

•••industry in Kilkeel has raised almost £25,000.00 to help Tsunami victims and it has been good to be able to contact ladies we met at Santiago de Compostela, who live in the affected areas and to get « on the ground » reports. Also Cornelie, of Vinvis, has worked with the fishing industry in Sri Lanka and is currently in Sri Lanka, organising the aid which is being sent from Vinvis and she has kindly agreed to discuss with them where our money could best be used. All this is possible because of AKTEA bringing together women involved in fisheries from many countries.

We have also continued meeting with Mna na Mara, the organisation for fishermen's wives in the Republic of Ireland. We regularly attend their meetings held in Dublin, and have been able to host a joint meeting in Kilkeel.

Over the winter months the BBC have been filming at the harbour in Kilkeel, and have followed the fishermen to sea. During the time they were filming we sadly had a boat lost, with one of the crew found dead. It also tells of the decline in the industry because of quotas and the rising costs of oil. This has all been put together and is to be shown in three weekly programmes of 45 minutes each. The series is called « *Rising Tide* » and it is planned that all three programmes will be available on DVD. We trust that this will make people more aware of the dangers faced by our fishermen as they brave the elements to bring home the Harvest of the Sea ♦

Trish Slater

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History of Mná na Mara

Following on from informal support structures for women in fishing communities, which have existed in various forms since the 1960's, in 2002 Mná na Mara formed as a national group in Ireland to formulate their response for their submission to the Irish government's National Plan for Women. In 2003 it was decided to develop the Federation of Mná na Mara, with the following objectives and aspirations:

- To further the development of coastal communities of Ireland dependant on maritime related activities.
- To lobby for improvements in infrastructure and facilities for the benefit of coastal communities
- To seek representation for Mná Na Mara at meetings with government / statutory bodies for the benefit of coastal communities
- To promote appropriate education and training resources for members of Mná Na Mara and local coastal communities
- To actively promote a maritime safety culture
- To conserve the heritage, history and traditions of coastal communities for future generations ♦

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UK & Ireland

With a little help, a cross-border fishermen's network is established

Women, as individuals and as organised group, have long played an active and vital role in UK and Irish fishing communities. Despite this, due to the geographical scale of the British Isles and neighbouring Ireland, and the diversity of fisheries interests across that scale, communication across community borders was limited until only recently.

In the end, it was an outside influence - the FEMMES Network - that precipitated the first meeting of a small group of women from a variety of sectors and regions to discuss the possibility of a UK/Eire-wide organisation of women in fisheries. This meeting was a success and the UK and Eire Women in Fisheries Network has now been in operation since Dec. 2003.

At its inception the Network had only ten members. But, after just eighteen months, we now have more than thirty members. Our diverse membership includes fishermen's wives and their organisations - e.g. Fishing SOS Shetland, the Kilkeel Fishermen's Wives Support Group, Mná na Mara and Moray Makes Waves; aquaculturists; fisheries journalists; local councillors and fisheries development workers; processors; entrepreneurs; members of the Fishermen's Mission; and researchers interested in fisheries issues. It also includes women from across the UK and Eire - from the Scilly Isles to Shetland and from Newcastle to Castletownbere.

The Network has helped to foster strong regional links between women's organisations: for example, between the women of Shetland and Northeast Scotland; and between the women of Northern and Southern Ireland. The Network's growing and diverse membership suggests that it has the potential for women from quite different sectors to learn from each other and to work with each other. Additionally, through participating and attending a variety of meetings and conferences, many of our members have now developed links with women from other European countries - such as through the North Sea Women's Network; from the developing world; and from other nations with commercial fisheries.

During the last eighteen months the UK and Eire Network membership have shared their successes and difficulties. We hope that this Network will continue to grow and provide a supportive role to women ♦

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AKTEA: nereid of Greek mythology symbolising the shore.



