

## Sustainable fishing in the Var (France). Why co-management would not fit?

**Within the Framework of PELA-Med project, Small-scale fishers from the Var have met their Catalan colleagues last week. Sharing experience about benefits of a shared management between fishers, administration, environmental NGOs and scientists. This is working every day in Catalonia (Spain).**

**Fishers from the Var are working together to discover this new governance mode.**

Facing the accelerated decline in fish stocks and increasingly drastic regulations, small-scale fishermen in Catalonia felt the need to move towards more concerted modes of governance and adaptive management. To this end, some Catalan *cofradias*, in close collaboration with the administration, scientists and non-governmental organisations, have set up co-management committees to draw up management plans for the species concerned, such as sand eel and cuttlefish. Active since 2012, they have now demonstrated their ability to act, together, by obtaining positive results both on the recovery of stocks of certain species (about 10 are co-managed) and on the economic value of their catches (selling price of sandeels multiplied by 3 in 7 years).

**Thanks to these 4 days trip organized in the frame of PELA-Méd project (Pêcheurs Engagés pour l'Avenir de la Méditerranée), jointly led by Planète Mer and the Var fisheries committee (CDPMEM Var) and accompanied by the Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) Platform, 10 small-scale fishers, representing 9 *prud'homies* from the Var have discovered the *Cofradias'* functioning. From Palamos to Escala, going through Arenys de Mar, they have met the players from the Catalan comanagement scheme: fishers of course, but also the fishing and maritime affairs direction from Catalunya, WWF Spain fisheries officer (participating to the comanagement) and scientists from the Girona University (aquatic ecology institute).**

**"More motivated than ever!" claims Pierre Morera, the Var fisheries committee chair.** "Discussions with our Catalan colleagues showed us that it is possible for us, fishers, to put in place easy and efficient solutions to sustainably manage our resources. For example, Catalan fishers are growing cuttlefish and squid eggs into traps to protect them before hatching in the environment. We should have thought about that!"

"I consider very interesting and promising the relationship that has been (re) built between fishers, administration, scientists and NGOs. This fits perfectly with the way we are working at Planète Mer. It needs time. But above all, there is a need to rebuild trust in order to create a true dialog that only works if everybody is committed. It is a great challenge to take up for PELA-Méd, and widely speaking, for the fishing sector in France!" **adds Laurent Debas, Planète Mer director.**

**Marta Cavallé, coordinating LIFE work in the Mediterranean,** considers that “it is essential for us to support and encourage this sharing of experience between Small-scale fishers in Europe as a first step to inspire and provide tools for deeper change in the different local communities. This trip highlighted the full benefit of a constructive dialogue on co-management, a paradigm shift we believe is the key for the future of European fisheries.”

PELA-Méd is a territory development project for and by Small-scale fishers. It aims to contribute to the definition of long-term management measures for small-scale artisanal fishing, to increase the economic profitability of fishing companies in the Var, and to restore and co-manage fish stocks in coastal areas.

It is run by Planète Mer and funded by France Filière Pêche and the Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation.

It brings together 11 of the 13 Var *prud’homies* from the Var and about 180 fishers.

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**PLANETE MER** is an association whose mission is to preserve marine life and the human activities that depend on it. Today, it focuses its actions on two main themes, implemented by a multidisciplinary team: (1) Raise awareness and get involved to preserve marine biodiversity (France) through BioLit, a national participatory science programme on coastal biodiversity, and its little brother BioLit Junior; (2) Work for responsible fishing (France). For eight years, Planète Mer has been working with fishermen to find and implement solutions that meet the challenges of the sector.

**CDPMEM du Var:** is an interprofessional organisation of sea fishing and marine farming sector with the entire Var area (France) as its territory of competence. It is a professional body governed by private law responsible for public service missions. Its missions are to represent and defend the general interests of fishermen before regional and national public authorities; to participate in the management of fisheries resources within the framework of responsible fishing and sustainable development; to promote the trades, men and women in the sector

**LIFE** is a platform managed by and for fishermen at European level. Its mission is to serve, build capacity and give a clear and coherent voice to the large number of fishermen who work on a small scale and use gear and methods that have a low impact on the environment.

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