

LIFE ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Uniting European Small-Scale Fishers to Achieve Fair Fisheries, Healthy Seas and Vibrant Communities



Cover photo: Margarita Serra Tur, Cabo de Gata

1. INTRODUCTION

2021 has proved to be a busy and fruitful year for LIFE. At **European level** our work has focussed on following and intervening in the policy making processes that affect small-scale fisheries. At **seabasin level and at the water-face**, LIFE has been active mainly in the Mediterranean and Black seas. The engagement of LIFE and our collaboration with members in other sea basins, notably the Baltic and North Sea, has lacked the same level of support as in the Mediterranean. Thanks to a new 5 year partnership with **Velux Fonden**, that will change in the coming period.

The **issue of fish as food as well as a source of livelihood** has loomed large in LIFE's work. With the pandemic still very present and impacting in our daily lives, small-scale low impact fishing continues to be an essential primary food producing sector all over Europe, providing livelihoods and supporting socio-economic activity. These fishers represent 50% of the workforce in fishing, providing much needed jobs and the basis of economic and cultural activities in coastal communities.

Fishing communities have shown themselves to be highly resilient. However, the pandemic has highlighted just how unsustainable and vulnerable our food systems are to such external shocks. In particular seafood delivery systems and value chains that we rely on for delivering large quantities of food "just in time", need to be strengthened, simplified and shortened to make them more resilient. This strengthens our resolve to establish fairer and more sustainable food systems for small-scale low impact producers, linking producers and consumers more directly.

Two key issues - **fair access to fisheries resources** and **fair access to markets** - have framed LIFE's work in 2021. These are also key targets of SDG 14, articulated through SDG target 14b (to provide access of small-scale artisanal fisheries to marine resources and markets).



SDG 14b has yet to be explicitly recognised by the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) or by EU Member States in their policies. For this to happen, it requires that the CFP applies a differentiated approach to the management of large scale and small-scale fisheries – something that LIFE continues to strive for.

We are very grateful to **LIFE's staff and Board of Directors** for the essential role they play in sustaining LIFE and keeping Europe's small-scale fishers at the decision-making tables and in the public eye.

We are also extremely grateful to the support we receive from our partners, notably the **MAVA Foundation** and **Marilles Foundation**. A special thanks is due to LIFE's 32 Member Organizations and to the thousands of small-scale fishers for their work at the waterfront, for their courage against difficult odds, and for putting delicious, wholesome and healthy food on our tables.

2. FAIR ACCESS TO FISHERIES RESOURCES: RULING ON BLUEFIN TUNA QUOTAS IN FRANCE ADDRESSES HISTORICAL INJUSTICES

Since LIFE's inception in 2012, we have called for fishing rights to be provided to those who fish in the most sustainable way, and who provide the greatest benefits to society. Thus the proper implementation of Article 17, in both the spirit and the letter of the law, is a corner stone of LIFE's work. Its proper implementation is key for achieving **fair access to resources** for small-scale low impact fishers. The blocking small-scale fishers' access to quota species is a historical injustice that LIFE urgently seeks to redress.

In 2021, a milestone was achieved by LIFE members in France. Thanks to a [legal challenge](#) mounted by the Union of Small-scale Fishers of Occitanie and other French partners, the French courts found that the rules used by the French government to allocate Bluefin tuna fishing opportunities were illegal – lacking transparency and objectivity as required by the CFP Article 17, and not complying with the French Rural Code. We await the outcome of an appeal by the French government.



3. FAIR ACCESS TO MARKETS: BUILDING ALLIANCES BETWEEN SMALL-SCALE FISHERS AND OTHER SMALL-SCALE FOOD PRODUCERS TO DRIVE FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

In March, LIFE together with the MAVA Foundation, Slow Food, GoB Menorca and the Global Footprint Network (GFN) launched the [Foodnected Project](#). This aims to address shortcomings in the prevailing market system and is an attempt to reverse the unfair situation faced by small-scale food producers. The project is initially centred in the Balearic islands and Costa Brava in Spain and Sicily in Italy, where direct marketing schemes and local communities of practice are being developed.