AKTEA

Women in fisheries and aquaculture in Europe

A DYNAMIC TO BE FOLLOWED

THE FEMMES programme ends in September 2005 and this is the last edition of AKTEA. Programme activities have mobilised numerous women across Europe and have helped create a dynamic exchange between women in fisheries and aquaculture. Links of solidarity are being tied. New women's networks or associations are seeing the light. Field trips are being organised in different European countries. Experiences exchanged in programme workshops result in ideas for new activities. We can even see women entering fishermen organisations, access to which was generally barred to them before.

In addition, researchers contributed to promoting women's interests during the scientific conferences. They have now set up solid links and joint-projects on women-related themes. The two agendas produced by the programme, one addressing women's claims and the other addressing their needs in terms of research,



Shellfish culture and aquaculture have a place of honour in this edition.

will help continue the dynamic launched throughout these last two and a half years. In order to carry through their work, researchers require women to answer the questionnaire they were sent several months ago.

The popularisation of public policies concerning the fisheries and aquaculture sectors is another activity undertaken within the scope of the programme. It is not sufficiently well known and several memos will soon be placed on the FEMMES programme's homepage, initially in French and later in other languages according to demand.

The women who work in fish or shellfish farming have always accompanied the programme. They are all represented in this AKTEA issue. Experiences recounted from different parts of Europe show that there is still a lot to do to enhance their professional recognition and their access to the decision making bodies. The women from Ireland and the United Kingdom also have a place of honour in this edition: we should congratulate them for the work they have done and for spreading the word ♦

Katia Frangouides

The FEMMES Network

France : CEDEM-Univ. de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest - Association Femmes entre terre et mer, Southern Brittany Spain : Univ. de La Laguna-Las Canarias - Cofradía de Pescadores de Cambados, Galicia - Portugal : Univ. de Madeira- Madere -Mutua dos Pescadores, Lisbon - Finland : Osterbottens Fiskarförbund r.f., Vaasa

Project identification :

Finance: Contract no. Q5TN-2002-01560 - CEC, DG Fisheries - 5th FPRD, "Quality of life and management of living resources" programme - Project Coordinator: Katia Frangouides, UBO-CEDEM, France.

Edition

Centre for the Law and Economics of the Sea - CEDEM - Publication Director: Katia Frangouides - Coordination: Sarah Mongruel - ISSN 1765-8527 - Printed by: Bureau 2000, Plougastel - English edition printed in 1000 copies - Participation in this issue : Pascal Raux, Nicolas Roncin, Severine Julien. Contact : reseau@fishwomen.org

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Web site: <http://www.fishwomen.org>



Oysters detaching.

Some women share their experiences and ideas in order to put aside the « *every man for himself* » attitude which prevails in shellfish culture.

The Thau basin has 600 shellfish farms, essentially of small family enterprises where the husband and wife work together. 70 women are owners of an enterprise, generally the « *daughters of* » who have learnt the work from their fathers and have inherited the business. In addition to these women, the number of women shellfish farmers, who work in the shadow of their husbands, is unknown. Only a dozen have registered to ENIM (Social coverage for navy invalids) or the MSA (agricultural mutual benefits funds) as « *collaborative spouses* » (literally co-workers- spouses).

Sharing of tasks is strict : man on the water for the physical work, woman on land to clean the shells, for sales and administration. Women can also participate on the water in operations which must be done by two. Man also does his bit in the marketing of the shellfish. He is the one who collects the spat and who is in touch with other shellfish farmers and she's the one who goes to the bank.

A local association of women shellfish farmers was established in 2003 by a small group of six women: Annie Rouquette, collaborative spouse, is among them. « *I worked in my husband's shadow for 25 years and that didn't bother me at all. Only in 1999, when there was salmonella in the lagoon and we couldn't sell our shellfish for six weeks, some of us set up an environmental committee as we were concerned about the quality of the water. We discussed our problems together. Some of the men said we should come to the meetings. We were infor-*

med, we wanted to understand everything! We were thought to be both revolutionary and naïve at the same time. »

Their programme included three items: environment, communication and women's status. The association has about twenty members and never really managed to mobilise the women. Those who have worked for a long time in shellfish culture do not want to upset the family balance. They think they have not got a say in the matter. And if by chance they gather any information on production, for example, they never really have much chance of getting their husbands to look at it. In farms owned by the younger couples, the women often work in another sector, even if it means hiring someone to come and assist the owner. That helps to secure the income of the whole family. Attitudes are changing and to work as a couple is no longer the norm. Finally, the number of women ready to stand up and launch ahead into the battle of professional recognition is very low.

