



## Dear Readers,

Sustainable fishing – at sea and in inland waters – is a cornerstone of German fisheries policy. The idea of “sustainability” originated in the forestry industry, where the principle was and still is: if you want to look after a forest, you have to ensure that the amount of timber that is cut is less than the amount that grows. The same applies to fishing: we can only utilise fish within the limits of their ability to regenerate. They are a source of food for us humans and at the same time indispensable elements in the ecosystems of our waters. In addition to this, only secured fish stocks with a sufficient regeneration capacity form a long-term basis for value generation and jobs.

For this reason, the Federal Government strongly advocates that the principles of sustainability in fishing be applied more strictly than they have been up to now, both domestically and at international level. Europe already has science-based multi-annual recovery and management plans for many fish stocks. In addition to this, the resolutions on a radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy adopted in late 2013 provide that by the year 2020 all stocks (and by 2015 as many stocks as possible) be managed in line with the principle of maximum sustainable yield. This management principle was agreed upon by the international community at the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002 in Johannesburg. To ensure compliance with



the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy, fisheries activities are monitored and controlled with state-of-the-art control technologies such as satellite-based vessel monitoring, electronic logbooks and traceability systems. Consistent action is being taken to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. We in Europe have set out on this course and others should follow us.

Implementing the concept of sustainability is no easy objective. This is a big challenge for our fishermen; it has led to temporary restrictions in the past and, in some cases, continues to do so. But the outcome of this strict sustainability policy is more than satisfactory. In 2007, 94% of all fish stocks in the North East Atlantic were reported as being overexploited, as compared to fewer than 40% now. This shows that sustainable fisheries are the best way of protecting ocean fish stocks as an important food source for humans and a basis for the existence of fishermen while maintaining biological diversity in our waters for the present and coming generations.

**Christian Schmidt**  
Member of the German Bundestag  
Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture

## Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

An agreement regarding the comprehensive reform of the Common Fisheries Policy was reached in 2013. The basic principle of the reformed European fisheries policy is to ensure that all fishing activities are environmentally sustainable. Accordingly, fisheries management must aim at restoring fish stocks to maximum sustainable yield. This maximum sustainable yield should be reached step by step for all stocks by 2015, or 2020 at the latest. The gradual introduction of a general ban on discards by 2019 will also serve the target of sustainable fisheries. This includes all catches of species subject to fishery regulations having to be landed even if they are unwanted and of no commercial value to the fisherman. This market-oriented approach should encourage fishermen, who have to generate an economic return, to optimise the selectivity of their fishing gear to avoid unwanted by-catches, particularly of juvenile fish. At the same time, the reform provides for regionalised management of resources in order to take better account of the different conditions in the respective marine regions by way of enhanced cooperation between the coastal states concerned.

## Developing multi-annual plans

The scientifically based multi-annual plans for the different fisheries form the backbone of the new Common Fisheries Policy. Under EU fisheries policy, Germany supports the further development of multi-annual recovery and management plans and the expansion of these plans to include as many commercially utilised fish stocks as possible. To this end, the fisheries research carried out on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) constitutes decisive preparatory work. In addition, the Federal Government plays an active role in developing rules to avoid unwanted by-catch.

The Federal Government also supports efforts aimed at the sustainable management of fish stocks and the maintenance of biodiversity on an international level. This applies in particular to measures taken within regional fisheries organisations and to EU fisheries partnership agreements with third countries. Above all through agreements with African developing countries, the Federal Government is committed to promoting measures to develop local administrative fisheries departments and the fishing industry. Germany also promotes the deve-

lopment of capacities in the areas of fisheries management and monitoring through bilateral development co-operation projects.



## Fighting illegal fishing

Political efforts to promote sustainable fishing in the oceans are often undermined by illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU fishing). Catches from IUU fishing are estimated to be worth up to EUR 10 billion. This has a highly destructive effect on legal fisheries and on marine biodiversity.

