

AGENDA FOR WOMEN IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN EUROPE

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FEMMES project members

Université de Bretagne Occidentale, CEDEM, France
U. La Laguna, I. U. Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, España
Femmes entre Terre et Mer, France
U. Madeira Departamento das Ciências de Educação, Portugal
Österbottens Fiskarförbund r.f., Vaasa, Finland
Confraría de Pescadores de Cambados, Galice, España
Mútua dos Pescadores, Portugal

The programme 'FEMMES', funded by the European Commission under the 5th Framework Programme for Research has organized a series of meetings and other interactions between women in fisheries and aquaculture in Europe. It has encouraged exchanges among women in fisheries and aquaculture, their organisations and researchers working on related issues. This interactive process has highlighted the concerns of the women whose lives and livelihoods are dependent on coastal and inland fisheries, but who are largely invisible to the public eye. They are mostly excluded from a legitimate legal status, from formal recognition, from participation in fisheries decision-making processes, and from access to credit, training and social security. Our interactions have helped evolve an agenda for action that we collectively feel needs to be implemented. Gender-sensitive fisheries policies are an essential step in maintaining the cultures and livelihoods of fishing populations.

Women have a long historical attachment to fisheries; family-based fisheries are their way of life, and they are experienced and knowledgeable workers who are essential to the resilience of Europe's coastal communities. Already vulnerable, the lives and livelihoods of these communities are increasingly threatened by resource degradation, poor management, inappropriate technology, intensive aquaculture, mass tourism, and gender-insensitive fisheries policies.

Our discussions have highlighted many issues that require immediate attention by policy-makers at national and European levels.

These issues relate to:

- The need to document the history, nature and scale of women's roles and contributions to fisheries in Europe;
- The establishment of statistical data within fisheries based on gender;
- The establishment of a women's unit within the fisheries departments of each country;
- The establishment of a women's unit within the Directorate-General of Fisheries of the European Commission;
- The integration of a specific gender focus in policy papers in fisheries;
- The investigation of the equality deficit through gender mainstreaming;
- The formal recognition of women's contributions in production and fisheries related activities;
- The formal recognition of women's right to represent the interests of the fishing enterprises within which they are primary actors;

- The need to document the ways in which women's roles in fisheries have changed over the last decades, and whether any of these changes have led to the abandoning of activities linked to fisheries;
- The gender sensitisation of fisheries education.

More specifically:

A.- WOMEN IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

I. Institute legal recognition of work done collaboratively by women and fishermen's spouses in fisheries, aquaculture and shell fishing.

1.1. Assign legal status, to the managerial work done by women in the operation of extractive fishing enterprises (such as administration, book-keeping, sales, etc.) in the countries where it does not already exist.

1.2. Assign legal status to women who practice aquaculture or shellfish/seaweed gathering on shore (i.e.. *mariscadoras*).

1.3. Inform women and men about the benefits of legal recognition in the countries where it exists.

1.4. Develop consensus on access to social benefits for women. All stakeholders having relations with social welfare issues (such as women's organisations, fishermen's social security insurance, administrations with jurisdiction over fisheries industries and women's equality) should meet with the objective to harmonize national legislation to the European Directive of 1986 (EU directive 86/613)¹.

1.5. Examine the possibility of reconstituting rights of access to social benefit linked to the legal status dating at least back to 1986, the year of the European Directive 86/613 which instructs all Member States to establish such status, especially for collaborative spouses and those working in production.

II. Recognition and promotion of activities linked to fishing

2.1. Recognise as a profession fisheries-related activities conducted by women, such as net mending, and fish selling.

2.2. Improve the working conditions of these activities.

III. Support for women's initiatives

3.1. Make accessible support programmes (financing, training, etc.) for women who want to develop their own fishery enterprise.

3.2. Make accessible support programmes (financing, training,) for the development of new activities initiated by women aimed at complementing the income of fishing dependant family businesses.

3.3. Develop micro-credit schemes to support these women in case of cash-flow difficulties.

IV. Improving labour conditions and safety on shore and at sea for women and men

4.1. Ensure the implementation and compliance of existing legislation on labour standards and maritime safety, including safety at sea.

4.2. Recognise occupational illness and institute compensatory measures.

4.3. Provide education on safety measures and to dispel gendered/discriminatory taboos and norms.

B. WOMEN AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

I. Access to representation

1.1. Recognise and support women fishers' entry to and participation in male dominated fishers' organisations and trade unions.

1.2. Give women and men equal rights to represent the family enterprise in all decision-making instances (voting rights in fishers' organisations, financial commitments, etc.).

1.3. Give crewmen's wives the right to be on fisheries committees in the absence of their husband or partner.

1.4. Give women's organisations in fisheries the right of representation in public decision making bodies and professional organisations.

II. Support for women's organisations

2.1. Provide financial support to women's organisations and networks.

2.2. Provide political and material support to actions initiated by women's organisations for the improvement and promotion of artisanal fisheries.

2.3. Provide support for exchanges and networking among women's organisations at national and international levels.

C. WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE SOCIAL REPRODUCTION OF FISHING CULTURES

I. Transmission of fisheries heritage

- 1.1. Recognise the relevance of practical learning processes in fisheries, and the relevance of women and men of older generations in the transmission of experience, technical knowledge, and even a way of life.
- 1.2. Recognise and support women's reproductive roles in sustaining fishing communities and their culture, contributing to the recruitment and rearing of new generations to fisheries.

D. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

I. Equal rights

- 1.1. Abolish all forms of gender discrimination hindering access to fisheries-related professions and to resources.
- 1.2. Grant equal hereditary access rights to males and females.

II. Access to training and validation of experience

- 2.1. Increase opportunities for accessibility to training for women and men (including crew's wives) in fisheries and aquaculture with financial incentives; such training should give access to recognized diplomas.
- 2.2. Give women and men in fisheries and aquaculture access to experience validation schemes.

Footnote:

¹ Council directive on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity and on the protection of self-employment women during pregnancy and motherhood.

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<http://www.fishwomen.org/>



D. G. Fisheries, UE
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Departamento das
Ciências de Educação



Université de Bretagne
Occidentale, CEDEM



Universidad
de La Laguna
I.U. de Ciencias Políticas
y Sociales