



ENVIRONICS
R E S E A R C H G R O U P

**Focus Group Research:
Canada's Strategy for International Fisheries Governance
and to Combat Global Overfishing – European Attitudes**

March, 2005

Environics Research Group Limited

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Executive Summary | 3 |
| A. Key Findings and Conclusions | 3 |
| B. Suggested Future Public Opinion Research..... | 7 |
| Detailed Analysis of Findings | 8 |
| A. Initial Awareness/Impressions of Fisheries and Its Cultural Importance | 8 |
| B. Reaction to the Overfishing Issue..... | 13 |
| C. Role of European Union and National Governments | 16 |
| D. Awareness of NAFO, Canada's Role and Priorities for Action | 18 |
| E. Final Thoughts..... | 24 |

INTRODUCTION

Methodology

Environics Research Group is pleased to submit this focus group report to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). Environics co-ordinated a series of nine focus groups in five cities in Europe: Boulogne-sur-mer, France (Feb. 5); Stockholm, Sweden (Feb. 8); Aveiro (Feb. 10) and Lisbon (Mar. 19), Portugal; and Vigo, Spain (Feb. 12). Two groups were conducted in every location, except Lisbon, where only one session took place. This research builds on a similar series of focus groups on the same topic conducted by Environics across Canada in December 2004. The report on that research is available under separate cover.

In Boulogne and Lisbon, sessions were conducted with “engaged” members of the general public. In the other three cities, one of the sessions was conducted with the “engaged” general public and one with stakeholders. “Engaged” members of the general public consisted of a mix of men and women in a variety of age groups and social strata. They were required to be people who were at least “somewhat interested” in public policy issues, who had some post-secondary education, and who had done at least two of following five things: made a public speech, written a published article, written a letter to the editor of a publication, served as an officer of a club or organization, or called in to a radio or TV talk show.

In Stockholm, Vigo and Aveiro, one of the sessions was conducted with stakeholders. In Stockholm, the stakeholders were representatives of prominent environmental organizations in Sweden. In Vigo and Aveiro, the stakeholders were fisheries stakeholders: owners of fishing vessels, oceanographers, fishers’ union representatives and others. DFO supplied Environics with lists of names of stakeholders to recruit in each of these cities and the local research firms that Environics subcontracted to conduct the research on-site handled recruitment.

The discussion guide for the sessions was based on the information provided by DFO and the guide used in the Canadian focus groups conducted by Environics in December 2004. It was developed to respond to the European experience after extensive consultation between Environics and DFO. Some background materials developed by DFO were also circulated at certain junctures in the sessions to give participants more information on this issue.

In conducting the focus group sessions, some interactive workshop techniques were used. One technique was used to help open up the discussion and learn, for example, ‘current awareness of challenges facing the fisheries’ involved a “paired exercise” whereby pairs or trios of participants worked separately for several minutes, and then brought their responses back to the group. This method generated a considerable amount of information in a short period of time and helped to make the participants more comfortable interacting with one another.

Objectives

Overfishing is rapidly becoming an important issue both for Canada and the world community. It is a complex issue, tying in what might at first appear to be conflicting interests of conservation, environmental concerns, national sovereignty and diplomacy, as well as economic issues. In recent years, there have been a number of overfishing incidents in international waters that have received media attention. As fishers continue to operate farther away from their countries of origin in search of fish, these incidents will likely continue.

DFO wishes to take a lead, both within Canada and internationally, in raising awareness of this issue in the hopes of moving toward solutions to the overfishing problem that take economic and environmental considerations into account. The Department believes that public awareness and advocacy activities in Canada and abroad will be an important way to disseminate information to various audiences about Canada's involvement in the overfishing and international fisheries governance issue and to build domestic and international support for these activities.

This phase of the research was tendered in order to gauge attitudes in Europe to potentially explore in future research.

The specific objectives included:

- Assessing current awareness and understanding of the impact of fisheries to each country and its people.
- Determining which issues are seen to be the most troubling facing fisheries and whether people feel that their governments and the world community are doing enough to protect aquatic life.
- Gauging European levels of concern about overfishing, the reasons for their concerns, and if they feel the situation is improving or worsening.
- Probing differences and commonalities in attitudes and levels of interest in international versus domestic overfishing, and if there is any awareness of overfishing around the world.
- Exploring reactions to DFO communications materials about the state of Canada's fishery and Canada's strategy to combat overfishing and improve international fisheries governance; and to identify which elements resonate in either a positive or negative way.
- Exploring understanding and views about international fisheries governance and management.
- Assessing understanding of, and support for, the concept of sustainable development and healthy oceans' ecosystems as it relates to the goals of the overfishing strategy.
- Identifying Europeans' information needs and desired information sources on this topic.

This research was also done to gain a better understanding of the views, attitudes and perceptions of the overfishing issue among different segments of the European population. Distinctions between the various countries, including those who are economically dependent on fishing, environmental stakeholders, and the general public, were explored in considerable depth.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Key Findings and Conclusions

Initial Views on Fisheries

- Assessments of the relative importance of fisheries vary by location and by country. It was universally noted that, while fishing was not the most important industry to any European country, it was very important to specific regions and communities. The fishery was also viewed in all locations to have strong historical and traditional ties. This perception was especially apparent in Spain and Portugal where participants considered that the fishery had a cultural and historic importance that transcended simple economic calculations.
- Participants were aware that fish stocks were becoming scarcer or even disappearing and that there had been job losses in the fishery sector. Fishing was often described as being an industry in decline.
- There were concerns expressed about pollution in the oceans affecting the survival of and health of fish stocks. This came up most often in Stockholm and in Vigo.
- Many participants expressed a desire to eat more fish – both for the health benefits and because they enjoyed the taste. But it was invariably mentioned that fish was getting more and more expensive compared to meat. To some, fish was also more difficult and time-consuming to prepare. There were numerous negative comments about farmed salmon not tasting as good and possibly being unsafe to eat.
- A common theme in all the locations was the extent to which people saw the growing role for the European Union (EU) in fisheries issues, perhaps at the expense of national considerations. It was suggested that when quotas are cut, jobs are lost and fish disappear. There was also a tendency to see the national government as being relatively powerless in the face of the EU bureaucracy.
- Most participants saw the major challenges of the fishery as stemming from shrinking fish stocks, leading to loss of jobs and revenue. The causes were seen to be a combination of factors including owners of fishing vessels too fixed on profit, too much consumer demand for fish, mismanagement by the EU and national governments, overfishing by various countries, pollution killing off fish stocks, and new technology making it possible to catch more fish more efficiently.
- There was some acknowledgement by participants that their own country bore some share of the responsibility for the state of the fishery. They also recognized that inappropriate behaviour by some industry participants for economic reasons was an inescapable fact.

The Overfishing Issue

- There was widespread belief that certain fish stocks were becoming scarce. This was most commonly seen to be the result of overfishing or “excessive” fishing. Various countries were seen to blame for this problem. There was also a widespread belief by some stakeholder participants that rogue vessels flying “flags of convenience” were a big part of the problem. Moreover, there was a general willingness to admit that participants’ own countries had been guilty of overfishing at least in the past, if not currently.
- Without using the phrase sustainable development, participants expressed a desire for some balance between the economy and environment. Overfishing was often described as a threat to the global ecosystem and also as a conservation issue since certain species of fish could disappear altogether.
- The extent to which overfishing was seen to be more of a national or international problem varied by community. In Stockholm and Vigo, overfishing was seen more as a global conservation issue. In Aveiro, Lisbon and Boulogne, the focus was more on how it was affecting the local or national economy.
- Participants, especially in Vigo, had a relatively high level of awareness of the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around each country. When the topic of overfishing was introduced there was often an initial misconception that that it meant foreign trawlers fishing illegally within their EEZ.
- To participants in Boulogne and Lisbon, and especially in Stockholm, overfishing off the Canadian coast was regarded as something very remote and disconnected. In Aveiro and Vigo, there was more of an understanding of the impact of overfishing in this area to their countries.
- However, there was a universal understanding in all locations that fish had no boundaries; and that the activities within and outside EEZs had an effect on global fish stocks in general.

