

5 June 2008

Sustainable fishing

Social contract North-Sea demersal fisheries

Introduction

- The wish to reach a social contract results from advice from the Task Force Sustainable North-Sea fisheries (“Fishing in heavy weather”).
- The Task Force’s advice is mainly focused on the Dutch demersal industry, which is facing the combined difficulties of increasing fuel prices, reduced fishing quota, and lagging prices.
- The report from the Task Force suggests a social contract as one of the proposed action points alongside setting up a Fishery Innovation Platform.¹
- These action points must be realised in order to enable the demersal fleet to move towards a sustainable and responsible industry that will safeguard fishing for the future.
- At the end of 2007, during the Regal Management Consultation between the industry, NGOs, the government, and research, it was agreed to explore the possibility of a social contract.
- To begin with, this was done by the industry and the NGOs, but the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality was invited to join early 2008.
- In the end this led to specific explorations of five themes of which the participants believe that co-operation will lead to added value.

Objective

- The ultimate objective of the social contract is to achieve a sustainable and socially accepted North-Sea demersal fishery.
- However, the first step towards this objective is to make a number of relevant, jointly co-ordinated efforts to encourage the development towards such a sustainable and socially accepted fishery. These efforts are set out in this social contract.²

Operational philosophy

¹ This Fishery Innovation Platform, comprising members from the fishery sector, science, social organisations, the government, and other groups, has been in existence since the end of 2006.

² The efforts that are described are strictly speaking ‘means’ that contribute to realising the ultimate objective. However, wishing to move forward together and seeking synergies is more than just a tool.

- We have not opted for an approach in which all parties agree on all matters; instead we have chosen to specify five ‘promising themes’.
- By opting for co-operation on these themes we expect to make a real contribution to the planned transition towards a sustainable and socially accepted North-Sea fishery, assuming that each party will play its part in the approach.
- This is without prejudice to the fact that each party will continue to work on these five themes from the perspective of its own responsibility. However, this does not have to impede effective co-operation in relation to these five and any other relevant themes.
- More specifically, if each party contributes from its own perspective, synergies can be realised that would not be possible in an ‘every man for himself’ approach.
- Co-operation on a number of relevant themes can influence topics on which no agreements have been reached as yet.
- We expect each party to do its utmost to comply with the agreements that were reached, but we will not expect the impossible.

Chosen themes

- The following 5 themes have been designated ‘promising’:
 1. Supply of sustainable fish (including certification)
 2. Communication (including the NGO’s)
 3. Education and training
 4. The approach of North Sea Marine Protected Areas
 5. Stock management
- The degree of detail differs from theme to theme.

Setup of the social contract

- The social contract consists of two parts:
 - These introductory notes
 - The outlined ambitions and agreements

The parties have prepared a background dossier for each theme, and these background dossiers are included in a working document that forms part of this social contract. The background files are, however, not included in this English translation.

Ambitions and agreements

- For each theme agreements have been reached on the joint ambition and each party’s contribution.
- The details for the themes have been added as an appendix, and they provide notes on and characteristics of the agreements.
- The ambitions can be seen as guiding objectives.
- We have attempted to formulate the agreements in such a manner that they are at least ‘administratively accountable’.

- The fact that joint agreements have been reached is of great relevance in itself. However, the success of the contract will be measured by specific results that are realised; see also the paragraph on monitoring progress.
- Practice will have to demonstrate how much we are able to achieve in a number of elements. For example, theme 4 also has a European dimension. This is without prejudice to the fact that the parties make maximum efforts in relation to the agreements they reached in this contract.

Participating parties

- The agreements have been reached between the demersal industry, represented by the Producers' Organisations; the Dutch Fish Product Board; WWF; the North Sea Foundation; and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality.

Possibilities for Expansion

- The contract can be expanded, also towards other parties, as long as this clearly presents added value, in terms of additional synergies, in the opinion of the signatories.

Financing

- This contract strives towards a transition of the demersal industry and this obviously will cost money. Apart from the own responsibilities of the industry, the transition is supported in two ways.
- First of all, the industry and the NGOs will jointly dedicate themselves to increase the 'pulling power' of the market for sustainably caught fish (creating added value).
- Secondly, the government will endeavour to provide adequate support for the transition within the framework of the European Fisheries Fund, which means using the available means and tools that offer the best possible complement to the approach proposed in this covenant.

Monitoring Progress

- Monitoring the progress made will take place jointly.
- The existing Regular Management Consultation will play a role within this as a form of target-group meeting.
- At least once a year there shall be a meeting on the progress, chaired by the Minister for Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality.

Working together on 'sustainable fishing'

- The approach in this social contract contributes to biodiversity objectives and to sustainable fisheries.

- The essence of the approach is that the parties each take responsibility for and co-operate on 'sustainable fishing'. This is in accordance with the advice from the Task Force Sustainable North-Sea Fisheries.
- The parties attach value to the joint approach that has now been expressed. For the parties, this means specifically that:
 - Each party is fully aware of the added value in co-operating on the themes mentioned in this contract;
 - Each party is actively committed to realising this joint approach;
 - Each party is dedicated to obtaining commitment for this approach amongst its own constituency;
 - Each party will defend this social contract in public.

Signed on 5 June 2008 in The Hague by:

The Minister for Agriculture, Nature, and Food Quality
G. Verburg

Chairman CPO Oost UA
A. van Urk

Chairman CPO Wieringen UA
J. Grin

Chairman CPO Dutch Fishermen's Association UA
J.K. Nooitgedagt

Chairman CPO Texel UA
B. Daalder

Chairman CPO West UA
R.L.M. Laning

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J. van de Gronden

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