitors can now learn about different aspects of the local fishing heritage in sixteen different places."

From Cistercian monks to Axis 4

Fish farming is the main activity in the valley of the Barycz river, a tributary of the Oder, which could also be called the 'valley of a thousand ponds'. In fact 11% of the land here is made up of ponds dug in the Middle Ages by Cistercian monks, primarily for rearing carp. As their monastic vows limited the consumption of meat, the Cistercians began farming fish in hundreds of ponds fed by the Barycz River. With an expert knowledge of the reproductive cycle of carp, they dug shallow and shaded ponds for rearing young carp, before they were transferred to deeper ponds to be fished when they had reached a certain size. Over 700 years of aquaculture has created a specific 'cultural landscape', which has been recognised as such since 1963, with the creation of the 'Milicz Ponds' bird sanctuary – one of the sites protected under the RAMSAR Convention – and in 1996, with its designation as part of the 'Barycz Valley Landscape Park', a protected area of 80 000 hectares. Transcending the boundaries of the voivode-

ships (regions) of Lower Silesia and Great Poland, this extraordinary area, of great environmental importance, also inspired a group of nature lovers from the nearby town of Wrocław to create the 'Barycz Valley Foundation', the forerunner to the Leader+ local action group (LAG).

Functioning as both a LAG and a FLAG, the 'Barycz Valley Partnership' has 123 members, including eight local authorities, the Milicz Powiat (County), numerous entrepreneurs (hoteliers, restaurant owners, tourist operators, craft workers, etc.), twenty or so fish farmers, a number of social, cultural and environmental associations, as well as private individuals. *"In terms of the way we operate, we are pioneers in Poland,"* says Inga Demianiuk-Ozga, President and Director General of the Partnership. *"As an organisation, we are strongly rooted in the land, and we are large enough and experienced enough to capitalise on the potential synergies between the different programmes that we are piloting, namely: Axis 4 of the EAFRD, Axis 4 of the EFF, as well as projects supported by the Polish American Freedom Foundation. Our aim is to be an integrated agency for local development where a potential client can find everything his project requires under one roof."*

With regard to Axis 4, for which work began in 2010, the FLAG has so far (February 2013) organised four calls for proposals, which have led to the selection of 55 projects out of the 85 proposals received.

"Funding from Axis 4 of the EFF came just in time to help build on the work we had been doing for seven years, organising 'Carp days' or themed evenings in restaurants: adding value and reducing the seasonality of carp sales, our favourite fish," explains Inga Demianiuk-Ozga.



Christmas all-year round

While the Polish eat relatively small amounts of fish, it is estimated that 80% of the country's population eats carp on Christmas Eve. *"Carp is the Polish equivalent of turkey,"* confirms Iwona Nowicka, a French teacher at the University of Wrocław. *"In the lead up to Christmas, there are vendors all over town with tanks full of live carp from the ponds of Barycz. And people take them home alive. I remember my father buying several carp and we watched them swim in the bath before being killed on 24 December."*



“Dni Karpia”: a celebration of the carp

September and October, the harvest season for carp, are a busy period for Polish fishermen and fish farmers, who gather around the large, slowly draining ponds to haul their large nets and collect this precious fish. The “Carp Days” (*Dni Karpia*) event now brings even more activity to the villages of the Barycz Valley during this busy period.

In 2006, the Wrocław-based Lower-Silesian Foundation for Sustainable Development organised the first Carp Days. They consisted of five events, involved various partners and attracted around 1 000 people. In 2007, part of the event was organized by the Barycz Valley Foundation, which later became the Leader+ local action group (LAG). Since then, the LAG has continued to support the event, as a means of promoting the area, its flagship species, and developing other local, speciality products and eco-tourism opportunities.

The Carp Days now attract up to 500 000 people every year. In 2012, 25 events took place in the Barycz Valley and in the city of Wrocław (pop. 650 000), where the kick-off event was held. This was important, because the Barycz Valley is close to the Lower Silesia capital and this allowed for the promotion of subsequent events in the Barycz Valley by tourist operators and other businesses, including the 17 restaurants that sell different carp products.

As for the activities, given the wide range of different attractions offered by the events’ programmes, everyone (families, cyclists, horse riders...) can find something of interest. Organisers often opt for thematic events (games for children, bird watching, Nordic walking, cycling competition,...) combined with a special attraction for everyone – a traditional fish harvest, where people can see just how hard the local fish farmers work. Most of the attractions are outdoors and include picnics, concerts, performances by local artists, exhibitions by local producers, and dishes prepared with local fish, especially carp. Since 2010, themed fish meals have also been organised in local restaurants.

The organisation of the Carp Days has a valuable networking effect as it requires several preparatory meetings, which bring together fishermen and fish farmers, restaurant owners, tourist operators, community associations and local authorities. “Many of these stakeholders did not previously know each other, or at least did not work together,” says Natalia Stankiewicz, the FLAG’s marketing manager.



This innovative concept provides a platform for producers to add value to their product through direct sales. It has also led to the development of new products, such as smoked carp, which has proven to be very popular with tourists.

The scope of the Carp Days has also been extended to include a permanent initiative: the development of a local brand, “Barycz Valley recommended”. This is awarded to local producers and service providers promoting high standards, distinctiveness, cooperation with other producers or service providers, and respect for the environment.

The Carp Days are linked to the quality label through the organisation of cookery competitions. During the most recent events, around 12 restaurants took part in these competitions and prepared different carp dishes. The best restaurants are nominated, “Mistrz Karpia”, or “Master of Carp”. This initiative has proved instrumental in promoting different ways of preparing carp and, as a result, carp can now be found in almost every local restaurant on a year round basis. It is no longer just a Christmas dish.

<http://dnikarpia.barycz.pl/>

«This is one change that is forcing our sector to adapt to new consumer habits,” adds Wiesław Bienkiewicz, a fish farming consultant. “People no longer want to keep carp in their bath for several days or to have to kill the animal themselves, especially as European rules on animal welfare have become a lot stricter in recent years. For this reason alone, fish farmers have to learn to prepare fish that are ready to cook, which adds value and also facilitates the sale of the product out of season.”

In terms of the scale of aquaculture in the valley, there are six farms that are large enough (over 50 hectares) to concentrate solely on fish farming, and around twenty smaller producers for which it is a sideline, or even a pastime. The farm of Jan Krzysztof and Tomasz Raftowicz belongs to the first category. With 153 hectares of fresh-water in 13 ponds, it produces pike, pike perch, catfish, tench, and grass and silver carp. Around 90% of the carp is sold to a wholesaler, who then sells it on to retailers in Poznań and Wrocław. As well as family members, the farm employs six additional staff: three all year round and three on a seasonal basis.

The Raftowicz farm is implementing the first Axis 4 project in the area, which involves the building of a complex comprising a fishery, a fish restaurant and a small fish shop. “We want to be involved in direct selling and local distribution, based on the French or Italian models,” explains Tomasz. “We are seeing a growing interest in ‘slow food’. There are five or six of us in the fish farming trade who are interested in the movement.” The complex is due to open in 2015 and is expected to create four additional jobs, including one in the fish shop. The farm will also receive funding for a second Axis 4 project, which involves combining fish production with the protection of biodiversity, namely by installing devices to prevent beavers from digging tunnels that can interfere with the water level of the ponds. “It is not easy to run a business in the context of environmental constraints,” explains Tomasz, “but we have lots of support from Axis 4”. And a third project is also under consideration – the development of a workshop and facilities for the preparation of fish (gutting, filleting, etc.).