Role of Governments

- European participants had a somewhat negative view of the performance of their national governments in handling the fisheries issue. For the most part, participants thought that their national governments tended to neglect the long-term issues and challenges facing the fisheries in favour of short-term political and economic gains. However, in Vigo participants suggested the Spanish government’s performance was improving.
- The general understanding of participants was that national governments and the EU managed the fishery by establishing quotas, levying fines for exceeding quotas, shortening the season for certain species and restricting the types of nets allowed. At the same time, some wondered how these policies were enforced – given shrinking fish stocks and a seeming worsening problem of overfishing.

- The EU was seen to be the level of government with the most responsibility for fisheries; which had both positive and negative outcomes. Some participants thought the EU level of government would have better control over an area as broad as Europe's EEZ. There was also much support for the EU to have as much standardization as possible in terms of rules for fishing and keeping the industry sustainable.
- A common criticism of the EU was that it did not and could not always take into consideration the specific needs of each country. The priorities of smaller countries such as Portugal and Sweden were thought to be usually ignored.

Attitudes Toward Canada's Role

- There was little or no initial awareness of Canada's activities on the issue of international overfishing, apart from some of the environmental stakeholders in Stockholm and in Vigo, where awareness was quite high.
- The initial background document that was circulated on the state of the global fishery and the fishery in Canada sparked a variety of reactions. Many were surprised that Canada had such a large fishing industry that employed so many people. Most thought that this demonstrated why Canada had a stake in doing something about overfishing.
- That 30 per cent of fish caught in the world is believed to be illegal, unregulated or unreported came as a surprise to most participants and was seen as indicative of the seriousness of the overfishing problem.
- Some participants were suspicious of Canada's motives in taking a high profile on this issue. In Vigo and Aveiro, for example, there were some negative comments about the idea of Canada trying to extend its economic zone to include the whole of the Grand Banks instead of the current 90 per cent.
- There was also some suspicion that if Canada had such a large fishing industry, it must also be guilty of some of the overfishing in the world. A number of stakeholders and others thought that Canada had "fished out" its own cod stocks; but several noted that Canada had perhaps learned from its mistakes and was now trying to do something.
- A commonly held view was that Canada had the power to take action on this issue in a way that European countries could not because Canada was not part of a broader union (like the EU). Participants tended to feel that their national governments were restricted and that consensus was almost impossible to achieve in the EU.
- Among participants, Canada generally has a very positive image as a country. It is regarded as a modern, democratic, peaceful country.
- There were some concerns expressed about Canada portraying itself too much as a leader on this issue as opposed to working as an equal partner with other countries. Some participants responded favourably to the fact that Canada had initiated activity to address this issue.

Views on NAFO

- Stakeholders were generally aware of the existence of NAFO and other regional fisheries management bodies. Among the general public, awareness of these organizations was almost non-existent, though many participants assumed that there must be some sort of international organization to regulate fishing in international waters.
- Participants wanted to understand more about which countries belonged to NAFO and which did not, and also what happened to non-member countries that tried to fish in the NRA. Many were under the impression that non-signatories of NAFO could do as they pleased in terms of fishing in international waters.
- The general public assumed that NAFO regulations were too weak and not being enforced aggressively enough.
- The idea that violating vessels were punished by their home countries was considered to be open to abuse and probably leading to penalties that were far too lenient. It was universally agreed that a 5000 Euro fine for overfishing was ridiculously low. To deter overfishing, the majority of participants believed that the punishment must 'fit the crime' or be greater than the value of the illegally caught fish.
- A host of ideas for harsher punishments were offered by participants, including jail sentences for owners and licence suspensions to fish for a specified period of time. In France, participants also focused on the importance of quick follow through on punishments.
- Some participants supported punishments that were directed to the owners of offending vessels and/or the decision-makers, and not the fishers who work on-board.

Terminology

- "Sustainable development" has a very positive connotation and is a well-understood concept. Many participants believed that it should be the principle underpinning any global fisheries policy. The official definition of sustainable development almost always met with nods of approval.
- "Fisheries management" is associated with economic and quota management of the resource and with multilateral bodies setting common rules.

B. Suggested Future Public Opinion Research

Conducting nine focus groups in five European countries provides a somewhat limited qualitative view of what the people of each country think about fisheries-related issues. It is also not necessarily reflective of the views of “Europeans” as a whole. France, Sweden, Spain and Portugal are all extremely diverse countries where views will differ enormously from region to region and by all social strata. Nonetheless, this phase of research was important as a way of comparing views in Europe on overfishing with those of Canadians and also as a way of at least establishing some ideas about how Europeans will respond to this issue as it gets a higher profile in their local and regional politics.

Down the road, DFO may want to conduct two types of additional research. First, they could quantify these findings and establish a form of benchmarking to be able to measure whether any future advocacy in this area is having a positive impact. National omnibus surveys exist in all of these countries and it would make sense for DFO to create a small set of tracking questions to be asked at regular intervals in each country to explore such basic attitudes as: the importance of fishing to the country, concerns about overfishing, source of the overfishing problem, desire for “drastic” action, and awareness of actions taken by Canada, among other areas. By running five or six tracking questions in each country using national omnibus surveys, the impact of Canada’s advocacy efforts could be measured in a very cost-effective way.

Secondly, DFO could conduct future focus group sessions or one-on-one interviews. For fishing stakeholders, in particular, that were very difficult to recruit to a focus group one-on-one sessions may be easier to schedule and stakeholders may be less inhibited about expressing opinions.

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

A. Initial Awareness and Impressions of Fisheries and Its Cultural Importance

1. General Views on Fishing and its National Importance

This research was conducted in five very different communities where the local history around fishing is unique and where the extent of local dependence on fisheries varies. As a result, the local top-of-mind associations with the topic of fisheries varied to an enormous degree. In all five locations there was a view that fishing was not the most important industry to the country, but that it was very important to certain regions and/or communities within the country and, in the case of Portugal and Spain in particular, it had a major cultural and historical importance that transcended the simple economic calculation. Another common theme in all the locations was the extent to which people saw the growing role for the European Union (EU) in fisheries issues, perhaps at the expense of national considerations. It was suggested that when quotas are cut, jobs are lost and fish disappear. There was also a tendency to see the national government as being relatively powerless in the face of the EU bureaucracy.

Boulogne-sur-mer: In Boulogne, the initial comments and associations were about the people who work in fisheries such as fishers and fish packing plant workers, the survival of Boulogne in the face of job losses in the fishing industry and rising unemployment. It was mentioned more than once that being known as France's biggest fishing port was part of the local identity. There were a lot of initial comments about EU rules and quotas, and some talk about vanishing cod stocks forcing fishers to catch other species. Although some participants in both sessions provided unemployment statistics, it should also be noted that some participants were not overly concerned about this industry, as they didn't work in it, nor were they personally dependent on it.

People in Boulogne spoke of the phenomenon of "delocalization," which described how the fishery was becoming less focused on catching fish close by for local processing as fishers journeyed farther and farther to find fish that was processed more often in developing countries.

