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МОРЕ /КСЧМ/

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From a meeting of Working Group 6 of BISAC

23 November, 2021

Topic: Socio-economic aspect of fishing - Impact of fisheries at local level, interaction of small-scale fishing with commercial fishing, the role of women, employment, producer organizations.

On 23 November, 2021 the Bulgarian members of BISAC met in Pomorie Town, in Pomorie Grand Hotel, and the Romanian members of BISAC met in Bucharest, and a meeting of Working Group 6 of BISAC was held via video link through ZOOM on the following topic: **"Socio-economic aspect of fishing - Impact of fisheries at local level, interaction of small-scale fishing with commercial fishing, the role of women, employment, producer organizations"**

The meeting was attended by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Violin Raykov and via video link Mrs. Pinelipi Belecku from the EC, Mrs. Yordanka Chobanova from the EC, Mr. Alexandru Simionov from NARA Constanta

The meeting was opened by the President of BISAC - Dr. Yordan Gospodinov. Greetings to the participants and guests followed.

The next is a report by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Violin Raykov prepared on behalf of BISAC on the following topic: "Report for the socio-economic situation, Covid 19 and women in fisheries and aquaculture in Bulgaria." The report emphasizes the fact that the Bulgarian fleet is facing serious problems caused by obsolete and unreliable safety equipment, inability to adapt ships to the energy efficiency standards, the introduction of individual fishing quotas and significant decline in catches of certain fish species in the Black Sea and the Danube River. Half of the vessels over 15 m (36) are old and inefficient for fishing due to lack of equipment and engines suitable for their tonnage. Despite its gradual restructuring in 2010-2012, the fleet continues suffering from structural imbalance in the Black Sea fish stocks. This is evident from the still significant number of inactive vessels in the segment up to 12 meters, which are among the main fishing vessels of turbot and rapan. A significant share of inactive vessels also belongs to the 18-24-meter segment, mainly due to the aging of ships and their economic inefficiency in fishing. The presence of a large proportion of

inactive and unused vessels in the Bulgarian fishing fleet seems to be a result of a structural problem and that is why Bulgaria needs to cope with this challenge.

The report shows that the structure of fish market in the country is still developing. There is a clear need to organize and build wholesale fish markets and fish distribution network. There is no tender system in Bulgaria. In order to implement the requirements of the EU legislation related to the common organization of the market, Bulgaria intends to set up points for the first sale of fish to ensure transparency, better data control and quality control, as well as better conditions and prices for fishermen. Domestic and marine fish supplies are made by wholesalers (or by registered buyers, in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance for the rules and regulations for first sale of fish and other aquatic organisms), many of whom also trade with other food products. They receive fresh fish from coastal wholesalers, frozen sprats from processors and frozen imported fish from importers, and supply domestic retailers and shops. The volume of fresh fish is small (perhaps less than 20% of the total catch) with sporadic supplies.

Regarding the employment of women in the sector according to NSI data for 2015, 3,500 people are engaged in the fishing sector in Bulgarian Black Sea waters. Officially, only 1% of issued licenses are to women. There is equal access, as women are free to obtain fishing licenses. According to the interviews, there is low interest of women to work in the catch industry. The available data about the presence of women in various subsectors show the following:

- Catch subsector: 1% of women, according to STECF.
- Aquaculture subsector: 32% of women, according to STECF, but the figure is significantly different from NAFA information, which shows zero participation of women.
- Processing sub-sector: 88% of women, according to the Executive Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture; insignificant participation in port activities and fishing supplies. The participation of female workers is predominant in fish markets.

In the catch subsector, only 1% of the issued fishing licenses belong to women. In the processing subsector, most of the staff working in the processing and packaging of rapan, bivalves and fish (based on interviews with individual women working in processing and all institutional stakeholders interviewed) consists of women. However, in general there is lack of information about the remuneration of women working in the fisheries sector in Bulgaria. In the processing sector, women with a low level of education have access only to low-paid jobs because the work is very hard, with low wages and unstable income in short and long term. Highly educated women who want to build a career tend to work in science and administration.

The fisheries sector is perceived as a very important and promising sector in Bulgaria and many new initiatives (including those of the EU) provide additional opportunities for hiring women, including some management positions. Difficult working conditions, with many unregulated rules and old technologies create obstacles and lack of incentives. Serious efforts are needed at European and national level to create incentives, promote and maintain favorable conditions for the development of the sector and female participation.

The presence of women in the fisheries sector is more widespread in the processing industry and fisheries-related activities. Catching and aquaculture are managed mainly by men. The demand for cheap labor, as well as unattractive working conditions explains the employment of low-educated or uneducated women in the sector.

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the Structural Funds should be used to provide more vocational training and education for women working in the fisheries sector, in order to help them access more specialized and managerial positions. In addition, it is important to set up networks to better disseminate information about training opportunities and related resources. Bulgaria should take steps to promote and achieve greater recognition of female work in the fisheries sector.

Regarding the interaction of small-scale and commercial fishing, more than 90% of fishing in the Black Sea is currently considered to be small-scale, operating in coastal waters and therefore as a livelihood tool in coastal communities. However, the benefits accruing from the Black Sea fisheries sector are not evenly distributed between different groups of vessels (for example, large-scale trawlers compared to smaller vessels using passive or polyvalent facilities). The small vessels provide 74% of employment in the Black Sea fisheries, but represent only 49% of the revenue. On average, small-scale fishermen earn about a quarter of what their trawler fellows can expect to do. This lower remuneration points to higher vulnerability of small-scale fishermen, who often work alone or in small groups and face high volatility in their catches, limited bargaining power and limited access to financial instruments, in order to invest further in their business.