Carp cluster

Stawy Milickie SA (‘The Milicz Ponds’) is the leading carp producer in Poland. Operating across five sites, the company manages 7 300 hectares, 6 500 of which are under water. Before the transition to a market economy, it was run as a national conglomerate. “At our peak, recalls Anna Grabka-Kupczyńska, Stawy Milickie’s European project manager, we produced up to 4 000 tonnes annually and employed 800 people.” In 2010, the company lost its national identity but remained public, when it was formally handed over to the office of the Marshal (Regional Council).

Today, the Milicz Ponds employ 170 people and the main product is carp (approximately 600 tonnes per year). Around 80% of the production is sold through five wholesalers and 20% through direct sales, the majority during the Christmas period in both cases. “Our aim is to produce 2 000 tonnes per year, to triple production by selling it all year round,” says Anna Grabka-Kupczyńska. “For this to happen, we need to change mentalities and offer new services. The FLAG is helping us to implement this strategy. First of all, we have created a strong image, symbolised by our logo of a fish and a bird, like the yin and the yang, to show the interdependence of the two species, but also our commitment to combining fish production and nature protection. Secondly, a few of us fish farmers have created a ‘carp cluster’ and started the process of obtaining protected label status for ‘Milicz carp’, as we are facing unfair competition from other countries and regions who are happy to use this name for their own products, which are sold at significantly lower prices and are of an inferior quality.” The business is undertaking four projects that are in receipt of Axis 4 support (EUR 650 000): a fish processing unit, which is expected to create four new jobs; the purchase of equipment, particularly for the cleaning and protection of riverbanks; the purchase of a lorry and three vans to provide more flexibility when it comes to distribution, while also respecting the rules on animal welfare; and lastly, the purchase of a refrigerated trailer, equipped for street trading (to travel to the villages and provide a greater presence at events).



▲ Harvesting carp.

With the aim of marketing its production all year round, Stawy Milickie SA is also diversifying into tourism and is planning to offer, by 2016, a package that includes a combination of food and accommodation, line fishing, bird watching, rides in a horse drawn cart, as well as environmental education, a carp museum and a cookery workshop, where people can learn how to prepare fish.

(Eco)tourism



There is another, much smaller fish farm near Milicz, which has also diversified into tourism. It belongs to Aleksander Kowalski, a former professor of ichthyology⁵ at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Wrocław. Mr Kowalski is a member of the FLAG and also, because of his scientific knowledge, one of its resource persons. For nineteen years, this lively octogenarian has farmed, along with one employee, five ponds (7 hectares), which produce pike, tench, catfish and, most importantly, carp (approximately 25 tonnes per year). What gives the farm its originality – and its beauty – is the presence, in winter and summer alike, of a herd of around sixty horses of the Polish primitive breed ‘konik polski’, Aleksander’s second passion.



⁵ The scientific study of fish.

Kowalski's farm is receiving funding for three Axis 4 projects, all of which will be completed in 2013. These include: the building of ten small cottages for bird watching (a grant of EUR 126 000); the purchase of a mobile unit for the preparation of fish, which will be used during events such as 'Carp Days' (EUR 22 350); and the building of a large sheltered courtyard to be used for educational purposes by school groups and tourists (EUR 40 000). Four new posts are expected to be created by the end of 2013. Mr Kowalski insists: "Obviously, all of this will blend into the landscape. The FLAG has planned for this by producing a 'catalogue of architectural infrastructure', which determines the criteria to be respected for all wooden constructions co-financed by the EFF or EAFRD."

"Tourism developments must take account of the fact that we are in a protected zone," explains Łukasz Rokita, a project manager for Milicz county. "The only option is to focus on the development of ecotourism. This type of tourism, which attracts quality visitors, also has important spin-offs. The conversion of the old Wrocław-Milicz railway line into a cycle path, for example, is a structural amenity for both the local inhabitants and tourists in the valley. Since it opened in May 2012, we have seen a significant increase in the number of visitors – at weekends and in the summer we recorded up to 4 000 per day! We want to continue in this direction with our Axis 4 project."

The project involves creating an artificial lake covering an area of nine hectares. Aleksandra Wencek, in charge of communications, justifies the investment: "We are surrounded by water, but paradoxically, apart from being able to observe nature, we cannot take advantage of it for leisure activities because of environmental restrictions and fish production. Hence the idea of creating an artificial lake, in the very same place where one existed in the 19th century, when it was used for bathing." The total cost of the project is EUR 1.5 million, half of which will come from Axis 4. The excavation and landscaping have already been completed and the construction phase is now underway: a track has been mapped out around the lake. A multi-purpose building and a range of equipment (pontoons, games, etc.) will be provided and a large stage will be erected on an island in the middle of the water. When completed, in

2014, the whole area will be an important new recreational destination, just like the wonderful promenade between two large lakes, which the City of Milicz is in the process of building, thanks to co-funding from Axis 4 of EUR 200 000.

Ownership

"Despite the difficulties, in particular the exodus of our most educated young people, I believe the area is in a virtuous circle," says Paweł Wybierała, mayor of Milicz. "Our local products, like fish, but also game, fruit and vegetables, are 'fresh' products and thanks to local development assistance schemes, like the EAFRD and Axis 4, the production and marketing of these products, and all the related services, are improving significantly, which encourages people to stay. Furthermore, everyone is very aware that schemes such as Axis 4 mean more than money; they also promote socio-cultural values e.g. traditions, expertise, heritage..."



▲ Chefs demonstrate how to cook local fish.

I can see that it is having a large social benefit, the emergence of a real collective mentality, the exponential development of community-led organisations... This is all the more significant in our region, where the majority of inhabitants are Poles who were displaced after the war from the Baltic States, Belarus and Ukraine... Thanks to the local development efforts, which have been underway for ten years now, it looks like they are finally claiming ownership of their adopted land." ■

DOLINA BARYCZY (Poland)

Area:
1 662 km²

Population:
96 500 inhabitants

Density:
58 inhabitants/km²

Axis 4 Budget	EUR			
	EU	National	Private	Total
Total	8 687 375	2 891 000	n.a.	11 578 375

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People

Aigars Laugalis:

"This period has been a learning curve for all stakeholders and I look forward to higher quality, more fisheries and business-oriented projects in the next period."

Interview with Aigars Laugalis, entrepreneur and member of the board of the Liepāja FLAG (Latvia)

FARNET Magazine: *Can you tell us briefly about yourself and your connection with the fisheries sector?*

I was born in the mid-1980s, in the Republic of Latvia, which was then part of the Soviet Union. The city of Liepāja and its region, located on the Baltic coast, has been my home for most of my life. My father was an engineer on an offshore trawler, working mainly in the Atlantic. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he started to develop private projects in the fisheries sector and he built up his own business, which included a fleet of five vessels. During my childhood and teenage years I was always involved in fisheries. However, the first and, unfortunately, the last time I went to sea to catch cod with the "big guys" was when I was thirteen. That was three days I will never forget, on a trawler called "Biksti". I always told my friends that I was one of the few people that never got seasick, but I was wrong. The first day was fine, but on the second day the sea was turbulent, and my stomach was likewise!

After graduating from university in Riga I came back to my hometown to join my father's business. My main responsibility was to establish, from scratch, a small country hotel, called "Jūnieka Ligzda" (The Seaman's Nest), which is located near the beach, just outside Liepāja. High season at the hotel coincides with the period when fishing for cod is forbidden, so it complements the fishing activities and, of course, helps the cash flow situation.

As the family business has grown, I have gradually become more and more involved in fisheries projects, dividing responsibilities with my father and brother. My brother has been going to sea for quite a while now and so he is mainly responsible for the logistics aspects of the fishing business. My mother looks after the finances and book-keeping, while my wife and mother-in-law manage the operational part of hotel and catering business.



