

## Editorial

AT THE BEGINNING of the year the European Community agreed upon a common fisheries policy, and in doing so the Community has shown itself capable of further development. The essence of the common policy consists of freedom of access of all Community countries to the fishing grounds of the member states, together with measures of conservation to ensure against over-fishing and a system of Community control to ensure enforcement. These basic measures are supplemented by a marketing organization and a policy of restructuring the fishing industry and its equipment so as to make it viable under present conditions.

Under the 1972 Act of Accession Britain was given a derogation in respect of the nautical limit of six miles where only the traditional fishing rights of other Community countries could be exercised. This limit has now been extended to twelve nautical miles and the derogation will continue until the end of 1992. Unless the Council otherwise decides it will also continue for another ten years after that.

The Council has fixed by Regulation the total allowable catch (TAC) for 1982 (and continuing) in respect of each species, and has allocated quotas of each catch to each of the member states. A total grant of 250 m. ECUs has been appropriated to the structural policy, half of which will be devoted to the construction and modernization of fishing vessels and one quarter towards a policy of adjusting capacity by withdrawal over the next three years. The balance will be used for the promotion of fish-farming, exploratory fishing and joint ventures.

One of the striking features of the policy is to be seen in its international aspects. An agreement made in 1966 between Denmark, Norway and Sweden concerning mutual access to fishing grounds in the Skagerrak and the Kattegat has now been superseded by an agreement initialled on 14 January 1983 between the Community, Norway and Sweden, reaffirming access to the fishing grounds; prescribing suitable restrictions as to mesh sizes and fishing periods; and laying down the TAC for each of the parties. It is the duty of the Commission to fix the date on which the catches taken by fishing vessels flying the flag of or registered in a member state have exhausted the share of the TAC available to the Community.

Agreements also exist with Canada, the United States, Spain, the Faroes, Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. Negotiations are proceeding with Mauretania and Cape Verde and will be pursued with other countries in Africa and the Caribbean. In addition the Community participates in international conventions covering the North-West and North-East Atlantic and the Antarctic, as well as salmon fishing in the North Atlantic.

Negotiations are also proceeding for the Community to participate in the tuna fish and whaling conventions as well as the organizations which exist for regulating fisheries in the Baltic and in Central and the South-East Atlantic.

At the same time the Committee on Agriculture of the European Parliament, of which Mr. Gautier is the *rapporteur*, has drawn up a Community fisheries policy for the Mediterranean. This is important as an end in itself to preserve the fish and the possibilities of employment of the fishermen of the Mediterranean countries. Although the size of the Mediterranean is only two and a half million square kilometres for 23,000 kilometres of coastline, the number of Community fishermen active in the Mediterranean is about 1.3 times higher than those operating in the North Sea and other waters, and accounts for 35 per cent of the Community fisheries output by value.

The fisheries policy has however a wider significance, for it entails provisions dealing with the pollution of the Sea, as well as provisions for limiting the periods of fishing. This requires agreement with all the Mediterranean countries. Furthermore, in order to protect the rights of Community fishermen from the Mediterranean the policy also extends to agreement with countries on the West African coast where much of the Community fishing is done. The agreements with Senegal and Guinea-Bissau give EEC fishermen the right to work in relatively well-stocked waters, and not only provide for fees to be paid to these developing countries, but also training for their fishermen and the right to work in EEC vessels.

Fish is not only important to France, Greece and Italy, but it is of vital interest to the applicants Spain and Portugal. The general extension of the fishing zone to 200 nautical miles has now made it imperative for the Community to come to agreement with other Mediterranean countries, in particular Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Yugoslavia. By adopting a positive policy to pollution (the Mediterranean renews itself only in 80 years) and by the promotion of a better standard of living for fishermen and a more rational use of resources including innovation in both sea-water and fresh-water fish-farming, it is hoped to benefit not only producers but also the consumers.

The fisheries policy is only part of a more ambitious proposal for a general Mediterranean plan by the Community designed to facilitate the accession of Spain and Portugal through the promotion of agriculture and industry in the whole Mediterranean basin. This may mean an unwelcome extension of the common agricultural policy, on which negotiations will be difficult. Taken as a whole however these developments indicate the vitality of the Community and the important part it has to play in the stabilization of the Mediterranean region.