Towards sustainable European fisheries

An EU research project worked to develop the evidence base and operational framework needed to make Europe's new ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management work.

Reform of the European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in 2002 highlighted the need to move towards ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) for sustainability. To achieve this, Fisheries Ecosystem Plans (FEPs) were developed, but they need more work before they can be implemented.

Building on earlier initiatives, the EU-funded 'Making the European fisheries ecosystem operational' (MEFEPO) project developed an operational framework for EBFM. Specifically, the consortium integrated Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) objectives within the reformed CFP in three regional bodies of water.

MEFEPO sought to demonstrate how EBFM can be made operational in practice by...
MEFEPO sought to demonstrate how EBFM can be made operational in practice by developing a framework with two aspects. The first was an institutional structure that best suits this new style of management, and the second was a decision-support tool for EBFM.

The institutional structure supports greater stakeholder involvement in fisheries management, while decentralised management promotes collaboration among Member States, Regional Advisory Councils and scientists. The decision support management tool simultaneously takes into account the three pillars of sustainability: the ecological, social and economic implications of management options.

The tool was used in selected fisheries in each region to evaluate the performance of different management strategies and the trade-off associated with each strategy.

Finally, MEFEPO produced regional atlases that incorporate ecological and socioeconomic data from several technical reports. These will help by providing definitive and accessible information on the state of the marine environment and the fisheries in question.

MEFEPO has furthered the transition to EBFM in Europe and enhanced collaboration among researchers, managers and policymakers. FEPs developed for the three regions should continue to provide important feedback on successes and challenges in the quest for sustainable fisheries management.

Keywords

Fisheries, Common Fisheries Policy, ecosystem-based fisheries management, Fisheries Ecosystem Plans

Project Information

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