Aigars Laugalis

A member of the board of the fishing company, SIA "Ervils" (offshore fishing), and of the local fishermen's union "Baltijas Zivsaimnieku apvienība", Aigars Laugalis is also the general manager of a small, family-owned, country hotel, located in the FLAG area, and a representative of small businesses and the fisheries sector on the board of the FLAG. His Axis 4 project concerns the construction of a traditional smokehouse (total cost EUR 20 000, of which EUR 12 000 came from the EFF).

www.jurniekaligzda.lv

Cod has been like bread in my family ever since I can remember. As someone who is very proud of the place I was born and the sea I have been connected with all my life, I believe cod (and Baltic fish in general) is the best you can get in Latvia in terms of local products. At the hotel, and in a bistro in the city, we have the opportunity to offer this fantastic natural resource to our guests.





The Liepāja FLAG (Latvia): reaching out to entrepreneurs

The Liepāja FLAG is located on the west coast of Latvia. The FLAG area has about 43 000 inhabitants, of which approximately 300 are employed in fisheries, aquaculture or fish processing; 73 fishing businesses are registered in the area. The FLAG budget from the European Fisheries Fund is EUR 2 071 849. The FLAG is also a Leader LAG.

Ligita Laipieniece, who was responsible for the fisheries activities of the LAG/FLAG at the time of the interview (January 2013), says that fishermen are becoming more and more aware of and involved in the FLAG, but they are still a very conservative group and it is very difficult to involve them if they do not see any financial benefit. Moreover, as entrepreneurs they are busy with their work, trying to ensure the viability of their businesses, and they do not always have the time to take part in FLAG activities, which very often involve developing a dialogue, talking, planning and reaching consensus on different issues. In her work, Ligita always tried to ensure their involvement when it was really important to have their feedback, but otherwise her priority was to at least keep them informed about the activities of the FLAG.

Ligita believes that in the FLAG area, one of the greatest challenges is the poor state or total lack of infrastructure. It is difficult, she explains, to develop economic activities around a big lake if there is no access to the lake. Therefore, local municipal projects, such as building or reconstructing access roads to lakes or to the sea, are the first priority. Then there will be a chance for NGOs or entrepreneurs to submit projects, in order to develop these areas and offer new services that can generate income for the area.

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet/flagsheet/flag-factsheet-latvia-liepaja-district-partnership>

What is the current situation with regard to fisheries in Latvia?

The Soviet heritage still influences fisheries in Latvia, especially in terms of the fleet. Most fishing vessels are outdated in comparison to the fleets in neighbouring, "older" EU Member States, such as Denmark and Sweden. Joining the EU promised a lot of changes in the Latvian fisheries sector. Most fishermen were sceptical of the benefits of the Common Fisheries Policy and its impact on Latvia. Critics say that we have lost independence and too rapidly reduced our fleet. However, I think that it would be worse without the EU influence, because there would not have been such large-scale investment. The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) has obviously transformed Latvia's fisheries sector and now, eight years after Latvia joined the EU, I think everyone in the industry has benefitted in some way.

The cod fishing season in 2012 was the worst for over three years, mainly because of the ridiculously low wholesale price (a little over one euro per kg) and the poor catch, not to mention increasing oil prices. In spite of this, I saw a cod fillet from the Baltic selling in a supermarket in Paris for EUR 25 per kg. I took a photo to show people in Latvia. We are looking for opportunities to sell fish into Western European markets, where the consumer is prepared to pay a more appropriate price. Unfortunately, we do not have direct channels. Fishing companies are at the beginning of the supply chain, but they get the smallest portion of the retail price in relation to the resources invested.

And what about your own company?

Our company has been actively adapting to the new conditions, using support from the EFF. Under Axis 1, the greatest impact was from the scrapping of two vessels. Now we operate just one trawler that catches fish offshore. In recent years, we have been more active in developing Axis 3 common interest projects, which can help to add more value to the catch. Mindful of what scientists are saying about the future of the Baltic Sea ecosystem, we are also interested in long-term investments in sustainable and economically viable projects in aquaculture (Axis 2).

What about Axis 4?

We are always looking for development opportunities, and because our hotel is located in a fisheries area, we decided to apply for Axis 4 funds to develop a smokery. We were the first business to complete a FLAG project in our area, and our project was 100% fisheries related. The fish smokehouse that we built now offers services to our guests in the hotel and supplies the restaurant. In addition to the smokery, we also developed a small



▲ Aigars Laugalis' hotel is not far from the Baltic sea.

garden area for people who like to enjoy their fish outdoors. Given the small scale of FLAG projects in Latvia (the maximum amount for NGOs and businesses is approximately EUR 28 000), the impact on our business will not be huge, but I believe that with consistency between projects, everyone can benefit.

We have applied for another project that will reduce the environmental impact of our tourism business – water treatment equipment for the hotel. If we have enough resources for investment, good ideas and FLAG support, we would like to participate in other calls for projects in the future.

You and your family were originally sceptical of the FLAG support. What is your view now?

Living and running a small business in a fisheries area means sooner or later you must be in contact with the local FLAG. I am the rare representative of the fisheries sector who supports the Axis 4 approach, and one of my commitments is to try to change the perception of Axis 4 and FLAG projects in the eyes of fishermen, but there is still a lot of work to be done, to improve the quality of projects and the understanding among all stakeholders of the aims of this programme.

What are your expectations with regard to the FLAG in the next period? Would you like it to continue?

Yes, I would support a continuation of the FLAG's activities in the next period, because although this programme has just started, it has already shown good results. Our local FLAG is slowly becoming better known and recognised for its role and the opportunities it offers.

In my view, there is a need for better management of Axis 4 in Latvia, in terms of communication with the FLAGs and with regard to flexibility. Improvements are necessary at all levels of Axis 4 implementation. This period has been a learning curve for all stakeholders and I look forward to higher quality, more business-oriented and more fisheries-oriented projects in the next period, with the majority of these implemented in coastal areas.

There are three practical issues that I consider particularly important for the next period: firstly, greater independence of the FLAG from the national level; secondly, higher maximum grants for projects implemented by entrepreneurs; and finally, greater involvement of people from all interest groups, especially fishermen and fisheries entrepreneurs. ■

***Interview conducted (in English)
in January 2013.***

Report

FISHING, A TOURIST AND GASTRONOMIC NICHE MARKET ON THE ADRIATIC COAST OF SALENTO [ITALY]

An emotional business

In Salento, the “heel” of the Italian boot, mass tourism is a recent phenomenon, bringing with it certain risks, but also some great opportunities for a local fisheries sector in search of added value and diversification.

Ever heard of Michelle Obama olive oil? Well, it exists! You can find it in the Apulia region, in Vernole, on the Salento peninsula, the heel of the Italian boot. “In May 2012, on the occasion of the Festival della Dieta Med-Italiana (Med-Italian Diet Festival), the Province of Lecce and other partners officially dedicated the region’s oldest olive tree, ‘La Regina’ (1 400 years old), to the US First Lady in recognition of her ‘Let’s Move’ campaign against obesity,” explains Francesco Pacella, councillor for tourism, regional promotion, agriculture and marine resources for the Province of Lecce, and head of the Adriatico Salentino Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG). “Subsequently, in October, during a major festive event in which the local people and schools were all involved, we harvested and pressed the 320 kg of olives that this ancient tree still produces. Several bottles of oil bearing the image of Mrs Obama were sent to the White



▲ Michelle Obama's picture makes for an eye-catching label.

House by way of the US Embassy. Shortly afterwards we received a reply in which she said she was very touched by the gesture and she promised to visit us when she is next in Italy.”

