

Issued on behalf of WWF, the UK Food and Drink Federation and Marks & Spencer

MEDIA RELEASE

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FISHERIES: UNIFIED SUPPORT FOR PROGRESSIVE REFORM OF COMMON FISHERIES POLICY (CFP)

EU Fisheries Commissioner, UK and Scottish ministers, WWF and business allies in unified stance on CFP reform.

Aberdeen – In a public demonstration of unity today (Friday 1 October) EU, UK and Scottish fisheries political leaders joined UK businesses and conservationists in discussing and agreeing the need for progressive reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Effective delivery will mean securing sustainability for fisheries, the marine environment and employment for those who depend upon them.

In a meeting today the world's largest conservation organisation WWF, alongside three of Europe's largest processors - Findus, Icelandic and Birds Eye Iglo - discussed ambitious reform of the CFP with EU Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki, UK Fisheries Minister Richard Benyon MP and Scottish Fisheries Minister Richard Lochhead MSP.

Commissioner Damanaki along with the ministers of EU member states and EU Parliamentarians face the challenging task of accomplishing a reform for the CFP that is both forward-looking and acceptable to all, by 2012. WWF and its business alliance believe that this is a once in a decade opportunity to set right what the CFP has failed to deliver to date – sustainable fisheries. Three-quarters of EU fish stocks are fully fished or over exploited and the economic viability of the fishing sector is under pressure.

During the meeting Commissioner Maria Damanaki said:

"I have been extremely impressed by what I've seen and heard during my visit. I am now even more convinced that when fishermen, industry, scientists, governments and NGOs work together it is possible to deliver fisheries that are both sustainable and profitable. With the assistance of strong industry and environmental leaders like those I have met here I would like to deliver a reform throughout Europe that will secure a future for fish and fisheries alike, as well as the marine environment that supports them."

UK Fisheries Minister, Richard Benyon MP, said:

"As an island nation, the UK has a long history of fishing and we are committed to ensuring there is a future for our marine environment and our fishing communities. The UK Government is committed to leading the way in Europe for an ambitious reform of the CFP with conservation of the marine environment working hand-in-hand with a prosperous fishing industry."

Scottish Fisheries Minister, Richard Lochhead MSP, said:

"The CFP is acknowledged as a failed and damaging policy and I firmly believe that progressive change, with greater regional control of fisheries management and an end to wasteful fish discards, is the right way forward. Scotland's Conservation Credits Scheme has won praise from international scientists and environmental organisations such as WWF and since its introduction discards by our fleet have sharply reduced. I believe that this innovative approach is an example that others across Europe can follow."

WWF, Marks & Spencer, the Food and Drink Federation, Findus, Icelandic and Birds Eye Iglo all welcomed the political acknowledgement of the need to put an end to the short-sighted scramble for fish.

WWF's Senior Fisheries Policy Officer, Helen McLachlan said:

"We are extremely pleased to have been able to share with Commissioner Damanaki some of the progress that has been made here in Scotland and the UK towards more sustainable fishing. WWF and its industry alliance believe long term management plans developed and implemented by key stakeholders, including governments, must be at the heart of the new reform with environmental assessments guiding the plans. We are delighted that the UK is committed to leading the way for effective reform with other Member States until 2012. We will certainly do all we can to support their efforts."

Andrew Kuyk of the Food and Drink Federation (which represents businesses like Findus, Icelandic and Birds Eye Iglo) said:

"FDF is working closely with its members in support of a reformed common fisheries policy which meets consumers' needs while ensuring the sustainability of stocks. The principles set out by WWF in collaboration with European processors and retailers represent an important signal to policy makers about the direction reform should take."

Richard Luney from M&S said:

"Our business plan is dependent upon sustainable fish stocks and a marine environment capable of supporting these. It is for this reason that we are keen to help deliver as strong a reform as possible."

WWF, Findus, Icelandic, Birds Eye Iglo and M&S are all members of an alliance [1] that is calling for the CFP reform to make effective ecosystem based long-term management plans mandatory for all EU fisheries by 2015, the introduction of effective regionalisation, maximising the value from catch to the consumer and ensuring that CFP principles apply to all fisheries in EU waters and beyond.

Peter Hajipeiris from Birds Eye Iglo said:

"We would like to see CFP reform as a genuinely practicable contribution to Sustainable Fisheries Development in order to meet the EU's consumer need for sustainable fish on a long term basis. This will provide a profitable future for the entire supply chain in the long run. We agree with our industry colleagues, WWF, the Commissioner and UK and Scottish governments that the time for these changes is now."

Ian Hagg from Findus said:

"We have to enable regional stakeholders to have real influence. This will ensure stronger partnerships are in place to develop and implement long-term fishery management plans. This will deliver local ownership and a long-term perspective."

Nigel Edwards from Icelandic UK said:

“It is vital that that the same rules apply to all European vessels wherever they fish.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

[1] In April this year, the EU Fish Processors' and Traders' Association, AIPCE-CEP, Eurocommerce and Euro Coop, which represent retail, wholesale and international trade interests to the EU, joined WWF in seeking reforms to the troubled European Common Fisheries Policy. The current policy has failed to secure the health of EU fisheries, and has put most of them under severe strain, compromising the availability of sustainably harvested seafood.

The alliance:

WWF is one of the worlds' largest and most respected independent conservation organisations, with almost 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries.

The Food and Drink Federation's (FDF) Seafood Group represents many of the seafood processors and brand owners in the UK, as well as those companies processing for retailers and food service providers. Members of the FDF Seafood Group were instrumental in developing the alliance with WWF on a shared vision for the reform of Europe's Common Fisheries Policy. The FDF seafood group is the UK representative body at AIPCE, FDF influences legislation and decisions in Europe via AIPCE. For further information, please see: www.fdf.org.uk

AIPCE-CEP is the EU Fish Processors and Traders Association and represents 130.000 employees, 4.000 enterprises and a production value of around €20 billion (<http://aipce-cep.org/>)

EuroCommerce represents the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors in Europe. Its membership includes commerce federations in 31 countries, European and national associations representing specific commerce sectors and individual companies. One company out of three in Europe is active in the commerce sector. (www.eurocommerce.be).

Euro coop is the European Community of Consumer Co-operatives, whose members are the national organisations of consumer co-operatives in 17 European countries. Created in 1957, Euro Coop today represents over 3,200 local and regional co-operatives, the members of which amount to more than 25 million consumers across Europe. (<http://www.eurocoop.coop>)