LIFE has also been active in international and European processes towards **food systems that are fairer and more sustainable.**

- ▶ LIFE **participated in various formal and informal panel discussions** around the Covid pandemic and “blue food” (as seafood is now being called), the [EU Green Deal](#) and the [UN Food Systems Summit](#)
- ▶ Going forward, LIFE is committed to engaging with the **EU’s Farm to Fork Strategy - for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system**, and to ensure that small-scale fisheries are given prominence.
- ▶ LIFE also participated in a COP 26 event organized by the **Transform Bottom Trawling Coalition**. One of the biggest existential challenges facing the European fishing sector is decarbonization. **Fossil fuels are the Achilles heel** of the fishing sector, which it is currently able to access tax free. The economics of fishing is highly sensitive to the price of such fuel. **The European Green Deal** proposes a carbon neutral sector by 2050. This will be an enormous challenge, and will require a fundamental change to the way that fishing is conducted. There are far ranging implications for the fisheries sector, and the transition process is likely to be difficult and painful - affecting all parts of the value chain and fleet segments. To drive this transition process, LIFE urges that extensive use is made of Article 17 to encourage a transition to low impact, low carbon, socially just fishing.
- ▶ Due to lack of capacity, SSF find it difficult to access markets. LIFE has therefore been **lobbying for the CMO regulation to be adapted to needs of SSF** to enable them to establish **Fish Producer Organizations (FPOs)** and similar structures. LIFE has published a report with **Guidelines** for setting up SSF POs, and we organized a webinar training session on **SSF POs** in June to promote these structures.

4. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES: LIFE AT THE WATERFACE

MEDITERRANEAN

LIFE puts equal priority on supporting its members at the local and national levels, and on making their voices heard at regional, European and international levels. However, due to a lack of capacity, LIFE **decided to pull out of the Mediterranean and Black Sea Advisory Council (MedAC)**.

LIFE will **continue its involvement with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and Black Sea (GFCM)**, particularly with regard to the implementation of the **Regional Plan of Action for Small-scale Fisheries** (RPOA SSF) and the work of the working group **“Friends of SSF”**. LIFE has also been active in the **GFCM Small-scale Fishers Forum initiative**, which in 2021 organized some important webinars – notably on the role of women along the value chain (July), and on co-management (October).

Co-management continues to be a central plank of LIFE’s work. Good governance is essential for fair fisheries, and co-management is an **important tool for improving governance by bringing fishers from the periphery to the centre of decision taking**, including different local and regional realities and building on the experience and skills of people who directly depend on the fishery. LIFE and its members are working to implement co-management schemes in **5 different sites in the Mediterranean**. Of particular note is that the co-management plan for SSF has recently been approved in the **Balearic Islands**.

- ▶ In July, LIFE organized a **training webinar**, informing national authorities in the Balearic islands, Malta, and Cyprus, and building on the examples of the autonomous regional government of Catalonia and Galicia.
- ▶ LIFE also took part in the **Forum on Fisheries Co-management** in Catalonia in October.
- ▶ A **detailed report and guidelines on co-management** were published by LIFE.
- ▶ Marta Cavallé, LIFE’s Mediterranean Coordinator, made a presentation to the **Forum of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean** on improved governance of MPAS through a partnership approach, and the relevance of co-management.



Photo: Annya Crane, Menorca

BALTIC AND NORTH SEAS

In the Baltic and North Seas, LIFE member organizations have continued to be a positive presence in the Executive Committee of the Baltic Sea Advisory Council, where their input has highlighted the perverse and distorted situation as regards access to the [cod fishery](#). Their work has also shone light on the very worrying situation of the [European eel](#), the important role of SSF in its conservation, and the importance of keeping the fishery open.

5. INTERNAL PROCESSES

LIFE Fisher Forum and General Assembly – LIFE renews its Board of Directors

At the start of November, LIFE organized a [Fishers' Forum and General Assembly](#). LIFE members adopted a statement on the implementation of the CFP, adopted modifications to LIFE's Statutes, internal regulations and approved LIFE's strategy for 2020-2025. Finally, and importantly a new, regionally based Board of Directors was elected.



LIFE Staff

In 2021 LIFE's staff team has gone from strength to strength. **Sarah Namann** joined the Brussels Office as Marketing and Communications Officer, and 3 new members have joined our Mediterranean Team – **in the Balearic islands Marga Serra and Annya Crane** are supporting our work with the **Marilles Foundation**, and **in Sicily Manuela Trovato** is providing socio-economic expertise to the **Foodneted and co-management projects**. **Jacques Bouché**, former Chief Operating Officer of the European Foundation Centre, has been helping LIFE to present itself to philanthropic foundations with good success.

We look forward to welcoming **Christian Tsangarides** as **Baltic and North Sea Coordinator** in January 2022. Sadly, in early 2022 we say goodbye to **Anna Masdeu**, who has led LIFE's work in the Balearic islands. She leaves LIFE to run her family food stores, including selling fish. We wish her and her family the best of success in their ventures, and look forward to keeping in touch. LIFE's Spanish team will take over her responsibilities between them, with **Marga Serra** in overall charge. LIFE's Alboran Sea Project Officer, **Macarena Molina**, was chosen by the MAVA Foundation to star in a film profiling her work - [A Fisher's Wisdom](#).