A popular event, coupled with a winning marketing idea and an effective media scoop – what better testimony to the strategic intelligence and dynamism of the authorities and stakeholders in Salento. “Agriculture and tourism are our two main economic pillars,” explains Michael Tenore, municipal councillor responsible for

the environment in the town of Otranto (population 5 000 rising to 80 000 in summer). “The two are complementary and are doing relatively well. In addition to olives (Salento produces 60% of the total output of the Apulia region, which itself generates 40% of Italy’s production), there is viticulture: every year we export between 10 and 12 million vine cuttings (‘barbatelle’) to destinations worldwide. As for tourism, the growth has been impressive but it is the result of a sustained promotional effort over a number of years.”

Promotion

The Apulia region only became a mass tourism destination very recently. “In the early 2000s,” explains Francesco Pacella, “Italy needed to do something about the tourism situation. Tourist numbers were stagnant and in regions such as Apulia tourism was still under-developed. In the framework of a structure known as the ‘Destination Management Organisation’, the six Apulian Provinces brought together the different players in the sector – including fishermen – who were mostly working away independently of each other. In the Province of Lecce, this bottom-up approach allowed us to identify three critical issues for our territory: mediocre access (Brindisi airport is quite a distance from the peninsular tip of Salento, which is difficult to reach except by



▲ A fisherman in the port of Castro.

car); insufficient foreign language skills in the hotel and catering sector; and a lack of information on local attractions, things to do, sites to discover, etc.”

“We immediately set to work promoting the region. We took action on three fronts: firstly, communication, targeting tour operators and the media by organising trips for journalists and ensuring a presence at strategic fairs, such as the IITB in Berlin, the WTM in London, and the Fitur in Madrid. Secondly, we sought to optimise the synergies between food producers and restaurants. Externally, we now participate in trade fairs such as CIBUS in Parma, SIA in Paris or Anuga in Cologne. Finally, within the region, at municipal level, we are trying to organise events throughout the year that highlight the region’s attractions. These range from the Mediterranean diet to literature (the Campi Salentina Book Festival), and also include the ‘pizzica’, our traditional music and dance, which attracts 100 000 people to a local festival in August and that we now use to promote the area in China, Russia and the USA. It is easy for Axis 4 to be a part of this strategy because fish and fishing have a strong cultural significance and incite strong emotions in Apulia. This is an ancient activity that touches something in all of us.”

Spirit

Set up in August 2011, the Adriatico Salentino Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) brings together the Province of Lecce, six municipalities, a regional Natural Park, three cooperatives and cooperative unions representing fishermen, a cooperative bank, two associations and the Leader group Terra d’Otranto. After it was founded in 2010, the FLAG had to deal with some lengthy administrative procedures, so it was November 2012 before its strategy was officially approved. “No project has yet been selected but we have put these two years to good use in mobilising the fishermen and other local stakeholders. I would say the ‘Axis 4 spirit’ is very present, even in the municipalities of Santa Cesarea Terme and Diso, where the fisheries sector is not so well developed,” stresses Giuseppe Scordella, the FLAG’s managing director.

“We intend to build on the work already done by Axis 3 of the EFF, which has been operational since 2010, and has also helped to create a genuine mobilizing effect with regard to the fisheries sector,” explains Francesco Pacella: “Our ‘Mittico’ project (EUR 1 million), which we are implementing with the other five provinces of Apulia, aims to promote the exploitation, marketing and consumption of local fish.” Cosimo Montinaro, president of the fishermen’s cooperative, “La Folgore” (60 fishermen and 24 vessels) confirms



▲ Cosimo Montinaro demonstrates how to dye nets.

this: “The Axis 3 actions we are involved in, such as the renovation of our ‘caves’ – storage spaces, carved out of the rock, where we keep our equipment –, training sessions about on-board safety, port modernisation or the cleaning up of the coastline, all create a dynamic that encourages professional fishermen to become actively involved in the region’s sustainable development.”



Regulations

In addition to its exceptional architectural heritage, which is visible in even the smallest villages, the Adriatico-Salentino fisheries area has protected zones, a magnificent coastline, and clean, high-quality water. The main challenges facing the local fishermen are the depletion of stocks, especially of the fish that are most in demand (shrimps, sea urchins, groupers, sea bass, snapper and breams); the ageing of the fishermen; and the scale of non-professional fishing: *"Four out of five people who fish are not professionals but they still market their catch by selling it to restaurants and fishmongers..."*, complains Antonio Schifano, a young professional fisherman from Castro (home of the fishermen's cooperative "Pescatori di Castro" – 25 fishermen and 17 vessels). *"We need*

new regulations or, failing that, we must at least ensure that the rules apply to everyone and increase the level of enforcement. This 'clandestine fishing' is keeping prices down at a time when fuel and other fixed costs for professional fishermen have risen sharply."

Luigi Carrozzo, who represents the municipality of Castro on the board of the local FLAG, makes a quick SWOT analysis of the situation in this region: *"Our main strength is that we are located by the sea and fishing has remained a very important economic and cultural tradition. Our main weakness is the absence of an organised supply chain, especially for fish, which currently has a low market value. In terms of opportunities, I see great potential in pesca-tourism, ichthy-tourism (see box), and the creation of links*

between fishermen, restaurants owners, hoteliers and other tourist operators. However, the principal threat is posed by all these amateur fishermen who, in selling their catch, are competing unfairly with the professional fishermen. Axis 4 can play a major role in addressing all of these aspects."

WHEN A FISHERMAN DECIDES TO OPEN A RESTAURANT

THE ROCCO MODEL

Rocco Cazzato was the first fisherman in Apulia to get involved in "ichthyotourism" – tourism linked to fishing heritage.

In 2010, he converted the ground floor of the family home in the port of Tricase (population 180) into a restaurant. *"It is the house I was born in. All I had to do was take down a few partitions and fit the window through to the kitchen, because transparency is important. People like to see how the dishes they order are being prepared."*

Run by Rocco, his wife and their two sons, the restaurant can seat between 30 and 40 diners. On the menu are local fish and seafood, caught fresh in the morning, and accompanied by home-made products. *"We produce nearly everything ourselves, including the oil. The restaurant is closed in November, for example, due to the olive harvest. It is hard work sometimes, combining fishing and cooking, which is why we are only open in the evenings."*

In the winter, the clientele consists mainly of locals, but from June to September, 90% of the customers are holidaymakers, *"especially French, American and British"*, says the fisherman and restaurant owner. *"I decided to try ichthyotourism for our two sons, so that they can have a future here. It compensates for the decline in fishing."* And it seems like Rocco has made a wise move, as he estimates that his income has more than doubled!



▲ A family affair - the Cazzatos at their seafood restaurant.

"We want to use Rocco as a model for Axis 4," explains Giuseppe Scordella, managing director of the Adriatico-Salentino FLAG. Rocco too is eager to share his experience with other fishermen. *"The key to success is quality,"* he insists, pointing to the high quality brand of pasta he uses. *"The other essential elements are work, authenticity and keeping it small. Small is beautiful!"*

But what about the location, especially if you are not fortunate enough to have a property in the port? *"I don't think that is a problem,"* replies Rocco. *"A lot of local authorities have empty properties that are well situated and could be let for reasonable rents. The problem, as I see it, is institutional: unlike agri-tourism, the public bodies have not yet clearly set out the framework for ichthyotourism."* An issue on which Francesco Pacella, provincial councillor for tourism and president of the FLAG, seeks to provide reassurance: *"We are working on a regional legislative procedure to better support and professionalise this activity."* In the meantime, the Cazzato family has opted for a cooperative structure in which Rocco and his sons are partner fishermen and his wife a salaried employee.

