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COORDINATING WORKING PARTY ON FISHERY STATISTICS

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Report by Eurostat

DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROSTAT'S PROGRAMME OF FISHERY STATISTICS SINCE CWP-20

I: General situation and resources:

General situation. Since the CWP-20 session in January 2003 Eurostat has been through a very difficult period as a result of well-publicised accusations and investigations into financial and administrative irregularities. This has given rise to changes at the higher staff levels and wide-ranging reviews and audits of administrative procedures, the organisation of the office, working practices and the programme of work.

Reorganisation. The "Fisheries Statistics" section has been moved to Unit E3, now renamed "Sustainable Development, Fisheries, Rural Development and Forestry Statistics" and has a new Director (Mr Laurs Nørlund) and a new Head of Unit (Mr Peter Tavoularidis). However, despite the poor general working environment during the much of the intersessional period, the work of the "Fishery Statistics" section has continued and the output has been relatively unaffected.

Staff resources. The staff in Eurostat Unit E3 devoted to fishery statistics is 3 full-time officials. This is a reduction of one since CWP-20 due to the return to his national service of a Seconded National Official on the completion of a 2-year contract. Currently a trainee from Romania is in the middle of a 5-month period with Unit E3.

II: EU Membership.

New EU Member States. On 1 May 2004 European Union¹ obtained 10 new Member States: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

Candidate countries. Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey have been designated EU Candidate Countries and Eurostat is actively collaborating with these countries to collect the same fisheries data as are required from the 25 Member States.

Note: as with most other sectors of Eurostat's work, no additional staff resources have been allocated to fishery statistics to manage the increased workload resulting from the enlarged EU membership.

III: Dissemination policy.

Eurostat's online databases. Perhaps the most notable change in Eurostat's programme of work has been the adoption of a policy by which, as from 1 October 2004, free-of-charge access to Eurostat's data-bases has been made available to the general public by way of the Eurostat web-site (www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat). Consultations of the web-site have increased noticeably in recent months but, despite initial fears concerning an increased workload on the statistical production units, this has not resulted in any major increase in requests for additional information. In part this may be due to the use of the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) to provide metadata in a harmonised format to support the data-bases.

¹) The 15 EU Member States as of 30 April 2004 were: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Policy on hard-copy publications. Another change in policy has been the decision, on the grounds of cost and of reducing the editorial workload, to restrict the languages in most of the Eurostat's hard-copy publications to one (in the majority of cases, English). These "hard-copy" publications have been reduced in number (again in consideration of the costs) but have been made available for downloading free-of-charge in PDF format from the Eurostat website.

Pocketbook of fishery statistics. In 2004 the Eurostat Fisheries Yearbook was replaced by a reduced format Pocketbook of Fishery Statistics. The Pocketbook includes basically the same information as the earlier Yearbook, though with shorter time series. Short commentaries are included on each of the topics covered.

CD-ROM of NewCronos fisheries database. Since access to the NewCronos database on fishery statistics is now available free-of-charge on the Eurostat website the production of the CD-ROM of the NewCronos data has been discontinued.

Newsletter of fishery statistics. Eurostat's Unit E3 produces a twice-yearly Newsletter of Fishery Statistics for circulation as a PDF file to national statistical correspondents, members of the Working Group "Fishery Statistics" and officials in the DG FISH and other Community institutions. Requests are received and met from journalists and many other people interested in fisheries. This publication which involves about one man-day's work for each edition has proved to be popular: currently about 300 copies of each edition are distributed.

IV: Review of existing EU legislation on fishery statistics.

Background of the review. As part of the general review of the programme of work Eurostat has conducted an internal review of the current legislation on fishery statistics. The object was to consider the use made of the data and to consider the workload the request for submissions places on the national services. This draft review has been discussed with the appropriate units of the Directorate-General for Fisheries and will be presented to the Eurostat/ICES joint meeting of their respective working groups on fishery statistics on 2-3 May 2005. The results of this review are summarised below.

Review of catch statistics. The three Regulations on catch statistics (for the Northwest Atlantic, for the Northeast Atlantic and for regions other than those of the North Atlantic) are equivalent to various STATLANT questionnaires. As such they have been part of the national programmes of work for many years. The data are considered as basic data in the fisheries sector and are widely used within the European Commission, by the regional organisations and by range of other users. Thus the advice is to retain these three Regulations in their current form.