Participants in Boulogne were less inclined than participants in the other five cities to "romanticize" the fishing industry. Although they acknowledged the historic importance of fishing to Boulogne, they expressed less of an emotional bond to the idea of fishers in their traditional clothes going out to sea to catch fish. Fishing was regarded as a *"tough way to make a living"* and one participant said *"everyone in my family has worked either fishing or in a fish packing. They all smell of fish so I don't even like to eat fish."*

Participants in Boulogne did report that they ate quite a bit of fish, as fish dishes are an integral part of the regional cuisine, but there was no clear trend in terms of whether it was being eaten more or less than before, with the exception of young people which they felt were not often eating fish. Some ate fish less frequently because it was getting to be very expensive and it was more challenging to cook. At the same time, fish was considered to be healthy fare, so many participants tried to eat more of it. There were also some comments about how visitors came to Boulogne expecting to eat fish and that it was unfortunate that fish and seafood products caught by local fishers or processed locally were not being "branded."

Stockholm: In Stockholm, participants in both the general population and the environmental stakeholder groups were quite concerned about the fate of the fishery in general – but they tended to view it as more of a regional or global issue. It was pointed out that fishing is a very

small part of the Swedish economy and that, to the extent that it exists; it is largely localized on the west coast of Sweden around Gothenburg. Participants noted that the industry was more important to neighbouring Norway and Denmark. Nonetheless, top-of-mind associations with fisheries revolved around the disappearing fish stocks with some specific references to how cod stocks have disappeared. The importance of fishing to the Swedish national identity was mentioned, in terms of Vikings travelling the world in search of fish and fishing which was major part of the origin of the Hanseatic League of ports that was so important to Sweden in the Middle Ages. It was also noted that for generations, the Swedes lived off herring and smelts.

Participants in both sessions identified a difference between small-boat fishers and large trawlers, and they were more curious than anything else about why fish stocks were shrinking and what, if anything is being done to stop this problem. As was the case in the other European cities, the EU angle quickly entered into the equation as the participants wondered if their national government really had much role to play in this area. Environmental stakeholders in Stockholm had a similar perspective. They often associated fisheries with environmental damage due to unsustainable fishing practices and rising prices. They also focused initially on how powerful the fishing industry can be and how they can manipulate emotions and lobby for their issues with government in a way that the environmental groups cannot. As one participant said, *“How can I as an activist compete with an old fisherman with a beard and cap and a raincoat braving the high seas to catch fish?”* It was noted that the fishing industry pulls a lot of weight considering how relatively small it is in terms of economic impact. Some participants noted that in Norway – where fishing is a much bigger industry than in Sweden – it is still worth only about two percent of the GDP and yet, they voted “NO” to joining the EU largely because of pressure from the fishing industry. The environmental stakeholders also pointed out that the whole idea of “responsible” fishing is very recent.

Some participants expressed a desire to eat more fish but said that it was getting more and more expensive in Sweden. Some also said that they were getting more and more concerned about fish containing PCBs and other pollutants.

Aveiro/Lisbon: In Aveiro, participants’ initial associations with fisheries were varied but much more focused on the local situation. The Portuguese distant water fleet is based in Aveiro so fishing has a direct impact on the local economy. Participants focused on the many problems facing the industry: that Portugal did not get enough quotas from the EU; that there was a crisis in the long-distance fishery as Portuguese fishers were cut off from the cod and hake that they traditionally caught; and that unemployment was rising and companies were closing down. While some participants tended to blame the actions of other countries for these problems, others recognized that fish was a finite resource that had to be managed. There was also an acknowledgement that fishing was an important but shrinking part of the Portuguese economy; many seemed resigned to its continual decline in the future.

The stakeholders in Aveiro spoke of the powerful cultural importance of fishing to Portugal, as a country that boasts over one hundred recipes just for salt cod. In fact, one participant was an officer of a club for aficionados of salt cod (bacalhau). The fishery was noted as a major part of Portuguese history and culture on which an empire was built in the wake of fishers journeying long distances to find new fish stocks. Participants believed that the Portuguese might well eat more fish than any other Europeans. Bacalhau, in particular, was noted as a staple in a way that is not the case in neighbouring Spain. According to one participant, Portugal is the world’s biggest consumer of hake and the Portuguese government has tried to encourage the consumption of other kinds of local fish, as substitutes to salt cod, but to no avail. However, for

all the talk about cod, it was noted that the most valuable fish to Portugal is the sardine, which tends to be caught in Portugal's own waters.

One participant said that the fishery was "*the last great hunting ground*" and that sometimes an integrated vision was lacking on how to keep it sustainable. Research on marine ecosystems was thought to be lagging and, as a result, policy-makers tended to take the attitude that "*if we don't know for sure what the environmental impact of fishing is – let's keep right on fishing.*" It was also noted by some participants that because so much of what happens in the oceans is hidden from view, people don't realize how much damage is being done. "*Fishing is like hunting, except that we cannot cultivate fish in the oceans the way we can cultivate and raise cows.*"

There was certain sensitivity in Aveiro surrounding fishing. Many participants felt that the EU did not listen to Portugal because it is such a small country. They were also very insistent that countries like Spain and France "*called the shots.*" This sentiment was voiced by participants in the other cities as well, but it was particularly pronounced in Aveiro.

In Lisbon, participants felt that fishing was important to Portugal because it was a coastal country. Participants here were more likely to label the industry as a stagnant or very "traditional" industry, and they felt that the costs of the rise in unemployment in the fishery sector were being borne by the whole country. Participants were quick to label the industry as not keeping up with more modern techniques, compared to the fishing industries of neighbouring countries. They also felt that the fishing industry was challenged by restrictions imposed by the EU and other bodies, as well a lack of government subsidies comparable to what had been done in other countries.

Participants in Lisbon were more focused on the state of fish stocks, believing that more and more species were being rendered extinct due to unsustainable fishery practices: "*Boats come back to harbour full of fish and then go back out; it's exhausting the resource*". There were also some comments about the pollution levels in the ocean and its effects on fish.

With regard to fish consumption, participants had responses similar to those in other focus group locations, in terms of wanting to eat more fish, but finding it more and more expensive and difficult to prepare well. There were some negative comments about farmed fish, which was described as not having the right consistence and being "*artificial.*"

Vigo: Initial attitudes towards the fishery in Vigo were more global than those expressed in Aveiro. Participants noted that Vigo is Spain's main fishing port and that the industry is the most important one in the town. Although fishing is second only to car manufacturing in economic importance in this region of Galicia, participants sensed that it was a declining industry and that little action was being taken to prevent its decline. Several participants were quick to associate fishing with environmental concerns, similar to comments heard in Sweden, but not often heard in France or in Portugal. Many participants specifically voiced their concerns about fish farms to the industry (how they are too big and posed a danger to the marine ecosystem) while others pointed to over-exploitation that, in combination with global warming would soon result in "*no fish left to catch*". Participants felt that human beings were not "*respecting the ecology of the sea.*"

Among stakeholders in Vigo, initial comments were similar, but more detailed. Several said that greater efforts were needed to balance environmental and economic concerns and that people were overfishing for the sake of short-term profit. One stakeholder remarked, "*If we're not careful, we will kill the goose that lays the golden egg.*" It should be noted that the whole way in

which many stakeholder participants in Vigo talked about fishing issues was more similar to the opinions voiced in Stockholm, rather than participants in Aveiro. Comments about the fishery were focused on world-wide impacts and ramifications as opposed to being more focused on it as a local issue.

As noted in all other focus group locations, participants considered the fishing industry to be important symbolically for Spain since the country has such a long coastline and since Spanish sailors explored much of the New World in search of fish. In the region of Galicia (where Vigo is located), the fishery was also seen by participants as being particularly important in much the same way as it is in specific parts of Canada, such as Newfoundland and Labrador. Participants tried to eat fish a few times a week but they all complained that fish was getting very expensive and that fish was actually cheaper inland in Madrid than it was at the docks in Vigo. As was the case in the other cities, there were a lot of concerns expressed in Vigo about being forced to rely on eating farmed fish – which was widely regarded as being dangerous and “full of grease” and bad for the ecosystem due to effluent.