The blue fish connection

The Adriatico-Salentino FLAG plans to use Axis 4 to introduce new forms of marketing (direct sales, short circuits, zero kilometre, slow food, etc.), to promote new fish products, and to encourage cooperation between the fisheries sector and other coastal sectors.

"We are seeking to add value to 'blue fish', the 'poor man's fish', such as sardines, anchovies and mackerels", stresses Giuseppe Scordella. "To do that we need to change the mentality of consumers and encourage restaurants to put these fish on their menus. That means training the cooks and teaching them how to prepare these fish to make gourmet dishes. In this respect, I am particularly interested in the Belgian Axis 4 project, 'Fish2Know', which aims to raise

awareness among future chefs and cooks about these less known varieties of fish. That is something we would like to draw inspiration from."

"Yes, we must adopt a supply chain approach, and Axis 4 will help us to create a network between pesca-tourism and the hotels and restaurants," stresses Alfonso Capraro, Mayor of Castro (population 2500, including about 40 fishermen). "Our ambition is also to set up a fish processing facility to increase direct sales. This exists already – look at the women buying their fish from the boat down there – but nothing is organised."



▲ A fishmonger prepares the catch of the day.

Pesca-tourism and ichthy-tourism: Italy the pioneer

Italy is the first European country to authorise fishermen to engage in pesca-tourism and ichthy-tourism, two forms of tourism linked to fishing and now well established on the peninsula.

According to Italian legislation (D.M. 13 April 1999 n.293, D.L. 26 May 2004 n.154), pesca-tourism is defined as "taking on board fishing vessels persons who are not crew members for the purposes of tourism or leisure activities, coastal trips, participation in commercial fishing activities, the practice of fishing as a sport, or other activities that highlight the culture of the area, the sea and fishing. The service can also include dining on board or on land with a view to adding value to the produce of the sea or reviving traditional regional recipes at their place of origin."(*)

Ichthy-tourism is defined (D.L.26 May 2004 n.154, Law on Agri-tourism n.96 of 20 February 2006) as a "reception and leisure activity of an educational, cultural and service nature, aimed at the respectful use of aquatic ecosystems, fishery resources and aquaculture, practised by entrepreneurs, either individually or collectively, using their own home or another structure that is available to them."(*)

Regarded as the birthplace of pesca-tourism, Italy is the first EU country to have studied this activity and to have prepared specific legislation to provide guarantees for fishermen and the tourists they carry. The same applies to ichthy-tourism.



The number of fishermen employed in this sector is growing by the year. In 2010, the number of permits issued was already over 500. Apulia accounted for 50 of these and Sardinia 70.

The Italian experience – as well as several European projects implemented under Interreg IIIA Italy-Greece and Interreg IIIB Medocc, which explored these two forms of fishing-related tourism – have served as a model for other European countries, such as France, Greece and Spain, which are now also getting involved and have entered into cooperation projects with Italy with a view to importing good practices.

Source: Pescatour – Associazione Nazionale per lo Sviluppo e la Valorizzazione del Pescaturismo ed Ittiturismo

(*) Simplified translation of the Italian legal text.

Niche markets

Paradoxically, in terms of direct marketing, the two most established approaches in this region are ones that are usually difficult to organise, mainly due to the legal constraints that apply in most other EU countries: pesca-tourism and, to a lesser extent, ichthyotourism (see box). *"The two systems make it possible to sell local products directly, but also, and just as importantly, to make them better known. A tourist who tastes a fish prepared by a local fisherman is more likely to ask for this fish again when he goes to a restaurant,"* suggests Giuseppe Scordella.



▲ Artisanal production of skipjack in oil.

Luigi Schifano (71) is one of the four fishermen in Castro to practice pesca-tourism based on a traditional fishing method that he has revived: the use of "the lampara net", a type of purse seine net. He estimates that this fishing tourism makes up around 20% of his earnings. *"I advertise it on the web, I also have leaflets printed up but the best publicity of all is word of mouth."* Genoveffa Lazzari, the wife of a fisherman who is also involved in pesca-tourism, agrees: *"Promotion is not a problem, what*

would be good is a new boat offering more comfort for more passengers."

Giovanni De Matteis, president of the "Il Delfino" cooperative, which represents 190 fishermen and 120 vessels, is a firm believer in the virtues of pesca-tourism and ichthyotourism. Since 1996, several members of the cooperative have become involved in pesca-tourism. Every summer, two or three days a week, they take tourists out fishing, charging between EUR 20

and EUR 50 per person, depending on whether or not a meal is included. *"The problem is not so much the promotion and marketing but managing the bookings. With Axis 4 we would like to set up a booking system through a network that includes the fishermen, hotels and restaurants."*

"Quantitatively," says Michael Tenore, *"tourism does not need to be developed any further here. 700 000 visitors a year is almost more than enough, because we are threatened by what I would call, "the Venice syndrome", the loss or standardisation of our traditions. The fisherman can play a major role in responding to this threat: for themselves first of all, by benefitting from the market niches that their activity and products, with their strong emotional connotations, can create, but also for the region as a whole, by acting as custodians, because in many respects they are the guardians of our heritage and our identity."* ■

ADRIATICO SALENTINO (Italy)

Area:
61 km²

Population:
31 507 inhabitants

Density:
517 inhabitants/km²

Axis 4 Budget	EUR			
	EU	National	Private	Total
Total	985 000	985 000	202 100	2 172 100

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Trade winds

PORTUGAL

"Cabaz do Mar", the seafood basket

Total cost: EUR 52 962 – **EU contribution (EFF Axis 4):** EUR 39 722

"The 'Cabaz do Mar' project aims to develop a local seafood sourcing scheme in Azenhas do Mar, a small village in Alentejo. The project is led by TAIPA, a cooperative and member of the local FLAG, and the aim is to provide fishermen



and their families with an alternative option for selling their catch, by delivering locally sourced fish directly to the customer. The packaging and pricing are currently being considered, but the goal will be to deliver a fixed priced package, with species and quantity adapted on the basis of seasonality and in agreement with the customer. This project is breaking new ground in Portugal, where the entire catch must be sold firstly through auction, sometimes at distant locations from the fisherman's landing site. After visiting similar initiatives in Southern France to learn about their experience, the project holder and participating fishermen are investigating how to coordinate with the Portuguese auction system to ensure delivery, real-time/on-line communication campaigns and the sustainability of the model."

Paula Carneiro, Alentejo FLAG manager
adl.alentejano@mail.telepac.pt

UNITED KINGDOM

Matching local seafood supply and demand

Total cost: EUR 20 930 – **EU contribution (Axis 4 EFF):** EUR 19 487

"With the 'Local Seafood Supply & Demand Study', the North & West Cumbria FLAG examined the demand for and ability to supply locally caught fish and seafood to the area's hospitality sector. Until now, very little of the seafood



landed in the FLAG area has been sold directly to the local market and although it was believed that there was demand for such products, there was little evidence to confirm the level or type of such demand, or the ability of suppliers to meet it. The study, therefore, explores the opportunities and steps to take in order to better connect seafood producers with potential consumers (especially in the popular Lake District) via business and hospitality channels such as fishmongers, hotels and restaurants."

