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Environmental group hits out at 'wasteful' EU fisheries policy

Aberdeen, Scotland: A new report from the environmental network WWF condemns the 'wastefulness' of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

The report - *Fishing Madness* - says that the CFP wastes billions of Euros in unsustainable subsidies. WWF is calling on the 15 European Fisheries Ministers to radically reform it.

"Currently there is a crazy situation where the European Union subsidises its fishing fleet by €1.4 billion (UK£868 million) a year, much of which is invested in expanding fishing capacity instead of fish stock recovery plans. In contrast two-thirds of our fish stocks are over-exploited and heading towards commercial extinction. These unsustainable subsidies have resulted in the fishing fleet being at least 40% over-capacity," said Louise Heaps, WWF Fisheries Officer.

Alliance with UK fishermen

WWF points out that, compared to other EU members, the UK fleet does not receive subsidies for expansion. The group has formed a strong alliance with UK fishermen, and they say their common vision for CFP reform, much of which is now contained in the EU Green Paper on reform, also has the backing of the UK Government.

Last June, Europe's leaders agreed that the review would address the overall fishing pressure by adapting fishing effort to match more closely the level of available resources. "This year the European Union's Fisheries Ministers will determine the future of our oceans, Europe's fishing communities and Europe's fish. This madness has got to stop," added Louise Heaps.

Insufficient attention to problems

WWF also believes that the EU does not do enough to reduce the bycatch of fish, or to address the problem of discards which now constitute nearly one third of total catches.

In addition, says the environmental group, the EU pays European fleets to fish in the waters of developing countries, for example in West Africa. WWF condemns such fishing, which is often unsustainable, as posing a threat to fisheries-dependant coastal communities.

The campaign is calling for a revised CFP to contain clear and measurable

commitments to eliminate over-capacity in the EU fishing fleet within the next 10 years, and to reform subsidies to ensure they support sustainable fishing. In addition, WWF say it should ensure fair and sustainable fisheries access agreements that respect the needs of local people and are in line with international agreements, and protect the marine environment, its habitats and species from the negative effects of fishing activities.

The *Fishing Madness* report marks the launch of the first European campaign by WWF.

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