Germany actively supports the EU in playing a leading role in the global fight against illegal fishing. Since 2010, the measures applied have included stricter controls, complete traceability of fishery products from third countries and severe penalties for non-compliance. In this way, the EU wants to keep IUU fishing and its products out of European waters, ports and the European internal market. Developing countries are also provided with support in protecting themselves against illegal fishing.

## Sustainable inland fisheries

One of the Federal Government's key priorities is to promote sustainable fisheries in Germany's rivers and lakes. It aims, in co-operation with the federal states (Länder) responsible for inland fisheries, to help improve protection of migrating species of fish (such as eel, salmon and sturgeon) at European level through research projects and restocking measures. To this end, the ministry supports the expansion of fish passes, co-operation between the Länder themselves, and cooperation between the Länder on the one hand and other riparian states and power plant operators on the other.

## Consumer responsibility – quality labels for fishery products



Against the background of overfished oceans, consumers in Germany are increasingly asking about the origin of fish, the production technologies used and the management of fish stocks. A range of informative material is available on the

subject of sustainable fisheries. Consumers can, for example, find out about trade names, catch methods and origins of fish on the websites of manufacturers of fish products or on the packaging of fish and fish products. To back this up, certification and quality seal initiatives, such as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), assess the sustainability of fisheries on the basis of various principles and criteria. They promote fish with a certified origin and check the traceability systems of companies that use fish from certified catching businesses. Consumers are also informed about the issue of overfishing. In this way, critical inquiries by consumers have brought about a change in the purchasing behaviour of important global buyers of fish and seafood who are now demanding more and more fish from certified fisheries. The progress and positive figures recorded here, however, should not attempt to hide the fact that a lot of fisheries worldwide still do not participate in this or similar programmes.

For this reason, the BMEL is advocating that minimum standards for sustainability labels for fishery and aquaculture products be established on a European level. More emphasis could be given to the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy in this way.



## The German fishing fleet

With its fishing fleet, the German fisheries sector catches an average of roughly 210,000 tonnes of fish and seafood every year, which are worth some EUR 179 million. The degree of self-sufficiency in respect of fishery products is approx. 19%. EU fisheries policy, fisheries agreements with third countries and national environmental policy all impose major constraints in order to secure fisheries resources. In recent decades, our fishing fleet has had to go through considerable adjustment processes due to the loss of traditional fishing grounds and the ongoing decline of several important fish stocks. Together with the EU, the BMEL has supported this adjustment process and mitigated the social repercussions of the structural change.



## Fisheries as an important economic factor of coastal regions

Jobs connected to the fishing sector – whether directly or indirectly – continue to form the backbone of many regions along Germany's North Sea and Baltic coast. Traditionally, the fisheries sector is an integral part of the local economy and way of life. The situation is similar in respect of inland fisheries in rural areas. In both cases, the fisheries sector promotes the attractiveness of the respective area as a tourist destination.

## Imprint

### Published by

Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL)  
11055 Berlin

### As of

May 2014

### Layout

design.ideo, büro\_für\_gestaltung, Erfurt

### Photos

BMEL/ Walkscreen; Bundesregierung/Kugler;  
Patrick Poujet + LianeM/Fotolia.com

### Printed by

BMEL

### Ordering information

You can order this and other publications free of charge:

Internet: [www.bmel.de/publications](http://www.bmel.de/publications)

E-mail: [publikationen@bundesregierung.de](mailto:publikationen@bundesregierung.de)

Fax: +49 (0)1805-77 80 94

Tel.: +49 (0)1805-77 80 90

By mail: Publikationsversand der Bundesregierung  
Postfach 48 10 09 | 18132 Rostock

This flyer is published free of charge as part of the public relations activities of the BMEL. It may not be used by political parties or groups for electioneering purposes.

For further information please go to  
[www.bmel.de](http://www.bmel.de)



Federal Ministry  
of Food  
and Agriculture

## Fisheries policy of the German Government and the EU

For sustainable fisheries