Susan Crooks, North & West Cumbria FLAG manager
admin@cumbriaflag.org.uk
www.cumbriaflag.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/North-West-Cumbria-FLAG_Local-Seafood-Supply-and-Demand-Study.pdf

UNITED KINGDOM

"Local Catch": new product-market combination

Total cost: EUR 80 000 – **EU contribution (INTERREG IVA):** EUR 8 000

"PMCs (product-market combinations) are innovative approaches to re-thinking the marketing, customer outreach and communication on local products. 'Local Catch' is one of the PMC initiatives supported in South East England by the INTERREG '2 Seas' crossborder co-operation programme. The project aims to inform customers about the source, the availability and the profile of local seafood. Through an on-line platform, combining desktop and mobile tools, fishermen and local seafood retailers can join to advertise their catch. Participating fishermen appear in a web-based directory and interactive map, as well as in a mobile app developed by the project. Fishermen can also use the search engine to target consumers or trade buyers according to their buying preferences. This platform also provides marketing and public relations support to fishermen and it is integrated with social networking sites. Around 70 seafood businesses are now part of the scheme."

Henriette Reinders, Project manager
henriette@tastesoutheast.co.uk
<http://www.projectfishandchips.eu/>
<http://www.localcatch.co.uk/>



BELGIUM

"Jean sur Mer": seafood hits the road

Total cost: n.a.

"Jean sur Mer is the name of my seafood catering company. With my 'seafood caravan' I travel around Belgium, selling freshly cooked, fried, baked, raw or sautéed seafood in public places, at events, music festivals or as a catering service. I



want customers to discover and enjoy quality and seasonal seafood, but I also want to offer a different experience to the traditional weekly market. The idea to develop this alternative, mobile fish catering business hit me during the 2010 Tour de France, which was passing nearby and, with some friends, I decided to prepare "kibbelings", (bite-sized pieces of deep fried white fish), something not well known in Belgium, but very popular in the Netherlands. It was a huge success, so I thought it could be worth trying as a business. A few months ago, I heard about local initiatives supported by the Belgian FLAG, such as 'fish2know'. The FLAG could help me link with local fishermen and their catch, enabling me to diversify my sourcing while promoting locally caught fish, that way I could turn this personal success story into a success for the local fisheries community."

Jan Kegels, project owner
info@jeansurmer.be
www.jeansurmer.be/
www.facebook.com/pages/JEAN-sur-MER/208375012529289

Spotlight

300 FLAGS AND 3 000 PROJECTS

Delivering results

Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) have to provide evidence that Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) – Axis 4 in the current period – can foster socio-economic development in a way that cannot be delivered by top-down policies.

As EU institutions and Member States negotiate the new budgets, regulations and financial instruments that will govern the 2014-2020 programming period, there is a shift in expectations, which has been on the table ever since the [EU2020 strategy](#)⁶ was published back in 2010. This shift is one towards evidence-based results. In other words, Member States can expect increasing demands to justify their spending of EU money – and to demonstrate that investments have borne fruit.

With this in mind, government departments, when allocating their new budgets to strategic priorities, will be paying close attention to those funding measures that can have the biggest impact and, very importantly, those that are likely to produce *measurable* results. Top of the agenda in Brussels is the double objective: “jobs and growth”. Indeed, creating and safeguarding jobs and businesses in and around the fisheries sector is expected to be a key indicator for measuring results under the new European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF), but of course, the results of the current period will play a strong role in informing funding decisions for the next.

It is a critical time, therefore, for FLAGs to provide evidence that they can contribute effectively to meeting the targets of their national operational programmes, and indeed, that Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) – Axis 4⁷ in the current period – can foster socio-economic development in a way that cannot be delivered by top-down policies.

After 20 years of experience in rural areas under the Leader programme, CLLD has been credited for its effectiveness linked to five main characteristics: responsiveness to needs; capacity to mobilize maximum local resources; flexibility to innovate; the integrated nature of actions supported; and its promotion of cooperation. And yet, fisheries areas have, at best, three years of experience in implementing local development strategies through their FLAGs – and in some cases, they are only starting in 2013. So, what evidence can be gleaned so far to make the case to prioritise CLLD under the new EMFF?

Firstly, it is important to highlight the achievement in itself of setting up **over 300 FLAGs** in 21 Member States. These are partnerships that bring together a range of public and private interest groups to analyse their area and agree upon a common set of development priorities to be supported financially.

This process has, for the first time, placed fishermen at the heart of a local development initiative, giving them the legitimacy and the means to make decisions that influence not only the local fisheries sector, but also areas such as town planning, port development, and the development of marine protected areas or tourist packages. Moreover, the building of these partnerships has brought together often rival fisheries organisations to work together towards common objectives, while also linking what is sometimes a rather isolated sector with some of the more influential actors in their territory.

We can then point to over **3 000 local projects** that these FLAGs have so far selected to support – projects ranging from training for fisheries sector workers to investments in the development of new fisheries and marine products, or in the modernization of port infrastructure in order to bring it up to the standards necessary for a competitive fisheries industry and for additional water-based activities. It is still too early to quantify the results of these 3 000 projects but initial indications point to some key benefits that the FLAGs and their projects are delivering in fisheries areas:

⁶ Communication from the Commission: “EUROPE 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” COM(2010) 2020 final.

⁷ Axis 4 of the EMFF provides for the “sustainable development of fisheries areas”.



▲ Pesca-tourism in the Var region (France).

Responding to needs



▲ Information meeting organised by the Lesvos FLAG (Greece).

Among the key challenges facing fishing communities around Europe are those linked directly to the sector, including rising costs (in particular fuel), the lack of competitiveness of EU fisheries products, and issues linked to the fisheries resource. Then, there are a series of challenges that are broader than the fisheries sector, but still impact on fishermen, their families and the communities in which they live. These vary significantly from one area to another, and FLAGs around Europe are starting to demonstrate the added value of a local approach to these complex and intertwined challenges, be they competition for marine space, depopulation

and an aging fisheries workforce, or poor access to markets. Indeed, in a series of FARNET case-studies on the added value of Axis 4 for the fisheries sector, a key conclusion to emerge was the “*value of having a local body (the FLAG) specialized in supporting fisheries-focused local development with the **autonomy to react to local needs and a budget to put ideas into action***”.

In terms of the sector specific challenges, for example, FLAGs are intervening to **help** fishermen investigate alternative fuel sources, such as renewable energies, for fishing boats (e.g. Finland, Italy...) or trialing more fuel efficient gear (Netherlands). However, FLAGs are particularly active further along the supply chain and numerous Axis 4 projects are **boosting the sector's competitiveness by promoting more effective marketing** of fisheries products. These include projects to: support the setting up of fish-box schemes, which deliver regular packages of fresh fisheries produce to subscribers; mobilise local restaurants, schools and public sector canteens to commit to regularly serving local fish; facilitate direct sales of local fish by supporting fresh fish markets and online platforms; develop quality labels around sustainable local fisheries products and improve traceability systems; and provide direct support to new shops, restaurants and other outlets that offer local fisheries products. Other FLAGs are helping fisheries organisations



▲ Coastal urbanisation is a major issue for the Pays d'Auray FLAG (France).

to **improve local fish stocks**, by improving the sustainability of fishing techniques, setting up marine protected areas or monitoring and improving water quality.

The context in which different fisheries are operating also impacts significantly on their activity. We see, for instance, attractive coastal communities where primary fisheries activities are under threat from new, stronger economic sectors and gentrification, both of which can push the price of water-front properties beyond the reach of fisheries companies. Solutions to such issues can be found, however. In Brittany, for example, the **Pays d'Auray FLAG** has been instrumental in mobilising support for an Oyster Charter, which prevents oyster farms from being sold off for residential or commercial development. Moreover, the FLAG has become a key partner in the region, and now represents the interests of the fisheries sector on issues relating to local urban planning.



▲ Lake fishing in the Kainuu-Koillismaa FLAG area (Finland).