The status of « *collaborative spouse* » provides social coverage with the right to a retirement pension, but it mainly is the starting point for professional recognition. As Annie Castaldo, a farmer owner, says, « *women are subjected to choices made by others. Even women farmer owners do not come to the meetings of professional organisations. It is always a man who represents the company* ». Annie and another woman have recently been elected to the Mediterranean regional shellfish farmers' organisation. One is the ●●●

●●● Of particular importance to the group is the seat it has been awarded on both the North Sea Regional Advisory Council (RAC) and the Pelagic RAC, where such issues can be discussed with decision makers.

An executive committee with two representatives from each country is being formed to develop the fledgling network. Membership is open to all women in the North Sea States with an interest in helping their fishing community, seeking improved living and working conditions, and developing new training and business opportunities. Links will also be forged with existing women's networks, and it is envisaged that the NSWN will facilitate a wide exchange of views and experience between communities.

In order to speak effectively on behalf of North Sea communities, the NSWN first intends to carry out a wide-ranging socio-economic study that will gather data at the grass roots level in fishing-dependent communities. The socio-economic importance of the industry in fishing communities is often under estimated and overlooked when management decisions are made. It will also look locally at guidance and trai-

ning opportunities, career development for young people, and employment and business opportunities, with the aim of encouraging the retention and return of young people to fishing communities.

As coordinator of the NSWS I attended the first official NSRAC meeting in Boulogne in February, where I was joined by VinVis member Annemiek Bais, who attended as an observer. She made an impassioned speech during the « *open floor* » session, asking the RAC Executive Committee and the European Commission to remember that they are making decisions that affect lives and livelihoods, which received a well deserved round of applause. The Commission has stated that it is willing to listen to advice from the RACs, and it is thus important to ensure that they become a useful tool and offer sound, workable advice.

I would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to join our mailing list, get involved in the work of the NWSN, or link their own network to ours. We can all learn so much from each other ♦

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Northern Ireland

Solidarity

Northern Ireland fisherwomen claim nothing for themselves and everything for those around her: for their husbands, for the victims of maritime accidents, and for the victims of natural disasters.

Over the past few months the Fishermen's Wives Support Group had held their monthly meetings in Kilkeel, where we have had a variety of speakers. One speaker regularly travels to Romania bringing along aid, and returns with Romanian glass and leather gloves, which he sells to help the people he reaches out to in Romania. A great idea and it gave us the opportunity to buy some beautiful painted glassware whilst helping people less fortunate than ourselves.

In November we had our annual weekend getaway. This year 40 of us went to London, and the weekend was spent sightseeing, shopping and enjoying the many wonderful restaurants and shows that London offers. But the highlight had to be a visit to the Mansion House, the home of the Lord Mayor of London. This year's Lord Mayor, Michael Savory, is on the Council of the Fishermen's Mission and it was he who organised the visit. It was a great weekend, and now we are looking forward to our next trip, in November 2005, when we are planning a weekend in Prague.

Another highlight of recent months was attending the FEMMES workshop and AKTEA International



Visiting Mansion House in London.

Conference in Santiago de Compostela. Lou Henning and Trish Slater represented Northern Ireland, and found these conferences challenging and thought provoking. As a result they are hoping to establish the « *Women in Fisheries Group* » in Northern Ireland. It was also good to meet other women involved in fisheries both from Europe and from around the world. This has proved of particular benefit with regard to helping the victims of the Tsunami. The fishing ●●●

Poitou-Charente

The enhanced region

The regional council is launching a study to better understand the needs of women in the fisheries and the shellfish farming.