Stakeholders in Vigo also felt that a lot of information about the true fishing picture was being kept from them and that a lot of bad practices had been allowed to be carried out in the past. *“Many species we keep fishing even during the breeding season. We need to give the fish a chance to pro-create.”* Participants pointed out that shrimp used to be plentiful off Spain until nets became denser and caught the smallest shrimp, interrupting their life cycle.

2. Challenges for the Fishery

Shrinking fish stocks were seen to be the major challenge facing the fishery in all five cities. However, participants differed from city to city in terms of what they perceived to be the cause of these shortages and, hence, the nature of the immediate challenge. A variety of other challenges were also mentioned, which varied by city.

Boulogne-sur-mer: In Boulogne, attitudes towards the problems facing the fishery were focused on the perceived greed of fishing companies, competition and the impact of globalization. The discussion was quite “anti-corporate” in both sessions, with many participants focused on the belief that companies were exporting jobs to low-wage, offshore countries and that fishing companies were being bought by foreign multi-nationals. Many participants pointed out that France had to compete with other countries for fish and that jobs in the industry in Boulogne were more fish processing than fishing. The EU as a whole was often identified as a challenge for the fishing industry since participants believed that it was not doing anything to deal with the crisis facing the fishing industry and yet it prevented France from taking any unilateral action.

Participants in Boulogne identified a worldwide shortage of fish as a key challenge that forced fishers to travel farther and farther to catch fish, which in turn was leading to more and more disputes between countries as to who was overfishing and who may or may not be intruding on territorial waters. There was a perception that as a result of European integration, France had to let fishers from other EU countries take what they wanted from French waters.

Pollution was another challenge facing the fishing industry according to French participants. A common perception was that boats from other EU countries were polluting French waters and

that the EU was not bothering to fine polluters and was generally too slack with companies that break rules.

Stockholm: In Stockholm, participants had a tendency to separate the immediate challenges facing the relatively small Swedish fishing industry from the challenges for the fishery at the global level. Participants in Stockholm exhibited an attitude that was comparable to what was observed in major Canadian cities that are farther away from oceans, such as Toronto or Calgary. They see the challenges for the fishery as very long term and environmental in nature. Participants spoke about the need for sustainable fishing practices and how maybe countries should only consume as much as they could catch in their own waters. Environmental stakeholders also focused on the need to find a way to make fishing sustainable, and they pointed out that they felt even industry was beginning to realize that something had to be done in this regard. Several participants found it scary that once plentiful species like cod had almost vanished and was now a luxury. One participant noted that fish was being made into feed for other animals such as chickens and domestic pets, which was adding to stock declines.

The major issues facing the fishery for Swedish participants were seen to be pollution, in terms of threatening the safety of fish; and overfishing, which was causing fish stocks to disappear. One stakeholder mentioned that the Baltic Sea was so polluted that the EU would no longer buy fish that was caught there. It was also acknowledged that Sweden was as guilty as any other country for the state of the world's fisheries, but that Sweden could afford to "pay off" fishers in their relatively small industry, so that they don't fish, whereas other countries did not necessarily have that "luxury."

Aveiro/Lisbon: Specific challenges facing the fishery from the Portuguese perspective were much more focused on local issues: on the need for jobs and revenue; on getting "its share" of quotas; and being treated with respect. EU policies were often identified as a challenge to the industry because they seemed to favour other countries, like Spain. One participant said that the Portuguese attitude towards fishery has tended to be to "pillage" and take what they can.

Another important challenge for the fishery identified by participants in Portugal is the fact that many fishers do not know any other way of life. It was pointed out that there is high illiteracy in coastal areas and that young people sometimes quit school to help their parents with fishing. Many participants in Lisbon also considered the fishing industry in Portugal to be quite "low-tech" and not as technologically advanced as in neighbouring countries. There was also consensus that countries other than Portugal could afford to offer big subsidies to their fishing industry.

Participants in Lisbon also focused on more of the international challenges facing the fishery, such as pollution and new rules, such as restricted mesh sizes in nets.

Vigo: Challenges facing the fishery were identified in Vigo as being related to the disappearance of fish stocks, especially in terms of how the industry was going to manage its decline as an employer, as well as deal with issues relating to pollution and fish farming. Participants spoke about how the industry in Spain had once been one of the world's villains with regard to overfishing, but now it had changed and recognized that there was a problem. Some participants remembered the seizure of the *Estai* by Canada ten years ago, but this incident was not mentioned in a negative or defensive sense.

Some participants felt another challenge was the regional dependency on jobs in the fishery, especially in Galicia, and the need for a transition to get some people employed in tourism.

Some countries were identified as being guilty of overfishing and causing problems in the industry because they were seen to be ignoring any rules to control fishing. Stakeholders in Vigo also felt that the fishing industry was challenged by needing more and more modern technology to catch fish, and that there was a lack of co-ordination and management of the industry, which was causing overfishing. One stakeholder said, *“Canada has learned its lesson and now is taking action and setting an example for other countries.”*

B. Reaction to the Overfishing Issue

1. Overfishing as a National and Global Problem

The extent to which overfishing was seen to be a national or international problem varied quite a bit by city. In Stockholm and Vigo, participants tended to view overfishing as a global conservation issue. In Aveiro and Boulogne, the focus was more on its effects on the local economy. In Lisbon, viewpoints touched on both the national and global problem. Most participants in all the locations acknowledged that fish do not respect international boundaries and that the action of any country has an impact on the global marine ecosystem.

Boulogne-sur-mer: Participants in Boulogne were less engaged on this issue. There was some discussion of factory trawler ships and a black market for illegally caught fish, but many participants were under the impression that overfishing was not happening in their waters as France had advanced policies and techniques. At the same time, they figured that quotas indicated that overfishing was going on somewhere and there was some acknowledgement that, in the long run, overfishing would be a threat to France and to Boulogne, and that it would wipe out all the small operators and leave only big corporations to continue fishing. To the extent that participants in Boulogne were aware of overfishing activity, it was something they associated with the Third World – for example, some people had heard something about dragnets being used in South America and wiping out the anchovies.

Stockholm: In Stockholm, the attitude towards overfishing was passionate, especially in the session with environmental stakeholders, who said this issue made them *“furious, frustrated and sad”*. They felt that dragnets were a “horror” that were destroying reefs and they were concerned about the threats of the destruction of cod stocks in the North Sea to the entire marine ecosystem.

Some general population participants had also read about the state of the global fishery: *“I read that 90 per cent of fish stocks have disappeared or are endangered.”* When thinking of overfishing, participants imagined trawlers with dragnets, vast amounts of wasted by-catch, fish getting more expensive, and an empty sea. Participants were not clear if any one country was most guilty of overfishing; some countries were mentioned, but they also said that that Sweden was probably part of the problem.

Aveiro/Lisbon: *It should be pointed out that overfishing is a difficult concept to explain in the Portuguese language, but when translated as “excessive fishing” or “that more fish was being caught than could be sustained”, the term was more readily understood.*

In Portugal, participants acknowledged that overfishing was a problem. In Aveiro, very small cod were being seen in markets and sole seemed to be disappearing. Some participants pointed out that while other countries were doing research and trying to manage fish stocks, the habits and

attitudes around fishing in Portugal *“hadn’t changed in a hundred years.”* As one participant pointed out, *“Canada has similar problems with disappearing fish stocks. Scientists warned the fishers and the Canadian fishers paid no attention until it was too late.”*

As noted by environmental stakeholders in Sweden, some participants in Portugal believed that their “fish lobby” was quite powerful. It was also believed by some that the fishers themselves were poor and desperate enough that they would catch as much as they could get away with. *“We pay attention to local crises for local species. It’s only when a species fails that people get concerned. This problem is even more important in international waters because more countries compete there. The attitude is out of sight, out of mind”.* There was also a perception that the worst offenders were bigger countries.