Review of landing statistics. The situation with regard to the Regulation on the submission of monthly data on the landings of fishery products in Member States is not so clear. The submission of the data imposes a considerable workload on the national services and discussions with the DG FISH have indicated that the data are of very limited value for day-to-day market management purposes. On the other hand, landing statistics are basic fisheries information which are widely used for, *inter alia*, economic analyses. It is proposed that the current legislation is replaced by a new act which better meets the needs of economic analyses and reduces the workload on the national authorities (by, for example, replacing monthly data by annual data). An outline of a proposal for the new legislation will be presented to the Eurostat/ICES joint meeting of their respective working groups on fishery statistics on 2-3 May 2005.

Review of aquaculture statistics. The Regulation on aquaculture statistics is equivalent to a part of the FISHSTAT AQ questionnaire, that part covering the volume of aquaculture production. The DG FISH has requested an extension of the coverage of the legislation to include, as in the FISHSTAT AQ questionnaire, data on the value of the production and data on the structure of the sector. The FISHSTAT AQ questionnaire has been submitted to FAO by the national authorities for about 20 years and thus is an established part of their programmes of work. Thus it is proposed that the current legislation be revised to include a requirement of data on the value of the production and on the structure of the sector. This revision should also take account of the changes to the FISHSTAT AQ questionnaire being introduced by FAO. An outline of a proposal for the revised legislation will be presented to the Eurostat/ICES joint meeting of their respective working groups on fishery statistics on 2-3 May 2005.

V: Catch statistics.

Changes in the format of the catch database. The format of the catch statistics database has changed little since the CWP-20 session. The only significant change has been the division of the data for the Northeast Atlantic into two: data for 1950-84 and data for 1985 onwards. This change was necessary because the size of a single data-base would have resulted in an unacceptably long response time when consulting the data on the Eurostat web-site.

NEAFC request for improved data on catches in international waters. Eurostat has been working with NEAFC and ICES to meet the NEAFC request for a finer area breakdown of the ICES divisions in international waters. This necessitates changes to the STATLANT 27A questionnaire and, in parallel, a modification to the Council Regulation no. 3880/91 on the submission of nominal catch statistics by vessels fishing in the NE Atlantic. The necessary changes to the legislation were accepted by the EU Member States in Eurostat's Working Group "Fishery Statistics" in May 2004 and then received a positive formal vote from the Member States in the Standing Committee for Agricultural Statistics in May 2004. However the final stage in the adoption of the revised regulation, the formal approval of the European Commission, has taken much longer than was foreseen. The documents have to be submitted to the Commission in all 20 official languages and the workload on the Commission's Translation Service, particularly for the new languages, has seriously delayed the translation of the documents (including the long and detailed description of the ICES divisions and sub-divisions). At the time of writing (mid-January) the texts of the revised Regulation are now available and the administrative procedure for the adoption of the Regulation may now start.

It is pleasing to report that due to the existence of the STATLANT system of questionnaires on catch statistics, Eurostat has had no problems in obtaining from the new Member States and the Candidate Countries all of the data required under the EU legislation on catch statistics and, indeed, has been able to establish long time series of such data on the NewCronos database.

Revisions to national submissions. Recently, coincidentally with the well-publicised release Pocketbook of Fishery Statistics, Eurostat has received a small number of complaints from national authorities that the Eurostat and other international databases contain data other than those submitted by the national authorities. Investigation has shown that the problem for Eurostat is the result of the automatic overwriting of the national submissions (considered by Eurostat as provisional data) by later data from FAO and regional organisations. This practice follows the CWP policy of considering the regional data to have been subjected to a quality control by the regional organisations and to be more reliable than the originally submitted data. While maintaining the policy, Eurostat is modifying its procedures so that, before the existing data are overwritten, the incoming data

are automatically compared with the existing data and discrepancies above a certain level are flagged.

Policy on revisions. There is no evidence to suggest that the revisions to the submitted data are not justified (indeed in most cases there is good evidence that they are justified) but it is important that these revisions are notified to the national authorities for their comments. It is hoped that the CWP will accept this policy and discuss the practicalities on its implementation. What is to be avoided is the situation of several years ago where there were considerable discrepancies between the various international databases. Such a situation gives rise to uncertainty among the users and adversely affects the credibility of the organisations involved.

