

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Cutting government support will help ensure a sustainable future for the fishing sector, says OECD report**

Fishermen in developed countries need to reduce their dependency on government financial support to ensure a sustainable future for the industry and for their communities, says a new OECD report. It adds that payments and subsidies would be more effective at helping fishing communities if they were more effectively targeting social, development and environmental objectives rather than supporting fishing.

**Financial Support to Fisheries** estimates that the fisheries sector in OECD countries receives annually around 6.4 billion US dollars from governments. This represents around 21% of the value of fisheries production in these countries. More than a third of this goes into management, research and enforcement of rules, most of which may be necessary for effective management of fish resources. Another third goes into infrastructure provision, such as constructing and maintaining harbours, while the rest takes the form of direct payments or other transfers that reduce the cost of fishing. This category of aid includes, for instance, fuel tax exemptions, vessel modernisation payments and income support.

The report warns that unless there is proper enforcement of catch controls and effective and transparent management, support to fishing activity will exacerbate fish stock depletion. Fishers' dependence on financial support to make fishing profitable can also reduce the ability of many fishing communities to adjust to changing economic conditions, it adds.

The report recommends reducing levels of support and imposing time limits on support programmes, noting that the expectation of continuous government support is a disincentive to invest in other economic activities. It observes that cutting support does not necessarily mean fishing will decline. Norway, New Zealand, Australia and Iceland have all reduced or retargeted financial support as part of wider restructuring programmes to put their fishing sectors on a more sustainable and profitable footing. The report also notes that these countries also recover some of the management costs from the industry.

“Unfortunately, talks at the World Trade Organisation to reach an agreement on disciplining fisheries subsidies are currently stalled,” said Carl-Christian Schmidt, Head of the Fisheries Division of the OECD. “The OECD work has shown how vital it is for these talks to succeed, not just for trade reasons, but more importantly to secure a sustainable future for OECD fisheries. The economic, environmental and social benefits of reducing subsidies are sufficient justification to seek innovative ways to achieve agreement on fisheries subsidies.”

To obtain a copy of **Financial Support to Fisheries: Implications for Sustainable Development**, journalists should contact the OECD's Media Division (tel: + 33 1 4524 9700 or <mailto:news.contact@oecd.org>).

For further information about OECD work on fisheries, please contact Carl-Christian Schmidt, Head of the Fisheries Division, OECD (tel: +33 1 4524 9560 or <mailto:carl-christian.schmidt@oecd.org>), or the OECD Media Division, or visit the OECD website at [www.oecd.org/agr/fish](http://www.oecd.org/agr/fish).