At the other end of the scale, we see some remote fishing and agricultural communities that are experiencing depopulation, an aging of the workforce, and a general decline in infrastructure and services. Here, FLAGs have taken up the challenge of fostering new and complementary activities and services to help attract residents, tourists and jobs to these areas. Examples include the setting up of a company to develop and market products from seaweed in Denmark, the development of port infrastructure in lake Peipsi, Estonia, to support both fishermen and new tourist activities, and the development of fishing tourism to attract visitors to some of the more remote parts of Finland.

Whatever the context of the many different fishing communities around Europe, FLAGs are offering tailor-made responses to their needs. Whether they are taking charge of sectoral measures and infrastructure development or helping to boost the competitiveness of local fisheries products and better connect them with the market, a key added value of doing things locally is the proximity of staff who can evaluate what needs are most urgent and what solutions will have the biggest impact locally.

Mobilising hard-to-reach local resources... and additional funds

Another feature of the CLLD approach is its capacity to mobilise local people – and their ideas, skills and financial resources – to initiate new activities that can benefit the fisheries sector and fisheries communities. Indeed, low levels of education and a lack of investment capacity are key barriers to a more competitive and innovative fisheries sector. The presence of local staff with an explicit role in “animation” has helped people across Europe, many for the first time, to access EFF funding to invest in a more sustainable future. It is also helping to develop the skills necessary to fulfil the potential of individuals, who **without such targeted support would simply not have the knowledge or the motivation to access EU funding**. The results, amongst others, are new jobs, additional revenue and a new sense of independence and professionalism for many small-scale beneficiaries.

We see this, for example, in Galicia (Spain) where FLAGs have played a key role in supporting shellfish gatherers to take a more proactive role in the sale of their produce. In some areas, this has included basic IT courses, in others a full chain of activities from training, to support for promotional

activities, to capital investment in SMEs have been supported, helping shellfish gatherers build up skills and experience in professional activities beyond the primary sector. This in turn is having a knock-on effect by empowering them to branch into complementary activities that can generate additional income.

There are also examples in Finland, where the [Kainuu-Koillismaa FLAG](#) has supported a cooperation project between fishermen, aquaculture farms and processors to set up a jointly owned fish handling centre, where the local catch can be frozen, stored and processed. By organizing themselves and their production in this way, fishermen have become a reliable partner for distribution chains, securing direct contracts and gaining better control over pricing. The FLAG was instrumental in bringing together the different parties, supporting feasibility studies, and helping to secure the funding necessary to build the handling centre (EUR 2.7 million from local public funds and EFF Axis 2, plus private match funding). Fishermen involved have since reported an increase in sales of 20-30%. However, without the drive and experience of the FLAG, they would never have initiated such a complex project, despite its important contribution to the viability of their activity.



▲ Shellfish gatherers in the Costa da Morte area (Spain): the local FLAG has supported their efforts to take a more proactive role in the sale of their produce.

Small is beautiful... and flexible and innovative

FLAGs across Europe have, on average, a budget of around EUR 3 million for the 2007-2013 period. This is being used to support a series of small and medium sized projects, with an average cost of around EUR 60 000. The opportunity to focus on a range of small-scale projects often allows for the fisheries sector to participate in exciting pilot projects, which are often too risky to be trialled on a larger scale. This was the case for a project supported by the [Var FLAG](#) in France, which involved fishermen in developing and trialling pesca-tourism packages, an activity previously prevented by legislation that prohibited taking tourists on board fishing vessels. Intensive work by the project promoter, and additional pressure from other French FLAGs keen to open up pesca-tourism activities to fishermen in their territories, finally resulted in a change in legislation, which has allowed small-scale fishermen in France to diversify their revenue source.

Examples of innovative new products fostered by Axis 4 are emerging from the four corners of the EU. Crab stock and seaweed ice cream from Denmark, goose barnacle pâté from Spain, leather items from fish skin in Finland... Each of these projects has a story to tell, of additional revenue

generated for fishing communities, jobs created, or new markets captured as far afield as Japan and China. And more trials are underway, to develop uses for non-commercial species, such as bio-medicine from the swimming crab (Portugal), or to exploit by-products such as scallop shells, which are being used to produce lime for fertilising fields (France).

Joined-up thinking through integration

Promoting a more holistic view of development has become a priority at EU level. We see this in the introduction of the Partnership Agreements, for example, in which each Member State must lay out how they will coordinate the different EU funds to achieve the EU2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Two concepts are particularly important: balanced and sustainable development; and making public funds go further through coordination and synergies. This is the sort of development that FLAGs are set up to deliver. Their strategies are designed to ensure an integrated response to the main challenges faced by a given fisheries area and, as FLAGs make progress in selecting and supporting local projects, we can start to see how these projects form integrated packages of actions that convert strategies to results.

The [Costa da Morte FLAG](#) in Galicia, for example, has two main development priorities, starting with ensuring the economic viability of the fisheries sector, and followed by the need to generate new sources of income through diversification and the promotion of the area's fisheries and marine resources. In an area that is losing population, has a strong dependency on fishing, and where much of the small-scale fleet and shellfish activity struggles to make ends meet, one series of projects lend direct support to fishing organisations, shellfish associations and net-mending associations, while others aim to capitalize on the area's fishing heritage to attract new people and activities to the area and to create demand for the area's fisheries products. On a practical level, different stakeholder groups are mobilized to carry out actions that together form part of a broader objective.





▲ The opening of the *cofradia's* exhibition area in Caion (Spain).

This is the case in the village of Caion where the local fishing organisation (the "*Cofradia*") has received funding to open up a meeting and exhibition area in its headquarters and make its archives public. In 2012, 1500 visitors came to learn about the historic role the *cofradia* has played in the community, as part of an integrated coastal trail set up and promoted by Caion's town hall. The trail also includes the port and fish auction, as well as information points on local bird and marine species. The private sector was also mobilized to develop accommodation and a restaurant to complete the tourist offer, and both have seen high levels of occupancy. Nearby, cockle pickers saw direct sales triple in 2012 thanks to Axis 4 support, net-menders are receiving training and certification to protect their trade, fishing organisations are purchasing new equipment to improve traceability and product quality, and local fisheries processors have received support to open new product lines. In just over two years, 20 projects have been completed in the area, with a further nine approved for funding. The completed projects received a total investment of almost EUR 2.9 million, 45% of which has come from private match funding. Over 100 jobs have been maintained and 28 new jobs have been created, 16 of which are full-time.

A voice for fishing communities and a learning and exchange platform

Last but not least, the networking and cooperation that are built into the CLLD approach warrant a particular mention. These are proving effective in two key ways: firstly, by improving the **visibility and influence of the fisheries sector** through better organization; and secondly, by facilitating the flow of ideas to help **progress spread rapidly from one area to another**.

We see, for example, how Axis 4 in France helped to create a platform to put pressure on the national authorities to create a legal framework to facilitate pesca-tourism. We also see how this breakthrough in France has prompted new thinking in Spain, Germany, Greece... – to mention but a few. Indeed, exchanges between FLAGs through FARNET, the European Network of Fisheries Areas, have helped stakeholders across Europe believe that changes to restrictive legislation are possible, and are generating the drive to make these changes happen. After many years of being told that it is not possible, fishermen in Spain are now also trialling pesca-tourism, Greek legislation has been amended, and Germany is talking of change. FLAGs have been at the heart of this transformation across Europe.

We have also mentioned above how Axis 4 is bringing together different parts of the fisheries sector to improve organisation and cooperation. This is also spreading. Inspired by the organization of fisherwomen, shellfish gatherers and net-menders in Galicia, for example, FLAGs in Andalusia have also set up associations and entrepreneurship support initiatives for women in, and linked to, the fisheries sector. FLAGs from France have also noticed how the organisation of Galician goose barnacle pickers has led to a very competitive activity and have taken advantage of a visit to the [Ria de Vigo FLAG](#) to learn how to improve the organisation of their own shellfish operations.