Poitou-Charente region was engaged in promoting the role and the place of women of the maritime world. In response to the request made by women's associations, it was decided to conduct a study in collaboration with the regional fisheries and shellfish farmer's organisations. The purpose of this study is to better understand women difficulties and to find the means to overcome them. This mission has already allowed for different types of problems to be aired, thanks to a questionnaire addressed to women in 1,500 enterprises in Poitou-Charente and through different meetings and interviews.

First of all in terms of professional inequality, recent statistics have shown that in the region, even if the number of women owners of shellfish farms is on the up (total of 125) and if the « *collaborative spouse* » nowadays reach a total of 136 (in fisheries and shellfish farming), there are still many women with no status at all, for a number of reasons: enterprise feasibility, cultural traditions, lack of information. There are very few women represented in professional organisations. Work must be conducted with the women to ensure greater individual autonomy, a better balance of the sexes and an inclusion of their specific issues in professional associations.

As far as employment is concerned, a certain number of wives of fishermen today work elsewhere, sometimes in casual or seasonal work. Shellfish farming has a great number of wage earners, sometimes with contracts of undetermined duration (whether spouses of owners or not) but mainly seasonal workers: the number of contracts of definite duration, over 80% for women, varies in effect from 455 to 2,909 at the end of the year. A small percentage of these women work 6 to 7 months a year (from September to March) but most have only worked 15 days by the end of the year. Nevertheless, the demand for women is increasing during the long season, for both manual (parks, marshlands, sheds) and administrative work. A certain number of actions (acquisition of dual competence, creation/enhancement of groups of employers, accommodation assistance, baby sitters...) will need to be performed by different partners to improve the conditions and duration of

employment for these women, who are very often left unassisted.

At family and social levels, it is the women who aspire to reconcile family and professional life, in particular in families with social problems and who work in fisheries or direct sales. Some projects have already been launched with outside partners, who are ready to favour the well being of these maritime families.

The women have furthermore expressed a wish for training to help boost their enterprises. Their requests range from computer sciences to communications and include accounting-management, foreign languages, marketing, exporting, diversification of tourism or production. A whole programme is to be developed with them, starting immediately with training in computer sciences.

The regional study also wanted to improve the psychological follow-up in the areas of accidents at sea or safety at sea and of enterprises. This action has been very well accepted by the departmental authorities of the medical-psychological emergency unit (CUMP) and the social workers of the fisheries social services. It should result in the organisation of awareness raising conferences as from next autumn ♦

Study group leader, Catherine Gouilletquer
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North Sea Women's Network

The voice of the coast

A women's network has recently been created for the defence of fisheries communities of the North Sea states. Acting within the North Sea and Pelagic Regional Advisory Councils, its primary role is to act as a voice at the national and EU political level for coastal communities in fishing-dependent areas.

Women from many of the North Sea states including Norway, the Netherlands and Scotland joined together in 2005 to form the North Sea Women's Network (NSWN), which seeks to provide a voice on behalf of coastal communities in fishing-dependent areas, and to ensure that the socio-economic consequences of fishing restrictions and management decisions are heard and considered at national and EU political level. ♦♦♦

♦♦♦ secretary, the other the treasurer. No doubt they will do very well in their administration and accountancy jobs, but they are not recognised by the men as full time professionals. « *We are not invited and we are not given all the information, if we are not there at the right time everything will be done without us* » says Annie.

At the beginning, the women association addressed other issues: communication, information, organisation of demonstrations and oyster promotions in partnership with scientists. The County Council invited us to be part of a committee created with the shellfish Producers Organisation and the shellfish farmers regional organisation. « *That frightens us, Annie Rouquette confides; we are going to use up a lot of*

energy. But we have to put forward our views of things in professional associations. It's the way we discuss things. When women are present, the meetings are calmer, more respectful, ideas are aired. Our men talk out loud they flaunt their views openly. We, we have no time to lose ! »

The road to professional recognition is long. But it brings with it an immediate benefit: through their exchanges and meetings women give each other support, motivate each other and see their difficulties more objectively. They feel their solidarity is as precious as the men feel their individualistic attitudes are ♦

Annie Rouquette and Annie Castaldo
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Marennes-Oléron

The battle of the elections

The association of women oyster farmers in Marennes tries to get spouses to stand at professional elections.