NAFO and tuna catch statistics. At the NAFO Annual Meeting in September 2003 the Standing Committee for Research Coordination (STACREC) that tuna species should be deleted from the STATLANT 21A questionnaire because these species were excluded from NAFO Convention. This recommendation was accepted by the Scientific Council. This could give rise to problems for Eurostat because the minority of Member States using the STATLANT 21A questionnaire (in paper or electronic form) would not submit these data while they remain an obligation under the Council Regulation no. 2018/93. These data are used as provisional data for tuna species until such time as final data are received either directly or via FAO from ICCAT. Accordingly the EU Member States are being reminded of their obligation to report on tuna catches in the Northwest Atlantic.

VI. Landing statistics.

Derogation on sampling levels. The Italian authorities have requested a partial derogation from the provisions of the Council Regulation on the submission of data on the quantity and value of fishery products landed in Member States. This derogation would permit the Italians, whose fisheries are characterised by a large number of fishing vessels landing their catches in many ports or landing places often with a poorly developed market structure, to use sampling procedures beyond the limit currently foreseen in the legislation. The Working Group "Fishery Statistics" accepted the text of the proposed Commission Decision permitting this derogation and the proposal received a positive formal vote from the Member States in the Standing Committee for Agricultural Statistics in May 2004. However, as with the proposed modification for the revision of the legislation on catch statistics (see Section V above), the formal adoption of the Decision by the Commission has been much delayed by the absence of the text in all 20 official languages. These texts are now available (mid-January 2005) and the administrative procedure for the adoption of the Regulation may now start.

Respect of legislation by new Member States. There is no equivalent system to the STATLANT questionnaires on catch statistics for the submission of landing statistics. This and the absence, until recently, of market economies in many of the new Member States has given rise to these countries experiencing difficulties in implementing the provisions of the Regulation on landing statistics. However, the introduction of the administrative procedures to collect the required data (principally through landing declarations and sales notes) is under way and the submission of data is anticipated to be nearly complete by the end of 2005.

Proposal for a revision to the Regulation. In Section IV above it is proposed that there should be a revision to the current Council Regulation on landing statistics to reduce the workload on Member States and to provide data better adapted for economic analyses. No text yet exists for this proposed revised legislation and no discussions have been held with the Member States. However current thoughts are leading to a proposal which would permit a greater degree of sampling than permitted in the current legislation, would provide

for the landings to be available by the flag state of the vessel and would replace the current requirement for monthly data by one for annual data. An outline of the proposed revised legislation will be discussed at the Eurostat/ICES joint meeting of their respective working groups on fishery statistics on 2-3 May 2005.

VII: Fishing fleet statistics.

Access to the fishing fleet file. Eurostat maintains a Statistical Register of EU fishing vessels which is updated once annually with extracts from the DG FISH's administrative file of fishing vessels. Until recently the contents of the administrative file and the Statistical Register have been considered to be confidential. However Council Regulation no 26/2003 removes this confidentiality requirement from the administrative file with the exception of "personal data"²⁾. The administrative file is now available for consultation on the web-site of the DG FISH (http://europa.eu.int/comm/fisheries/fleet/index_en.htm). It follows that the confidentiality restriction is removed from Eurostat's Statistical Register and file together with the program to compile statistical tables from the individual records on the file may be freely disseminated.

Fleet records for the new Member Countries. The fishing fleet files for the new Member States are not yet available on the DG FISH's administrative file but it is anticipated that they will be by the end of 2005. As soon as they are, the records of these vessels will be added to Eurostat's Statistical Register.

VIII: Aquaculture

Aquaculture data from the new Member States. Since the current EU legislation on aquaculture production statistics is compatible with the FISHSTAT AQ questionnaire there has been no problem in obtaining the required aquaculture data, including historic time-series) from the new Member States and Candidate Countries.

Proposed new legislation on aquaculture statistics. Section IV of this document (Review of Current EU Legislation on Fishery Statistics) proposed a modification of the legislation to meet the DG FISH's requirements for data on the value of the production and on the structure of the sector. An outline of this revised legislation is being developed by Eurostat for discussion at the Eurostat/ICES joint meeting of their respective working groups on fishery statistics on 2-3 May 2005.

Capture-based aquaculture. Included in this new legislation will be a request for the Member States to differentiate for capture-based aquaculture (primarily concerning bluefin tuna in the Mediterranean) between the catch input to the cages and the aquaculture component.

Compatibility with the FISHSTAT AQ questionnaire. It is further noted that, following an FAO Technical Consultation on Aquaculture Statistics and a subsequent Working Group meeting reviewing the FISHSTAT AQ questionnaire, FAO intends to introduce a revised FISHSTAT AQ questionnaire. Eurostat is currently consulting with FAO to ensure that the proposal for revised EU legislation is compatible with the revised FISHSTAT AQ questionnaire. It will then be proposed to the Member States that once the new legislation has been adopted they will have no obligation to use the FISHSTAT AQ questionnaire for reporting the data to FAO: submission of a copy of the data sent to Eurostat would suffice.