Strategic Alliances

Looking forward, LIFE has established a **new 5 year partnership with the Velux Fonden**, which will support **LIFE's work in the Baltic and North Sea region up to 2027**.

LIFE has formed strategic alliances with various NGOs to build synergies around fisheries control, subsidies and CFP reform.

- ▶ In particular LIFE linked up with **Our Fish** to publish **a report on Article 17, highlighting its potential to transform European fisheries** into a low impact, low carbon and socially just sector.
- ▶ With **Client Earth**, LIFE has signed up to **a declaration and joined a campaign calling for the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund to be directed towards supporting sustainable and socially just initiatives**.
- ▶ LIFE has also been a partner of **Client Earth** in **legal action taken against the Dutch fisheries inspectorate for failing to provide adequate checks on fish landings**.



Photo: Marta Cavallé, Cabo de Gata

6. LOOKING FORWARD

As 2021 comes to an end, we are gearing up for 2022 which will celebrate the **International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA)**. In the EU, the **implementation of the CFP** will be scrutinized, and an **Action Plan to Conserve Fisheries Resources and Protect Marine Ecosystems** will be published.

The European Parliament Fisheries (Peche) Committee is publishing reports on the small-scale fisheries situation in the EU and future perspectives; the implementation of Article 17 of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation; and the State of play in the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and future perspectives.

2022 looks like being another busy year, and we hope it will be productive and meaningful for small-scale fishers wherever you are. Remember, SSF are the cream of the catch – providing high quality fresh fish for direct human consumption and 50% of the jobs at sea.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
ARTISANAL FISHERIES
AND AQUACULTURE

2022



Photo: Annya Crane, Menorca

ANNEX

LIFE Statement on the Implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy Adopted Unanimously at LIFE's General Assembly Meeting November 6 2021

The Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) was launched in 2012 on the eve of a newly reformed Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) to unite European small-scale fishers to achieve fair fisheries, healthy seas and vibrant communities.

LIFE Platform set itself the task to provide a clear and coherent voice at EU level for the previously mainly silent majority of European fishers, who are smaller scale and who use low impact fishing gears and methods, but who have historically lacked dedicated and effective representation in Brussels and at Member State level.

Meeting on November 5 and 6 2021 in General Assembly, LIFE Members note with concern that:

Systemic failure of Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) implementation is undermining its objectives, and this is disproportionately affecting us, the small-scale low impact coastal fishers, and undermining the sustainability of our communities and the natural resources on which we depend.

Eight years after the adoption of the reformed CFP in 2013 and its implementation in 2014, the intended improvement in sustainability outcomes for the small-scale low impact fleets across the EU are not being delivered, and the opportunity to harness our potential to achieve wider social, environmental and economic sustainability goals is being squandered.

To address this, LIFE calls for a review of the implementation of the CFP in 2022 which provides for:

Fair Access to Fishery Resources for Small-scale Low Impact Fishers

Despite comprising around 75% of the active EU fishing fleet by vessel numbers and providing 50% of sea-going employment, lack of sufficient fishing opportunities means that our sector is only able to land 5% of the EU's catch. LIFE welcomes the inclusion of Article 17 in the 2013 CFP as a tool designed to reward those who fish in the most sustainable way and who provide the greatest benefit to society with priority access to resources. However, in its current form Article 17 is inherently flawed and is designed to fail.

To be fit for purpose, Article 17 requires that the European Commission has a clearly defined role in overseeing its implementation and in providing Member States with guidelines on the use of, and examples of, criteria of an environmental, social and economic nature to achieve the desired socio-economic and environmental outcomes of fair fisheries, healthy seas and vibrant communities.

LIFE calls for the fishing rights of small-scale low impact fishing fleets to be ring-fenced against privatization or transfer to larger scale fishing companies. Legal provisions need to be put in place to prevent the concentration of fishing rights in the hands of relatively few companies and speculative trading markets for fishing quotas, activities that have detrimental environmental and socio-economic impacts.

LIFE also calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure full transparency on the allocation of fishing opportunities by making public the details of the companies and vessels to whom fishing opportunities have been allocated.

Secure Fishing Areas, and a Say in how they are Managed

Our fishing areas are increasingly invaded by larger scale intensive high impact fishing activities, which have a detrimental effect on both the fishery resources and the marine environment. This impacts negatively on our livelihoods, reduces our catches, and undermines the future prospects for our sons and daughters. We call for all inshore fishing areas up to a depth of 50 metres or out to 6 miles from the baselines to be reserved for small-scale low impact fishing activities under co-management regimes.