In France, shellfish farms are concessions of the public maritime domain conceded to individuals. The Marennes-Oléron basin has close to one thousand farms but not all are operational. The reactivation of these farms is becoming a real problem. Few young people are attracted to this profession, which is physically hard and increasingly less profitable. The cost to become oyster farmers is high and in five years time, the basin will no doubt have lost a third of its farms.

Oyster farms are small family enterprises where both husband and wife work. Few women work elsewhere, except in the case of the younger couples. The number of women owners is very low. But there is a higher number of women who are co-owners with their husbands. Others are employees of the enterprises and 74 have taken up the status of « *collaborative spouse* ». Others have no status at all.

However, oyster farming is a full time job for women. Women are responsible for the administration work and the accounts. The rest of their activities vary according to the size of the farm. In large businesses, the women deal with management and staff issues but they do not do any oyster packing. In the smaller ones they select the oysters and prepare the baskets. Some deal with the customers while others go with their husbands to the oyster

bed, especially in summer. In these cases, the farm employs an extra worker.

Why are there still so many women with no legal status? « *It is a tradition* » says Dominique Richiero, co-owner of the family enterprise. « *The women think about investing their time in the enterprise first of all and then, they will deal with the status aspects later, a later which never comes. They do not take the time to look at their own individual situations.* »

The issue of the personal status of women oyster farmers has been the main objective of the women oyster farmers professional association of the Marennes-Oléron basin since its creation in 1983. In the last 20 years, the number of members has varied greatly from 50 to ... 2 ! The women say « *they don't have the time* », bemoans Dominique who is the president. « *In fact, they come when they have some information to get, when one is setting up a training course. Then we never see them again* ». This disinterest is also expressed through a general reticence to be engaged in collective action, perceived as a waste of time. What prevails is the short term. And then, the husband has to accept that his wife spends some half days working for the association. In general, the women who are more active in the association are those whose husbands are also involved in collective life. ♦♦♦

••• For the moment, the association's main objective is to have the draft-decree on elections in the regional shellfish farmers organisation altered favourably for the collaborative spouse.

« We want to be able to be elected, as is done in trade or industry. The woman can stand for election if she is the co-owner of an enterprise with her husband, but not if she is collaborative spouse. It is very annoying. »

That is a very important step for recognition. To be elected is the only way to participate in the meetings where decisions are made. The women's association is recognised by shellfish farmers' organisation but that only gives them the right to be heard and to put forward their claims. The power to move their claims forward is obtained through elections♦

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Norway Aquaculture

Industrialisation

Modernisation and concentration of enterprises have had both positive and negative impacts on women. Some women have suffered, due to the reduction of women employed in the aquaculture industry; others, however, have profited, reporting positive experiences and successfully developing their career within fish farming.

Fish farming is a quite new industry in Norway; however we can find the same gender division of labour and gendered hierarchy of positions in fish farming as in traditional fisheries. Women are involved in processing, while men more often work in primary production. Traditional « *women's tasks* » are slaughtering, processing, cleaning and administrative tasks. Ownership, management and employment positions are mostly held by men. Still, a few women have successfully developed their careers in the industry.

In the past, fish farming was a traditional rural industry consisting of several small family businesses. Women in coastal areas in Norway have always had an important role in this kind of family businesses. Women were flexible part-time workers, and their role was often invisible. They have been the « *ground crew* » working in the business when they were needed.

Today, the Norwegian fish farming industry has become a globalised and capitalised industry with

more « *professional* » companies, fewer in number but larger in scale. Such a situation has resulted in new employment possibilities for women as there now are more administrative positions.

Despite the increase in administrative jobs there has been a general decrease in the percentage of women employees in the industry during the 1990s, from 20% in 1985 to 13% in 1999. The reduction has been especially dramatic in farming of fish for food, while the share of women employees has been relatively stable in fry and fingerling production.