²⁾ "Personal data" being defined as the names and addresses of the agents and owners of fishing vessels.

IX: Supply balance sheets for fishery products.

Importance of supply balance sheets. Data derived from supply balance sheets (namely, principally, per capita consumption and degree of self sufficiency) are among the most frequently requested from Eurostat. Currently this information is obtained from the balance sheets compiled by FAO.

Study on feasibility of establishing supply balance sheets. Eurostat contracted a consultant to investigate the feasibility of establishing supply balance sheets using data already available within Eurostat. A prime objective of this study was to avoid placing any additional demands for data on Member States. The report of this study was relatively positive as far as establishing total balance sheets and balance sheets for the major species (or species groups). However, the absence of reliable data on the production of processed fishery products would exclude the possibility of developing balance sheets for individual fishery products. While, for the most part, these balance sheets could be established using data already available to Eurostat, a few additional pieces of information would be required from Member States (for example, the proportion of the total catch being used for industrial purposes – production of meal and oil).

Implementation of the study report. An internal study is currently in progress to investigate the implementation of the contractor's report using, as far as possible, automatic processing techniques. FAO will be kept fully informed of the progress with this project.

X: Employment data

Development of trial questionnaire. With the increasing interest in the social impact of fisheries management policies Eurostat has been developing a questionnaire on employment in the fisheries sector in consultation with the Member States within the Working Group "Fishery Statistics". Following the poor results with an initial trial questionnaire Eurostat convened a Task Force of a limited number of Member States (plus participants from FAO and OECD) to review data availability and the parameters considered of value in subsequent analyses. The Task Force recommended that the questionnaire should request the numbers employed in the sector (fishing, aquaculture and processing) by sex, by age group, by region, by form of employment (part-time, full-time). A revised questionnaire is ready for transmission to the Member States and it is hoped that sufficient results will be available by early May 2005 for an assessment of the questionnaire and its contents to be made at the Working Group meeting.

X: Economic data

Implementation of regulation on economic data. The Council Regulation no. 1639/2001 requires the EU Member States to establish national databases containing *inter alia* economic data for predefined sectors of the fishing fleet. The basic regulation, while outlining the parameters to be collected, does not define these parameters. The Member States have held two Workshops to discuss the parameters and the concepts and definitions to be applied to them. Eurostat has participated in these workshops, one of the principal objectives of which was to ensure harmonisation of the data, in order to provide information on the harmonised concepts and definitions used in other sectors of Eurostat's programme of work. These Workshops and the Commission's Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries has studied the information already collected and advised on improvements to the legislation. The DG FISH has announced that there will be a proposal for revised legislation in the course of 2005.

Access to the national data. One feature of these national databases is that the Commission will have limited access to them. A request will have to be made and the data may only be retained for a limited period (20 days). The precise details of this procedure

have yet to be decided but it is anticipated that the Commission will be able to retain at least certain EU-wide aggregates of the economic data (see Section XIV below).

XI: Fishery indicators

Sustainability indicators. There are various initiatives to develop sustainability and structural indicators for fisheries. At the EU level the Directorates-General for Fisheries and for the Environment and the European Environmental Agency have proposals for sustainability indicators and have organised a number of meetings and working groups to review these proposals. Eurostat has participated in these meetings and will be following the developments in this work.

Structural indicator. One structural indicator for fisheries has been developed and may be consulted on Eurostat web-site (<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/>). This indicator, the proportion of the total catch which is taken by stocks considered to be outside of safe biological limits, is computed by the DG FISH using information from the ICES Advisory Committee for Fisheries Management.

XII: Eurostat/ICES Partnership Agreement.

Details of the Agreement. Eurostat and ICES have signed a Partnership Agreement under which Eurostat alone processes the data for the NE Atlantic submitted by EU and EEA countries under the terms of the EU legislation (which is equivalent to the STATLANT 27A questionnaire). The ICES Secretariat sends to Eurostat for processing the data submitted to it by its member countries not covered by the EU legislation (the Faroes, Iceland and the Russian Federation). Eurostat maintains the catch statistics database for the NE Atlantic and makes available as and when required these data, normally in the FISHSTAT Plus format. ICES, for its part, validates the data processed by Eurostat and will be undertaking projects of mutual interest (for example, computerising the data in ICES' archives for data prior to 1973, the earliest year for which data are currently available in the database).