In Lisbon, Portugal was seen as a small country that couldn’t be a big part of the problem. Participants often referred to “underfishing” as being more of a problem in Portugal. At the same time, one man pointed out, *“We Portuguese are hypocrites. We complain about Spain fishing in our waters, but then we take cod from Canada.”*

Vigo: Many participants in Vigo considered overfishing to be a worldwide problem that caused a chain reaction in ecosystems wherever it occurred. Most participants understood that migratory species were also affected by overfishing. To a large degree, underdeveloped countries were considered to be particularly guilty of overfishing because they needed to fish to feed their people. Participants in Vigo were particularly focused on the current situation in Africa.

Participants considered areas such as the North Atlantic to be quite regulated, whereas they called other areas of the world a “free for all.” There was a call for monitoring by satellite and stronger enforcement of bans on catching young fish. Many ‘engaged’ public participants, especially, had the impression that consumers were buying fish that were “too small.” It was also believed that smaller fish were wasted in by-catch and that there should be ways to avoid this.

Participants could all agree that so long as there was pressure for profit, countries and their fishers would keep finding ways to overfish.

2. Awareness and Concern about Overfishing in International Waters

There was quite a broad understanding of the fact that each country had a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). However, there was a lot of confusion about whether each individual EU country had any rights to their own national EEZ or whether it was all “EU waters” that were open to any other EU countries fishers. Many participants remarked that the EEZ for the EU as a whole was a gigantic amount of water.

As was the case in the Canadian focus groups, when the topic of overfishing was introduced, participants in every location tended to assume that we were talking about foreign trawlers poaching and fishing illegally in their country’s territorial waters or EEZ. Participants did recognize, however, that fishers were forced to go farther and farther to find fish because fish resources were scarce within the European EEZ. There was also a universal understanding among focus group participants in all locations that fish had no boundaries; and that the activities within and outside EEZs had an effect on fish stocks in general.

Boulogne-sur-mer: Participants were aware that there were limits and boundaries to follow in international waters according to various treaties and agreements, but there was general consensus that larger vessels were overfishing. In Boulogne, the problem of overfishing in international waters was thought to be far away from French or EU shores, and participants tended to draw attention to Africa and Latin America. Notably, there was some sensitivity toward captains of vessels thought to be overfishing, as one participant noted that *“some captains don’t abide by the rules because they’re under pressure by their bosses to break them – to deliver the product no matter what.”*

Stockholm: One participant in the general population session mentioned that Sweden was included in the Baltic Sea talks, but on the whole, most participants felt that the issue was more of an issue in the Mediterranean, Japan, or Canada. Environmental stakeholders were much more concerned about the issue, identifying some of the elements of overfishing that they felt were compounding the problem: lack of an ecosystems-based approach; lack of political will; and the effects of by-catch, among other issues. One participant also blamed apathy for rule breakers: *“We’re part of the overfishing problem... we accept the rules that permit overfishing.”*

Aveiro/Lisbon: In Aveiro, the issue of overfishing seemed very abstract; stakeholders commented that the dominant mentality in Portugal is “not” to be concerned about this issue. Environmental and conservation issues did not feature prominently in the viewpoints of these participants, as the coastal waters off Portugal were seen to be rich sources of fish such as sardines. Participants in Aveiro also seemed to relate to this issue more as ‘competition between countries’. It was pointed out that Portugal was one of the first countries to declare a 200-mile EEZ and that, after this occurred, the industry focused more on the inshore fishery.

On the topic of the EEZ, some of the participants in Aveiro suggested that Canada had a hidden agenda to extend its boundary to 300 miles to get 100 per cent of the fish on the Grand Banks and all the oil in that region. One participant said that, *“Canada used to have tons of cod, but they fished it all out and now they want to seize more territory so that they will have something to fish.”*

In Lisbon, reaction to overfishing in international waters was more in terms of seeing the global ecological dimension and, particularly, how it could have an impact on Portugal’s waters. They were not aware of anything currently being done about this problem, but they assumed that more ‘powerful’ countries or environmental groups were taking some action against the problem.

Vigo: Both general public and stakeholder participants in Vigo were very well informed about the issues of overfishing, the role of a 200-mile EEZ, and the concept that international waters were beyond that limit. They also understood that there was some kind of multilateral management regime in those waters. In fact, in both Vigo sessions, people mentioned NAFO without prompting. Participants suggested that overfishing in international waters was equally important to overfishing in domestic waters.

Participants believed that the EU Parliament was taking the issue of overfishing more seriously and that there were multilateral discussions in progress. They noted that there could be no real barrier between national and international waters due to all the migratory species and all the stocks and ecosystems in common.

Some participants in the general public group said that Canada was a leading voice on this issue and was working with the EU. They also suggested that the regional government of Galicia

was quite active on this issue and should be included in these joint efforts. Stakeholders in Vigo were also well-informed about actions being taken to address overfishing: they knew about scientists and observers spending time in boats and how vessels were inspected when they land. Some also said that under NAFO, the northwest Atlantic was the most regulated part of the world's international waters. However, the stakeholders had very mixed views as to whether enough was being done about overfishing in international waters.

C. Role of European Union and National Governments

1. National Government's handling of fisheries

European participants had a somewhat negative view of the performance of their national governments in handling the fisheries issue. It should be noted, though, that the fishing industry is regarded more as a European Union, as opposed to a national, issue and many participants were uncertain as to how much blame they could attest to their national government. For the most part, participants thought that national governments tended to neglect the long-term issues and challenges facing fisheries in favour of short-term political gains.

The importance of research and science was raised by participants in Stockholm, Aveiro, and Vigo during this portion of the focus group.

Boulogne-sur-mer: In Boulogne, some participants believed that the French government was relatively aggressive about protecting fish stocks, often seizing ships for fishing illegally and impounding them in the harbour and subjecting them to fines.

Stockholm: The Swedish government was viewed somewhat more favourably in terms of being well-intentioned, but people felt there was little they could do when neighbouring countries were breaking the rules – both in terms of dumping pollutants and in terms of overfishing. The environmental stakeholders in Stockholm, in particular, felt that Sweden's EU reps were too quick to make concessions, and that environmentalists had too little influence while industry often had too much. The general public in Stockholm were more likely to think that Sweden was an environmental leader in the EU and that it was doing a lot to support small fishers. However, participants wondered if Sweden had been a leader on fish-related issues since it was not a big fishing country compared to countries like Norway or Spain. Some were aware that Sweden supported the moratorium on cod in the Baltic, but most people believed that Sweden had nothing to do with what was happening in the North Atlantic.

Aveiro/Lisbon: In Portugal, there were comments that the national government needed to do a better job basing policies on science. In Aveiro, participants said that hake was on the verge of disappearing and they felt that little or no action was being taken by the Portuguese government to stop this trend. A few participants suggested that desire of politicians to be re-elected led them to follow the path of least resistance.

Vigo: In Vigo, there were complaints that scientific research of the ocean ecosystem was chronically underfunded. Participants felt that there was no real strategic plan for the fishery in Spain beyond selling the fish. Some also thought that the Spanish government might have good intentions but that other countries were ignoring the rules and polluting and overfishing.

