

CONTACT: MIKE WALKER

SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATE TO THE PEW ENVIRONMENT GROUP

+32 476 622575 | mwalker@pewtrusts.org | www.pewenvironment.eu

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European Marine Programme

Overfishing Exacerbated by EU Fisheries Subsidies

BRUSSELS - A study released today by the Poseidon Aquatic Resource and the Pew Environment Group finds that EU fisheries subsidies have failed to reduce fleet overcapacity, thus exerting fishing pressure on stocks at two to three times sustainable levels.

The ten EU member states evaluated in Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) 2000-2006 Shadow Evaluation accounted for 93 percent of the €4.9billion of fisheries subsidies allocated. The European Commission has identified fleet overcapacity as the principal failure of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

"EU fisheries subsidies and the overfishing of valuable fish stocks are clearly connected," said Tim Huntington of Poseidon Aquatic Resource. "Of the funding analysed, 29 percent went to measures that would result in increased fishing pressure, whereas 17 percent was spent on measures known to support healthy fisheries."

Key findings from the study include:

- Construction and modernisation - Almost 3,000 new vessels were constructed and nearly 8,000 were modernised with FIFG funds.
- Scrapping - Twice as much funding went for the scrapping of small (less than 12 meters) vessels than for their modernisation and construction. Vessels over 24 meters received significantly more monies for modernisation and construction than for scrapping.
- Environmental impact - The construction and modernisation of vessels enables overfishing of several key European fish stocks, such as Southern hake, monkfish, sharks and prawns.

This study analyses the 2000-2006 FIFG data from the fishsubsidy.org Web site. For the current funding cycle (2007-2013), subsidies are allocated by the European Fisheries Fund. Its tighter disclosure criteria make a similar allocation study impossible.

"Transparency has been removed with the new funding instrument. The public have a right to know what they have funded," said Markus Knigge, policy and research director at the Pew Environment Group. "Fish stocks are a public resource that the European Commission and member states are responsible for managing sustainably on our behalf. Instead public monies have funded overfishing, with devastating effects on the marine environment and fisheries dependent communities."

The subsidy allocations for each of the 10 EU member states covered by the study are Denmark (5 percent), Italy (11 percent), France (9 percent), Germany (3 percent), Greece (5.5 percent), Poland (3 percent), Portugal (5 percent), Spain (46 percent), Sweden (2 percent) and the United Kingdom (5 percent).

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Notes

- FIFG 2000-2006 Shadow Evaluation is available here <www.pewenvironment.eu/FIFG-evaluation>.
- In the upcoming days, the European Commission will publish its own evaluation of the FIFG 2000 - 2006.
- Poseidon works globally providing advice on the production, management, processing and marketing/trade of fisheries and aquaculture products, as well as on marine environmental issues. Their clients include international and bilateral donor agencies, national and local governments, the private sector and NGOs.
- The vessels that have received subsidies and been found guilty of fisheries infringements are available here: <http://fishsubsidy.org/infringements> <<http://fishsubsidy.org/infringements>>.
- fishsubsidy.org is co-ordinated by EU Transparency, a non-profit organisation in the UK and Kaas and Mulvad, an investigative journalism and data analysis partnership in Denmark. The aim is to obtain detailed data relating to payments and recipients of fisheries subsidies in every EU member state and make this data available in a way that is useful to European citizens. The fishsubsidy.org project is supported the Pew Environment Group.
- The Pew Environment Group, the conservation arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, strives to advance scientific understanding of the causes, consequences and solutions to environmental problems, to design innovative policy solutions to these problems, and to mobilise public support for implementing these solutions. The objective of the Pew Environment Group's European Marine Programme is to support the European Union in ending global overfishing and reducing destruction of the world's oceans.