Report on the first year's implementation of the Agreement. 2004 was the first year of implementation of this Partnership Agreement and, from Eurostat's point-of-view at least, has been a success. With the exception of one country which was late with its submission, the catch data for 2003 for the NE Atlantic were available in the database by mid-August 2004.

XIII: Working Group "Fishery Statistics"

2004 joint Eurostat/ICES meeting. In May 2004 Eurostat held a joint meeting in Luxembourg of its Working Group "Fishery Statistics" with the ICES Statistics Liaison Working Group. Representatives of 28 countries attended. The meeting treated topic of mutual Eurostat/ICES interest and of interest of one or other of ICES and Eurostat. Of specific interest to Eurostat were reports of the study on supply balance sheets for fisheries (see section IX above) and draft legislation on catch statistics (see section V above) and landing statistics (see section VI above).

2005 joint Eurostat/ICES meeting. A similar joint Eurostat/ICES meeting is planned for 2-3 May 2005 in Luxembourg where, although the agenda has still to be fixed, the main Eurostat topics are likely to be the implementation of the report on supply balance sheets for fishery products, the draft legislation on landing statistics and the draft legislation on catch statistics.

XIV: FIRMS-FIGIS Partnership Arrangement.

Eurostat's progress to membership. At the time of writing (January 2005) the FIRMS-FIGIS Arrangement has yet to be signed by Eurostat. Certain legal problems have been overcome (e.g. with whom should FAO sign the arrangement (Eurostat, the European Commission or the European Community). There have also been delays due to the administrative procedures to be followed (e.g. consultation of other concerned Directorate-Generals) and the installation of the new Commission. However it is hoped that the latest (and last?) delay over the precise form of the presentation of the Arrangement for the formal approval by the Commission will be overcome in time for Eurostat to become a full member of the FIRMS-FIGIS arrangement before the February 2005 meeting of the Steering Committee.

Data to be submitted. Due to the delays in signing the arrangement Eurostat has not given a great deal of attention to its contributions to FIRMS-FIGIS. However the initial ideas centre around EU wide indicators derived from the Regulation no. 1639/2001 regarding the submission, *inter alia*, of economic data for segments of the national fishing fleets and around sustainability and structural indicators derived by the Directorates-General for Fisheries and for the Environment and by the European Environmental Agency.

XV: FISHSTAT Plus

Current situation. The FISHSTAT Plus software version 2.3 is widely used by Eurostat internally and externally (for example, for the transmission of data to and from ICES under the Eurostat/ICES Partnership Agreement). Eurostat has updated the CWP FISHSTAT Plus integrated catch statistics for the Atlantic and also provided a service to NAFO and CCAMLR in supplying their catch statistics in FISHSTAT Plus format. Its own catch statistics have been made available in FISHSTAT Plus format.

Future developments. Despite some problems of installing FISHSTAT Plus version 2.3 under all configurations of Windows XP and the fact that a lack of documentation makes difficult the development of minor changes (for example the introduction of EU-25 aggregates taking account of the extended membership of the European Union), generally the software meets Eurostat's requirements for disseminating and consulting catch and aquaculture statistics. While FAO may consider developing a version 3 of the software using 32-bit technology, it is hoped that, in line with the recommendation of CWP-20 FAO will maintain version 2.3 until such time as version 3 has been well and truly tested.

XVI: CWP Newsletter.

Maintaining the Newsletter. Eurostat has maintained the CWP Newsletter on the website <http://cwp.cross.lu> (which may be accessed from a link on the FAO website at http://www.fao.org/fi/body/rfb/cwp/cwp_home.htm). The Newsletter has been updated as soon as Eurostat's attention has been drawn to suitable material. However, the CWP member organisations are requested to assist in this process.

XVII: Species database

Establishing of the database. Based on the ASFIS species file and the Multilingual Illustrated Dictionary of Aquatic Animals and Plants, Eurostat has been developing a database containing all the species mentioned in EU fisheries legislation in all of the EU official languages. The purpose of the database which will be made available to all those interested is to promote the use of harmonised names in official documents and to facilitate the development of legislation containing species names in all language versions.

Further developments. Currently the database contains the species with, as far as they are, available, the names in all 11 of the official languages on the EU-15 Member States, the scientific names and the 3-alpha identifier. As resources permit the gaps in the database will be filled as will the addition of the 9 languages of the new Member States. The database will be made available in the Oracle format.