Under the right circumstances, fisheries co-management can provide the basis for a more effective delivery of socio-economic and environmental benefits from fisheries management. It involves a “a partnership arrangement between government and the local community of fishers, sometimes also connected with agents such as NGOs, research institutions, and other resource stakeholders, to share the responsibility and authority for management of a resource”.

The CFP should recognize the importance of co-management and promote and support co-management initiatives.

Public monies for public good not individual gain, to help us to fish better not to fish more

The misuse of public funds through the European Structural Funds (EMFF) has created a distorted sea in Europe, benefitting fishing companies with larger scale high impact fishing operations with windfall subsidies to invest in vessels and gear. This gives them an unfair advantage and contributes to overfishing and environmental degradation. It is also contrary to SDG 14.6, which commits States to: “by 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing, and refrain from introducing new such subsidies.”

Fisheries and the marine environment are public resources that need conserving in a sustainable manner if fishing is to have a future. This requires giving attention to the three pillars of sustainability – the environmental as well as the social and economic pillars. LIFE therefore urges that under the new European funding scheme for the maritime sector – the EMFAF - that priority is given to protecting the environment and conserving fish stocks, and to supporting collective projects that contribute to social and economic sustainability of fishing communities.

By-catch and Discards

An instrument like the landing obligation makes no sense for the conservation of fish stocks, is of questionable use for scientific stock assessment, and is a huge burden to fishers. Discarding must be done in the sea through the high selectivity of the fishing gears. Those gears that have a by-catch rate higher than 5% of non-target species and of fish below minimum size should not be licensed to fish.

Fisheries Control Based on Risk of Infraction

Our fleet segment contributes 5% of the catch by volume, we have a comparatively low impact on the environment, and we are happy to comply with sensible, practical and bespoke control measures for our fleet segment. We call for control measures to be applied proportionately, using a risk-based approach to fisheries control and enforcement, that focuses on those fleet segments that have the highest risk of infraction and where infraction is likely to cause a significant breach of fishing

regulations. For example, in fisheries activities where the risk of significant by catch and discarding is high.

Encouragement, Training and Support for Fishers of the Future

The average age of fishers is increasing faster than the population as a whole, and younger generations are losing interest in taking up fishing as a livelihood. Special effort is needed to encourage, train and support younger generations to take up small-scale low impact fishing either as a way of life or as a part-time activity combined with several other livelihood activities, including combining tourism and fishing.

Fair Access to Markets

Small-scale low impact fishers provide the cream of the catch – catch of the day fresh fish of a high quality for direct human consumption, supplied locally, seasonally diverse, caught in a sustainable manner, contributing to the socio-economic well-being of our communities and rooted in our shared maritime cultural heritage.

The inherent value of our fish catches is not being realised, and we as fishers are losing out as price takers in a market where supply and demand determine prices – set according to the volume of landings from the larger scale sector and the prices offered by large retailers. This is undermining the viability of our businesses. To obtain their full added value and a fair price, our products need to be differentiated on the market, with short supply chains as direct as possible to the consumer.

We ask for support and capacity building, and an enabling policy environment, based on value not on volume, so that we can form our own small-scale producer organizations and other appropriate commercial structures through which we can organize our activities and supply our products.

Celebrate the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA)

2022 is designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA). To mark the occasion, LIFE calls on the European Commission to incorporate SDG 14b – to provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets - into the CFP objectives.

LIFE PROVISIONAL ACCOUNTS 2021

	Revenue	Expenditure
Balances carried forward to 2021	-230.119,08	
Income		
MAVA NTZ	-82.387,00	
MAVA SFFS	-67.818,00	
Marilles Foundation	-50.000,00	
Velux Fonden	-115.000,00	
Expenditure		
LIFE Brussels Office		
Staff		71.973,79
Communications etc		4.026,25
Office rent + related costs		9.848,16
Misc Overheads		4.624,67
Article 17 interpretation		3.490,00
Fishers Forum/ General Assembly		39.197,00
Mediterranean Project		
Staff and Consultants		141.863,40
Mediterranean Activities ¹		61.904,14
Subtotals	-545.324,08	336.927,41
Balance carried forward to 2022	-208.396,67 ²	

¹ Activities carried out in the framework of the MAVA Mediterranean partnership, related to co-management and reserved areas, and to the Foodnected (Sustainable and Fair Food Systems) Project

² LIFE receives multi-year funding. The carry forward does not represent an underspend