Networking and exchange are also facilitating the transfer of specific project ideas. Solutions to problems found in one fisheries area are circulating, being adapted and redeployed all around Europe, be they new ways of organizing the shellfish activity, as in Galicia, connecting fishermen with markets (e.g. the German "fish from the boat" project, later taken up in Denmark), or the tanning of fish-skin for leather products, transferred from Sweden, to Finland and then to France. Axis 4 is delivering results, and these results are generating a valuable pool of experience that can help accelerate development in all fisheries areas.

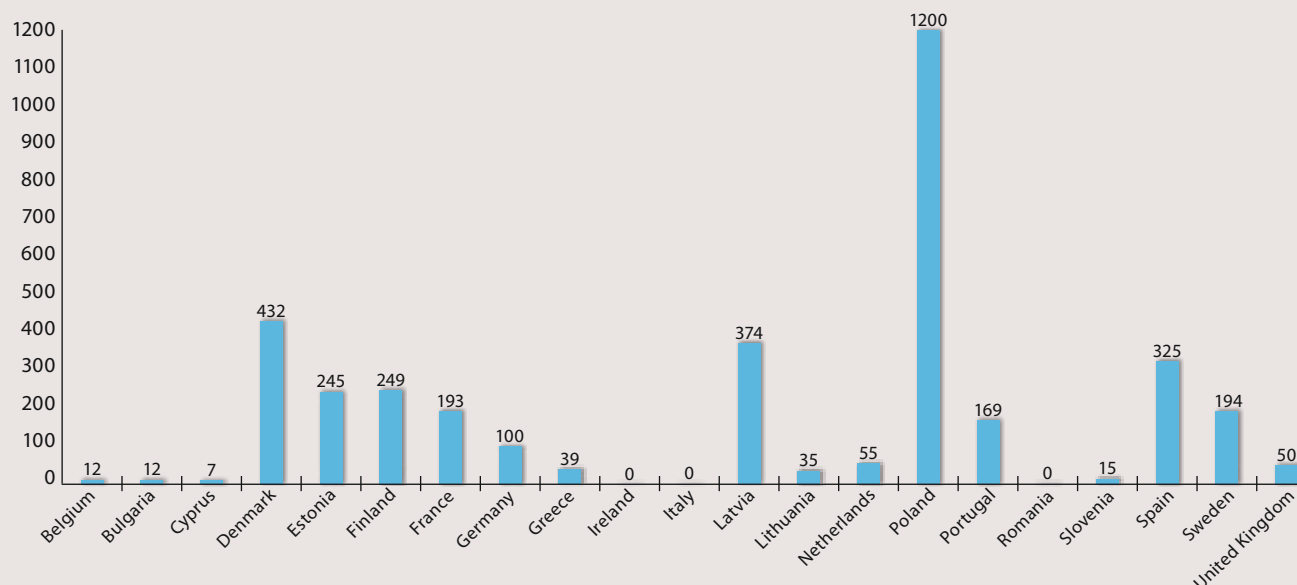
Investing in the future

When figures were collected in 2012 on FLAG projects approved in 12 countries, total project investments came to around EUR 150 million. This was double the amount of EFF Axis 4 money offered in grants and over 30% of this figure came from private investment levered at local level. EU wide figures do not yet exist to illustrate what the results of the first Axis 4 projects represent in economic terms but a glimpse into any one of the FLAGs around Europe reveals a story of progress, be it in terms of value secured for the fisheries sector, new jobs created, or improved services for fishing communities to compete in a globalized world. The challenge now is to gather available data that can help to communicate the results and impacts of Axis 4 projects so government departments can take informed decisions when allocating their EMFF budget to support CLLD in fisheries areas – and so that they can justify why such an investment is worth making. ■

FARNETwork

> **State of play: 3 706 projects and counting!**

By March 2013, the 303 FLAGs now active across 21 Member States had supported an estimated 3 706 projects.



> **FLAG cooperation in the Baltic Sea area**

Following an initial meeting at the FARNET conference in Olhão, Portugal, in June 2012, a group of FLAG representatives from the Baltic Sea area have launched a regional cooperation network, with an initial focus on environmental issues. The South Baltic FLAG from Sweden and the ESKO FLAG from Finland organised an international conference and inaugural meeting of the network in April 2013, in Helsinki.

www.southbalticflag.se/

FARNET Baltic Sea Network on LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3909551&trk=myg_ugrp_ovr

> **First EGTC for a cross-border international marine park**

The Bouches-de-Bonifacio international marine park, located between Corsica (France) and Sardinia (Italy), has recently adopted the form of a European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), marking the establishment of the first structure of this type for the implementation of EU environmental policies at cross-border level. The core task of the EGTC will be to encourage the emergence of joint solutions to management issues that are difficult to resolve at the level of each protected marine area. One such issue is tourist flows (excessive numbers, recreational sea fishing, the impact of pleasure boat anchors, etc.). In addition, the strengthening of international cooperation will provide greater capacity to deal with issues related to scientific knowledge, for example with respect to fisheries resources.

FARNET Agenda

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE
21-22 May 2013	European Maritime Day 2013	Valetta (M)
03-05 June 2013	FARNET.Lab: Marketing the Local Catch	Stockholm (S)
07-10 October 2013	OPEN DAYS – 11th European Week of Regions and Cities	Brussels (B)
November 2013	FARNET Seminar: "Connecting fisheries and the tourist economy"	To be confirmed

Profile

NAME: Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF)

OBJECTIVE: The EFF may co-finance local projects for sustainable development and improvement of the quality of life in fisheries areas, complementary to other EU financial instruments.

IMPLEMENTATION: Twenty-one Member States implement Axis 4. An important innovation in the implementation of this axis is the emphasis on the territorial approach.

TARGET AREAS: "Fisheries areas" are areas with a sea or lake shore or including ponds or a river estuary and with a significant level of employment in the fisheries sector. The Member States select the eligible areas according to the following criteria: they should be small local territories (less than NUTS 3) that are coherent from a geographical, economic and social point of view. Support should be targeted either to sparsely populated areas or those where the sector is in decline or those with small fisheries communities. Member States can add further criteria for the selection of the areas.

RECIPIENTS: "Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs)", i.e. a combination of public, private and civil society partners jointly devising a strategy and innovative measures for the sustainable development of a fisheries area. FLAGs are selected by the Member States on the basis of criteria defined in their operational programmes. More than 300 FLAGs have been created across the EU.

ELIGIBLE MEASURES: Strengthening the competitiveness of the fisheries areas; restructuring, redirecting and diversifying economic activities; adding value to fisheries products; small fisheries and tourism infrastructure and services; protecting the environment; restoring production damaged by disasters; inter-regional and trans-national cooperation of actors; capacity building to prepare local development strategies; and the running costs of FLAGs.

NETWORK: All the stakeholders concerned with Axis 4 are organised around a "European Fisheries Areas Network (FARNET)", permitting wide dissemination (through seminars, meetings and publications) of innovative projects implemented for the benefit of fisheries areas and fostering transnational cooperation. The network is coordinated by the "FARNET Support Unit".

DURATION OF THE PROGRAMME: seven years (2007-2013), but projects can be implemented until the end of 2015.

EUROPEAN UNION ASSISTANCE: Priority Axis 4 has a budget of EUR 570 million of EFF funding for the period 2007-2013, to which must be added national public co-funding and private investment. It represents approximately 13% of the overall EFF budget (2010).

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ISSN 1831-5720



9 771831 572004



Publications Office

