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.....News Release.....

CRUNCH MEETING ON FUTURE OF EU COD RECOVERY

EU's Regional Advisory Councils Symposium on Europe's Cod Stocks is booked out

The failing EU Cod Recovery Programme has prompted the North Western Waters and the North Sea Regional Advisory Councils to host a joint **Symposium on Cod Recovery on 9 and 10 March next in Edinburgh**. The Symposium, one of the most critical debates ever held on EU Cod Recovery, is set to offer findings that will inform the RACs's advice to the EU Fisheries Commission on their soon to be revised Cod Recovery Programme.

The Symposium's line-up of world-class scientists and environmentalists, who will join forces with fishing industry representatives and other RAC stakeholders in Edinburgh next month, has led to unprecedented demand from delegates for Symposium bookings. As a result, event organisers have been forced to close further delegate registration.

The Symposium's two-day programme will be officially opened with a message from Commissioner Borg, followed by the Symposium keynote speech from Mr. Fokion Fotiadis, the EU Commission's recently appointed Director General of Fisheries. Fotiadis's presence underlines the Commission's active involvement in the event, as will the presence of EU Commission representatives Mr. Ernesto Penas Lado (DG Fisheries) and Mr. Jose Rizo Martin (DG Environment). They will speak respectively on the Common Fisheries Policy and Cod Recovery and on Recovery from an Environmental Perspective. Their presentations follow the session's initial address by Mr. Martin Pastoors, chairman of the highly regarded International Council for the Exploration of the Sea's (ICES) Advisory Committee on Fishery Management, whose findings on European cod stocks should make for interesting listening.

One of the programme's most controversial topics will be covered by UK science environmentalist, Mr. Chris Reid. His paper will focus on the effect climate change is placing on fish stocks, including cod. The Canadian and Norwegian approaches to Cod Recovery will also feature on the programme which will offer an Examination of Cod

Recovery Experiences outside the EU via high profile Canadian fisheries scientist, Mr. George Rose and Norwegian expert Peter Gullestad.

Dr. Tom Pickerell of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and one of the organisers of the event, stated that it is imperative that we consider similar examples from around the world. “The collapsed cod stocks of Canada have still not recovered after 15 years of closure. The fishery, and thousands of jobs that depended on it, disappeared virtually overnight after ineffective management decisions were taken. The participation of a wide variety of stakeholders at this Symposium demonstrates the desire to avoid the Canadian scenario in our waters and the willingness to work together to consider just how cod stocks can be restored and the industry sustained.”

During the Symposium, stakeholders will be given every opportunity to discuss the issues raised by speakers and to comment on why Cod has not recovered in their area and on what action should be taken to improve stocks in European waters.

Day two of the meeting will consider the future of the Cod industry and will highlight future management objectives and measures for Cod Recovery. In this section, the use of the latest technical measures in Cod Recovery will be presented by Mr. Dominic Rihan, Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) the Irish Sea Fisheries Board and chairman of the ICES - FAO Working Group on Fishing Technology & Fish Behaviour. Dr. Mike Kaiser of Bangor University will also address and discuss alternative management measures. In addition, the hot topic of the Days at Sea regime will be thoroughly examined in this session.

Delegates will participate in a series of working groups to cover issues critical to any future, workable Cod Recovery plan. Ranked high in workshop discussions will be how closer co-operation can be established between fishers, scientists and managers. The need to avoid inefficiency in the management regime will also be highlighted as will the future role the RACs might play in any new Cod Recovery plan.

Closing remarks will be given by Ambassador Steffen Smidt, former Director General of Fisheries and now Permanent Representative of Denmark to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD.

Commenting in the lead-up to the Symposium, Mr. Barrie Deas, Chief Executive of the National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations and member of the North Western Waters and North Sea Regional Advisory Council said:

“The stakeholders attending the RACs’ Cod Recovery Symposium are all committed to Cod Recovery. The huge interest shown in the Symposium clearly demonstrates the active and very real interest we all have in making Cod Recovery work effectively. However, major questions have been raised about whether we have the right Cod Recovery Programme. This Symposium should help us answer this and other related questions. The event’s main purpose is to question whether cod is recoverable and, if so, how do we do it?”

Symposium delegate registration has closed due to unprecedented subscription for delegate places. However, Symposium organisers are offering a post-Symposium Report to any interested parties. Reports will be obtainable from either the Secretariat of the North Sea RAC ann.bell@aberdeenshire.gov.uk, or the Secretariat of the North Western Waters RAC nwwrac@bim.ie. A full and detailed document on the EU Cod Recovery Programme is available at www.nsrac.org

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Information Note on the North Western Waters and North Sea
Regional Advisory Councils

The NWWRAC and the NSRAC are two of seven Regional Advisory Councils, advising on the Baltic Sea; Mediterranean Sea; North Sea; North western waters; South-western waters; pelagic stocks and High seas/long distant water fleets. The RACs were established by Council Regulation and are implemented by Commission Regulation.

The principal aim of the RACs is to bring together stakeholders, including fishermen, environmentalists, anglers, consumers and aquaculture from across Europe, to advise the Commission on matters of fisheries management in respect of the various areas.

The objective is to work towards integrated and sustainable management of fisheries in the wider context of the sustainability of the marine environment and to prepare and provide advice on the management of the fisheries on behalf of stakeholders in order to promote the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy.

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