The most important explanations are related to major structural changes in the Norwegian fish farming industry during the 1990s. The industry has developed to a more efficient and professional industry and this has led to a reduction in the number of employees. This reduction has been greatest among part time and seasonal employees, which were usually women.

Another explanation is the improved opportunities in other sectors of the labour market for women living in coastal areas. The expansion of the public sector created job opportunities for women, especially in the caring and social services. This enticed women out of the marginal jobs in the fish farming industry, as public sector jobs often offered better working conditions and a secure and stable income.

The women working in the Norwegian fish farming industry have had primarily positive experiences. They are usually accepted by their male colleagues, and looked upon as rough and different women in a positive manner because of their choice of work position. Many of these women have a strong desire to develop their career within fish farming, and consider fish farming as an opportunity for an exciting career which satisfies their professional interests and their desire for personal development.

However, some women find themselves exposed to distrust, conflicts and in a few cases exclusion from the industry, mainly because of their sex. The male dominance of the industry is considered a problem both among the women and among many of the (male) industry leaders.

It is a great challenge to create opportunities for women in fish farming; and the changing of the image of the industry from being a typical male dominated industry to one that is attractive for both sexes is perhaps the most urgent yet the most difficult of these challenges♦

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Galicia

The conquest of equality

In terms of work and status, men and women are on an equal standing in Galician mussel culture. But women are still ignored when it comes to decision making bodies.

The Galician mussel culture sector is strong with 3,300 mussel rafts, or bateas which generate about 11,500 direct jobs. Half of the production units consist of family businesses. It is estimated that 45% of these jobs belong to women. Mussel breeding also represents 7,000 indirect jobs in the manufacturing sector, where the female labour force prevails. The income of the mussel culture businesses varies between 90 and 180,000 Euros a year. It is a strategic sector for the economic development of Galicia.

Everything began in 1946 when a Galician entrepreneur succeeded in developing the first mussel raft: a float, a pillar with ropes made of rush supplied with rods to pin down the mussels, with a total area of 125m² of piling. The invention was taken up by the whole of Galicia.

Present-day rafts lie on four to six floats covered with polyester. The platform is made of eucalyptus beams and cross-beams from where the ropes are hung, now synthetic and immersed, fitted up with plastic rods to attach the mussels. According to the Fisheries Act, adopted by the government of Galicia, the rafts cannot exceed a working area of 500 m² and have more than 500 12 metre long ropes.

The mussel breeding cycle lasts for about two years, from the spat collection in the rocks, when the mussels are merely the size of a lentil, to marketing when they measure about a dozen centimetres.

They are marketed in three different ways: fresh mussels represent 35% of the total sales volume, conserved mussels 41 % and frozen mussels 24%. The main distribution points are Spain and Europe. Throughout this whole breeding process, only the rich phytoplankton of the rias is used, with no other nutritional support or sanitary products added.

Women have played and continue to play an important role in this story. At the very beginning, when there was no mechanisation, the labour force was essentially female, except for the hard physical work of packaging done by men. Today, women continue to work on the farms, which are essentially family



Rafts, an original technique for growing mussels.

enterprises. They contribute to the sea social security regime in the fisheries and aquaculture category.

In terms of working hours on the rafts, the women work the same hours as their husbands: once out of port they only return once the work has been completed. If the raft is close to the dockside, and if it is the season to separate the mussels, to select them and to detach them in order to replace them on another rope. They get back home at lunch time, and then back again to work. If the raft is far off dockside they stay on board all day and lunch there.

Men and women have equal rights in terms of the duties to be performed on the farm. But once on land, it is the women who look after the home and the children. The presence of women in the decision making bodies of professional associations remains very weak. They rarely attend meetings, and tend to delegate to their husbands, sons or brothers the task of representing them in the decision making bodies, even when they are the owners or co-owners of the enterprise. It is a road still to be followed. Women should be represented in the institutions where the decisions concerning their work, prices and marketing are made and where the laws which affect mussel culture are drafted♦

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