2. The Role of the EU

The EU was seen by all participants to be the level of government with the most responsibility for fisheries; which was believed to have both positive and negative outcomes. Some participants thought the EU level of government would have better control over an area as broad as Europe's EEZ. There was also much support for the EU to have as much standardization as possible in terms of rules for fishing and keeping the industry sustainable.

A common criticism of the EU was that it did not and could not always take into consideration the specific needs of each country. The priorities of smaller countries such as Portugal and Sweden were thought to be too often ignored. As one participant in Aveiro said, *"We are a very small country and we get swamped in the EU."* Also, participants in Sweden had the impression that although Sweden had higher environmental standards than the EU as a whole, being part of the EU had resulted in the "watering down" of these standards.

In Boulogne, participants saw the EU as the "faceless body" that makes unpopular decisions. They were also under the impression that boats from any EU country could have unrestricted fishing rights in the economic zone of any other EU country.

Participants in Vigo were less sceptical about the EU and its ability to be responsive to Spanish interests. There was more awareness of EU funding of various scientific and conservation initiatives, although there was still some acknowledgement that when Spain joined the EU, some national sovereignty over fisheries was ceded. Similarly, the participants were less negative about the EU and saw it as concentrating on pollution and conservation issues

There was a general awareness among participants in all locations that national governments and the EU manage the fishery by establishing quotas, levying fines for exceeding quotas, shortening the season for certain species, and restricting the types of nets allowed. At the same time, many participants wondered how these policies were enforced – given shrinking fish stocks and a seeming worsening problem of overfishing.

Participants thought that the EU could address some specific policies:

- Educate people about the fishery
- Have a strategic plan for fishing
- Help fishers to exit the industry
- *"Decisions are being made by men in suits in Brussels – they need to spend time on a ship."*
- Seek input directly from fishers
- Invest in more research
- Inspect more vessels
- Stop other non-EU countries from fishing in EU waters
- Retrain fishers
- Cannot be afraid to reduce quotas for the sake of conservation
- Balance economic and environmental concerns
- Get fishers and conservationists to come to the table together
- Ensure fairer access and allocation rules among EU countries

D. Awareness of NAFO, Canada's Role and Priorities for Action

There was little or no initial awareness of Canada's activities on the issue of international overfishing in France, Portugal, and Sweden, apart from some of the environmental stakeholders in Stockholm. In Vigo, however, awareness was quite high: some members in the general population group hailed Canada as a "beacon of good fishing policy and forward thinking"; while in the stakeholder session one participant had a high regard for the consultations and consensus that went into fishery decisions in Canada.

Some participants were suspicious of Canada's motives in taking a high profile on this issue. In Vigo and Aveiro, for example, there were some negative comments about the idea of Canada trying to extend its economic zone to include the whole of the Grand Banks. However, a common sentiment expressed in most of the sessions was the belief that Canada 'cared for its fishing industry' and was taking action to help it by addressing this issue.

1. "Background on the State of Global Fisheries and the Fishery in Canada"

General background on the state of global fisheries and the fishery in Canada was circulated in each session to stimulate this portion of the focus group session.

Boulogne-sur-mer: There was some scepticism about the numbers quoted among participants. Some wondered if fish were fleeing into the international zone to avoid being caught by Canadian fishers. There was some suspicion that if Canada has such a major fishing industry, it is probably also guilty of a lot of overfishing. Some also felt that if Canada was exporting so much fish, they must have been catching much more than they needed to feed their people. Others said that Canada has a huge coastline compared to France and that if Canada is complaining about fish stocks disappearing; it must really be a big problem.

Participants reported never having known that Canada was such a big fishing country. The facts in the document about the size of Canada's fishing industry made some people think that Canada "knew what it was talking about" when it came to fish, and participants were impressed with the actions taken by Canada to date. Others were left with the impression that Canada must be one of the countries that is guilty of overfishing. The fact that 25 per cent of fish stocks are apparently overexploited had some impact on the participants and made them realize that there was a serious problem. There were concerns that fish were being caught at a rate that is above the "reproduction rate" of the fish.

Stockholm: Participants in Stockholm reacted more to the statistics that 30 per cent of fishing is illegal and 50 per cent of fish stocks are overexploited. They wondered if anyone was being punished for this. They also wanted to know what share Canada had of the world's fishing industry and some comparison with other countries.

The environmental stakeholders were less surprised by this information. Many of them already knew something about the role of the fishing industry in Canada and that Canada has a very long coastline. They also were aware that overfishing was an emerging issue for the world.

The fact that Canada has 100,000 people working in the fishing industry was seen quite differently by the general public and stakeholders in Sweden. To the general public, this number did not seem like a lot of people in a country with 30 million inhabitants, but to the stakeholders, it was proof that Canada had a high stake in the fishery industry and an interest in getting

overfishing under control. Stockholm participants indicated that they understood that Canada had seen the impact of overfishing on the cod stock and that they had to deal with rich fishing grounds just outside its 200-mile EEZ. *“The cod never returned to Canada after they imposed a moratorium and they want to raise the consciousness of the world to this issue.”* There was also some awareness among stakeholders that Canada had been involved in a conflict with Spain over fish in the 1990s. However, it was noted that every country has its own side of the story to tell and “it would be naïve to assume that Canada is the ‘good guy’.”

Some participants were struck that Canada ‘cared’ for the industry, *“A government that cares about its fishers; that’s fantastic, not too many governments are willing to do this nowadays.”*

Aveiro/Lisbon: The reaction in Aveiro to the document was more mixed with a degree of scepticism. While some participants in the stakeholder group thought that the facts presented were “undeniable,” others thought that science could be manipulated, depending on the political agenda of the country in question. Some were surprised that 30 per cent of fish caught are illegal or unregulated.

In both sessions in Aveiro, Canada’s motives were questioned: some wondered if it was accurate to say that Canada really had much of a fishing tradition since so much of the Canadian population lives far from the coast. To some people, 100,000 Canadians working in fishing was a very small number compared to Portugal’s dependence on fishing. Others thought this was a big number and proof that Canada must be part of the problem when it comes to overfishing. Some participants were more likely to give Canada the benefit of the doubt; even to the point of saying Canada’s motivations to combat global overfishing were altruistic.

There were also suspicions in the stakeholder session in Aveiro that Canada wanted to extend its EEZ from 200 to 300 miles in order to get more revenue from oil in the North Atlantic. The feeling was that this probably made good sense for Canada but that, ultimately, Canada was doing what was in its own self-interest and they thought that Canada should not try to make some pretension about doing the world a favour. On the other hand, it was also acknowledged that there had to be some multilateral co-operation in managing the fishery in the North Atlantic and that Canada, by virtue of having such a long coastline, deserves a place at the table.

In Lisbon, people were less sceptical of Canada’s motives and they felt that some action had to be taken to police fishing in international waters. As one participant noted, *“It seems like Canada is looking for some sort of world monitoring of international waters, because it’s not being done by some countries.”*

Vigo: Participants in both sessions in Vigo found the information very interesting and one even wondered why it wasn’t provided by the Spanish government. They were shocked to read about the level of illegal activity and that 50 per cent of species were being fully exploited and 25 per cent overexploited. For the general public in particular, the information was seen as a “wake-up call,” that action had to be taken and people made aware that all this over-exploitation was happening. They also wondered if there were some species of fish that were now completely extinct.

General population participants in Vigo were surprised that fishing was so important to Canada since many of them associated Canada more with farming, forestry and factories. This made some say that they saw more of a common interest between Canada and Spain, since both

were countries had long coastlines and large fish industries. People remarked that Canada clearly saw that there was a problem here and was trying to take action and to be at the forefront and they hoped that Spain would follow Canada's lead.

Some stakeholders in Vigo felt that the tone of the backgrounder was a bit “hysterical” and that, in reality, there was a lot of overfishing happening in national waters – and Canada had to accept some responsibility for that. Some felt that Canada's plight was being exaggerated since Canada was doing very well catching shrimp and crab instead of cod. As was the case in Aveiro, some of the stakeholders were resistant to the idea that Canada could be identified as a major fishing nation, since they felt that fishing was really only important to Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. It was also noted that 90 per cent of the Grand Banks was within Canada's territorial waters and that Canada should therefore spend more time cleaning up its own act instead of implying that overfishing in the ten per cent of the Grand Banks open to international fishing was to blame.

Some of the stakeholders credited Canada with taking a stand on this issue and showing concern for its own people. Others saw Canada's actions as being politically motivated – trying to put all the blame on European countries as well as on seals that eat cod.

2. Awareness of International Fisheries Management Organizations

The extent of participants' awareness of any international fisheries management organizations varied a great deal between stakeholders and non-stakeholders, and between people in the various cities.

Boulogne-sur-mer/Lisbon: In Boulogne and in Lisbon, where the sessions were composed of “engaged” members of the general public, there was no awareness at all of specific international fisheries management organizations like NAFO. People assumed that there must be some kind of regulatory body, but they tended to assume that it was probably a body within the EU. In Boulogne, there were also comments that there likely wasn't an organization that dealt with vessels ‘flying flags of convenience’.

Stockholm: Similarly, the general public in Stockholm assumed that there must be some EU bureau to regulate international fisheries in their area, but no one knew what happened in other areas. Some participants wondered how it was even possible to police international waters without satellites spying on ships and UN forces with the power to board vessels.

Stakeholders were more likely to be aware of NAFO. In Stockholm, the environmental stakeholders had generally heard of it even if they did not know a lot about how it functioned. Their perception of NAFO was that it was largely about apportioning quotas and that its mandate was very much geared around fishing as an industry, as opposed to being dedicated to conservation. It was described by one participant as having “shoved the UN aside.”

Stakeholders in Aveiro and Vigo were quite well-informed both about NAFO and about other similar organizations, such as SACAV and CEAFO.

Aveiro/Vigo: Some stakeholders in Aveiro knew that Portugal had taken a lead in helping to establish NAFO, but they were sceptical as to whether it had real enforcement powers. Some of

the stakeholders in Vigo knew that NAFO was one of 20 regional fisheries management organizations in the world and that ICCAT was another dedicated to managing the tuna fishery.

One factor that came up over and over again was the desire of participants to understand more about which countries belonged to NAFO and which did not, and also what happened to non-member countries that tried to fish in the NRA. Many were under the impression that non-signatories of NAFO could do as they pleased in terms of fishing in international waters.

3. “The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization”/“NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures”

Participants were shown another document with more detail about NAFO; the general public was given a more basic description of NAFO entitled “The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization,” while stakeholders were given a more detailed description of NAFO entitled “NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures.”

The general public in all five cities had similar reactions to this document and to what they learned about NAFO. As mentioned previously, they invariably wanted to know who the members of NAFO were and what happened to non-member countries caught fishing in that area. For the most part, people were glad to know that an organization like NAFO existed and they liked the idea that there was a multilateral organization that was trying to manage the fishery in international waters through some form of consensus.

However, there was also a strong consensus that NAFO probably did not have the resources or the power to really police the NRA. The penalties for overfishing were thought to be too lenient and it seemed to participants that NAFO had very few patrol boats to police such a large area. It was also felt that NAFO still did not have enough powers to impose stiff sanctions and actually enforce the rules.

Participants in all locations questioned the ‘independence’ and honesty of the NAFO observers; some wondered whether shipowners might bribe them. Customs officers were also thought to be corrupt by some participants which led to even more cynicism about whether NAFO was actually doing much good. In Vigo, people were quick to admit that Spanish fishing boats did not always play by the rules. One person said, “*Spanish boats have two nets: one that they show the inspectors and one that they actually use.*”

Another point that was made over and over again was that the fines for overfishing had to be high enough to truly deter overfishing. The idea that a vessel caught overfishing might be fined just 5000 Euros was universally condemned as being ridiculously low. As one woman in Boulogne said, “*It’s like travelling on the train: if the fine is less than the price of the ticket, why would I buy the ticket?*” It was agreed that, for regulators such as NAFO to do their work, they needed to have many patrols and the ability to levy punishments that are a real disincentive to breaking the rules. The fine ought to be far higher than the value of the illegal catch.

Yet another point made quite frequently in the general public sessions was the need to ensure that the fishers who work on the fishing vessels do *not* get punished, since they are just following orders. Participants felt that the wealthy shipowners were the ones who should be punished – ideally, by not being allowed to send out their ships at all for set periods of time (like having a drivers’ licence suspended).

People had very mixed views of the principle of having the home country of offending fishing vessels be the one to exact a punishment. This was especially prevalent in the sessions in Aveiro and Vigo, where on the one hand, participants did not want their fishers persecuted by foreign countries, but on the other hand, they feared that their home country might be too lenient. For that reason, participants felt that penalties must be consistently applied by all countries in NAFO. There was also some suggestion of having international arbitration panels to handle the punishment.

Boulogne-sur-mer: In Boulogne, the general public were more disinterested in the whole topic, which they described as “remote” to them and more of a Canadian concern. When they saw **Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization**, participants in both groups asked about the northeast Atlantic. However, participants also felt that the public needed to be educated about NAFO and the importance of its work, and they voiced concern about the actions of non-contracting countries in the NRA and the plight of workers on violating ships (rather than vessel owners) when NAFO issues penalties. *“It must be the bosses who are punished not their workers.”* As was the case elsewhere, participants in Boulogne wondered how enforceable the rules were, since the ocean is so large and contraband was thought to be easy to hide. They were also assumed countries flying flags of convenience would take what they wanted, and that home countries would be reluctant to really punish those found overfishing.

Stockholm: The general public in Stockholm felt that ideally every single boat should be staffed with impartial observers who were incorruptible, but they wondered how realistic this was given the difficulties in preventing pollution from 150 oil spills in the Baltic Sea. They still thought that it was “nice to know” that something like NAFO existed and that Canada was working to improve it, but they wondered how a ship could get punished in international waters and they were concerned that taxpayers and not the shipowners would end up being the ones to pay the fines. One participant suggested that the fines could be high enough to pay for the existence of NAFO. A few others wondered if there was a way for NAFO to ‘brand’ fish that were legally caught so that consumers could know what they were buying.

The environmental stakeholders in Stockholm wondered how “pirate” fishers from non-NAFO members were handled. They thought it was good that something was being done and that there was 72-hour follow-up; but they felt that the conservation and enforcement measures were insufficient. Environmental stakeholders also believed that the problem of *legal* fishing was much to blame for overfishing, and they saw NAFO as mainly controlled by fishing interests, which allowed everyone to fish too much. They saw that in terms of international law, countries would have to punish their own people, but they felt that this could be addressed by implementing real deterrents. One participant suggested that licences be suspended since monetary fines would never be enough. *“The ultimate penalty is to stop their trade.”* There were also calls by others for hard scientific work to develop a more foolproof way of tracking fish and determine whether stocks are being overfished and endangered. They also wanted to see evidence that Canada was restricting itself and “thinking globally and acting locally.” They felt that in both the EU and NAFO, countries tended to act in their own self-interest, and that a country like Canada needed to show that it was taking sufficient steps at home.

Aveiro/Vigo: Fishing stakeholders were more sensitive to the idea that Canada might be taking a “holier than thou” attitude. They stressed that there needs to be a consensus between NAFO members to make changes and that Canada cannot be seen to be making the rules and expecting everyone else to follow. At this point in the session, some participants wondered if Canada wanted to act as police for the whole North Atlantic.

Canada's motives in the NRA were also questioned to some degree by stakeholders: "*Canada wants to restrict others, but not themselves. They already control 85 per cent of the Grand Banks and now they want the other 15 percent.*" There was also some sentiment that, by world standards, the North Atlantic was quite well-regulated and that the problem was bigger elsewhere, such as off Africa.

Fisheries stakeholders were impressed with some of the details around the activities of NAFO, but they also wondered how much money and manpower they had to actually enforce anything. They were also concerned about whether any rules apply to non-members of NAFO or to ships flying flags of convenience.

Some participants had ideas for addressing non-compliance, such as having special courts to prosecute offenders or banning offenders from ever fishing. They expressed concerns about the length of time it takes to punish ships that fish' illegally, and noted that it is treated by many as 'the cost of doing business'. But participants also stressed that there cannot be unilateral action – countries need to work together.

4. "Canada's Actions in 2004 to Combat Overfishing and to Improve International Fisheries Governance"

The general attitudes of participants towards Canada and Canada's role in the overfishing issue have been discussed throughout this report. It should be noted that very few general population participants had been aware of any new Canadian initiative in this area before being invited to the session.

In general, most participants view Canada quite favourably as a country: Canada was seen as modern and democratic. While there was some sensitivity about Canada "grandstanding" on this issue, in all four countries visited, participants believed that Canada had the power to take action on this issue in a way that European countries could not because their governments were somehow restricted by being part of the European Union.

Most people thought that hosting conferences was a good place to begin, and even fishing stakeholders in Vigo and Aveiro for the most part applauded the fact that Canada was taking such an interest in this issue and trying to take some action. There were only a couple of participants who questioned Canada's motives, and felt that the actions were all in Canada's self-interest.

Aveiro/Lisbon: In Lisbon, views about Canada's actions were mixed. Several participants praised the efforts of Canada to address the issue and raise awareness; but others were cautious that no one country should work alone on such an issue – there should be many countries – and the United Nations should be involved. In Aveiro, the call for international co-operation to address this issue was even more strident and Canada's motives were more often questioned.

Vigo: In Vigo, stakeholder participants were sympathetic to Canada's position but wary of Canada going beyond the NAFO process and appearing to act in a patronizing and dictatorial way towards a country like Spain. It was pointed out that, while Canada had a long coastline, it had no distant-water fleet so it had nothing to lose by having such an aggressive position. As

one stakeholder said, *“to be a leader, you have to listen and give others credibility. Canada must reach out to Spain as an equal and not from a position of superiority.”*

The general public in Vigo were more sympathetic to Canada’s plans. They liked seeing things like “constant monitoring,” “diplomatic advocacy activity,” “international fish governance” and “words to action.” They were, however, concerned that three patrol boats did not seem like much to patrol the dozens of boats fishing in the northwest Atlantic. They saw Canada as being very “generous” in offering to monitor the NRA close to Canada and they wished that Spain could be a leader in the same way. There was a sentiment for the regional government of Galicia to also have a place at the table. It was clear that Canada’s image was very positive in Vigo and a Canadian-led initiative on overfishing could be welcomed. It was also noted that Canada was admitting that “challenges remain” which was a good self-effacing comment in the document.

Stockholm: In Stockholm, it was clear that Canada had a very positive image. People thought that while these initiatives may be all talk, it could also be a good start. *“Canada needs to be part of a global humanitarian effort and needs to involve other like-minded countries.”* Canada was thought to have as much credibility as any country to take the lead here. General population participants viewed Canada as being a country with values similar to Sweden’s: calm, peaceful, and moralistic.

Some of the stakeholders had heard something about Canada wanting to take a high profile on this issue and they liked the overall direction of what Canada was proposing. However they brought up how Canada had destroyed its own cod fishery by being greedy and they wondered what sacrifices Canada would be willing to make to set an example for other countries on this issue. Still, the environmental stakeholders gave Canada credit for at least getting people talking by convening some conferences.

Boulogne-sur-mer: In Boulogne, reaction was similar to what was expressed in Stockholm, though with less interest in the subject. One person said, *“Boulogne is very closed; we don’t have that much interest in world issues.”* The image of Canada was quite positive: a modern, innovative, democratic country. They read the materials and concluded that Canada was taking steps, and was spending a lot of money to address the issue, and some wanted to see France get involved nationally and not just as an appendage of the EU. Some participants liked the idea of having a conference, while others wondered whether conferences accomplish anything other than being “talk-fests.”

E. Final Thoughts

1. Terminology

There was some limited discussion of terminology in some of the sessions when time allowed. This was a challenging element to appraise, since terms such as “sustainable development” and “fisheries management” were translated into four other languages and in the latter case, there is no generally accepted way of translating the concept. Both of these terms, however, seemed to have positive connotations. It was clear that the term “sustainable development” is widely known in Europe and that people associate it positively as being the path to follow in order not to over-exploit resources such as fish. It was also associated with the protection of species, a clean environment, and responsible management. It was compared to forestry, where every tree that is cut is replanted, and with respect for nature, with access to a resource without depleting it.

When the term was explained as “development that meets the needs of the present generation without undermining the capacity of future generations to meet their needs,” people invariably nodded in approval.

“Fisheries management” is associated with economic and quota management of the resource and with multilateral bodies setting common rules. For some participants, its meaning could also include controls on the age at which fish are allowed to be caught and types of nets allowed to be used. Some participants also mentioned that ‘fisheries management’ should involve management of the marine ecosystem as a whole, including keeping the ocean unpolluted and ensuring that species are not fished during their spawning season. *“We should not exhaust what we have. I think that the fish management is to preserve species. So that these resources are resources without which we cannot live. And they should be preserved in as much as possible”.*

2. Final Advice for Canada

Participants had various pieces of advice for Canada and for dealing with this issue in general, including:

Vigo and Aveiro:

- Put out more scientific information and information on the state of the world’s fisheries so that it starts to be regarded as a trusted source of information.
- Sponsor scientific exchanges and conferences on fisheries.
- Offer to work in equal partnership with other countries affected by the overfishing in the North Atlantic.
- Initiatives must be seen to be for the sake of the marine ecosystem and not for Canada’s self-interest.
- Need to sponsor dialogue between shipowners, captains and unions, and consult with them.
- Be open about what is going on within Canada’s economic zone and show that Canada is looking after its own backyard.
- Do more of what it is doing – sponsor dialogue and conferences and try to build consensus.
- Be aware that countries like Spain and Portugal need to be treated as partners – even though they are competitors in the fishing industry.
- Show what is being done now and how Canada’s contribution to solving this problem compares with other countries.
- Give people some information on what they can do to pressure their own governments to take action.

In Stockholm:

- Put money into more television documentaries and publications that will tell Canada’s story. Get coverage on the Discovery Channel about overfishing.
- Find a way to have fish products labelled if they are been caught through sustainable fishing practices.
- Canada needs to take forceful action that EU members, like Sweden, cannot take.

- Show that you practice what you preach by demonstration conservation efforts Canada is taking in its own waters.
- Offer concrete proposals and deadlines.
- Show respect for what the scientists are saying.

In **Boulogne-sur-mer**:

- Inform people in countries like Germany where the environmental movement and Green parties are stronger.
- Show a clear tie into the concept of sustainable development and make it clear that there are limits to growth.
- Be honest in communications and avoid “sensational” stories.
- Get the story on nature shows on television.
- Address young people in schools where there is a chance to change impressions; create information packages for teachers about the state of the fisheries.

In **Lisbon**:

- Provide information on overfishing to be used in schools.
- Communicate with other governments, including Portugal.
- Provide the Portuguese government with information and they can communicate directly with the Portuguese population.