The next is presentation of a letter from NARA Romania, related to the topic of the working group, prepared at the request of BISAC. In 2020, Romanian fishing fleet in the Black Sea consisted of 175 vessels / vessels, of which only 153 were licensed, 75% of the total number were active in commercial fishing, with the majority entering in the length category of 06-12 m (71.54%). In addition, 97 economic operators were licensed (commercial company, licensed individual, sole enterprise, family business, 239 divers and 405 fishermen, as the total number of employees engaged in fishing was 387 fishermen / divers; The number of employees by age is: 15-24 year-old = 19.64%, 25-39 year-old = 48.06%, 40-64 year-old = 32.30%; the number of employees according to the education degree: secondary school = 50, 13%, high school = 38.24%, higher education = 11.63%; the number of employees by nationality: 93.54% Romanians and 6.46% other nationalities (Bulgarians, Turkish).

The employment according to the status was: 93.02% of employees and 6.98% of owners.

140 vessels under 12 m, 57.14% non-motorized vessels and 42.86% motorized vessels are registered in the Romanian fleet. In order to avoid possible conflicts between small-scale fishing and commercial fishing, national legislation has introduced the following measures:

a) Commercial fishing with beam trawls is prohibited along the coast up to the 15-meter isobaths, along the entire coastline, from Midia Cape to the border with Bulgaria;

b) Commercial fishing using beam trawls on the territory of the Reserve - Danube Delta Biosphere from the shore to the 20-meter isobaths, along the entire coastline, from the border with Ukraine to Midia Cape.....

Regarding the employment of women in the sector, 98.97% of men and 1.03% of women are employed in the fishing industry in the Black Sea.

The next is presentation of a letter from NAFA Bulgaria, related to the topic of the working group, prepared at the request of BISAC. According to official data of the Agency, as a result of the fishing activities performed by the fishing fleet of 1233 active vessels in Bulgaria in 2020, 6228 tons of fish and other marine organisms have been landed, which generate revenue of 9 million BGN and gross value added of 5.5 million BGN. In social terms, according to the officially provided data that NAFA collects, for 2020 the employees in fisheries are 1754 people in total for 1233 active vessels. Of these 1754 people, the share of paid workers is 19% and the share of unpaid (family) workers is 81%.

In 2020, the small-scale fishing in Bulgaria was performed by 1148 active vessels. This part of the commercial fishing landed for the same year 1947 tons, which represents 31% of the total landing quantity for 2020. It took 14304 days in the sea. On the other hand, in 2020, large-scale fishing was performed by 85 active vessels, which landed 4,281 tons. Both sub-sectors in fisheries share common areas of the sea and share common stocks of fish species and other organisms. However, in order to assess their interaction, a significant set of methods and models are needed to calculate the productivity of the individual fleet elements.

For 2020, the employment in fisheries in Bulgaria is 1729 men, of whom 328 are paid workers and the rest - family workers. Women in the sector are 25, or 1.4% of all employees, of whom 11 are paid workers and the rest are family workers.

Currently in Bulgaria there are 2 producer organizations.

Discussions:

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: In recent years, the educational culture in the fisheries sector has significantly increased. The production is also strongly export-oriented, which contributes to the importance of the sector.

Mr. Daniel Buhai made a comment, related to the report of Assoc. Prof. Raykov, where he mentioned that in Bulgaria the fishing fleet has 5 544 kW, which is probably a mistake, because in fact it is over 50,000 kW.

Mr. Todor Georgiev asked Assoc. Prof. Raykov - whether there is information about the amount of fish consumption and fish products in Bulgaria per capita compared to that in Europe, because it differs significantly.

Assoc. Prof. Raykov: In Bulgaria in recent years the consumption of fish per capita is increasing and is about 8 kg / year, which is little compared to other European countries.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: "BG FISH" Association conducts its own study of fish consumption in Bulgaria per capita and it is over 10 kg / year. Also in Bulgaria there is a

discussion about reducing VAT on food, which tax is currently 20%, and in neighboring Romania it is 9% for food.

Mr. Todor Georgiev expressed support for the reduction of VAT on food and suggested that BISAC to bring up the question before the authorities right now while negotiations for a new government are underway in the country.

Mr. Danko Penev said that it is very difficult for Romanian fishermen to sell fresh fish and wild catches in large supermarket chains, because they want delivery on specific days, which often do not coincide with the days when the ship goes to sea for catch. He suggests representatives of these chains to be invited to a meeting of BISAC to discuss the topic.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: the solution of this problem is the existence of producer organizations, where all ships after a fishing trip to declare their catches and to have direct requests to them from the chain stores. There are also no fish markets and exchanges in Bulgaria and ships cannot negotiate with the large chains. It is becoming increasingly difficult to attract young people to work in the sector. State aid must be sought to stimulate and attract young people to work, as there are similar programs to support agriculture: for example “Young Farmer”. The fisheries sector needs to be one of the priorities for support, as well as to be thought about incentives to attract women in the sector.

Mrs. Dimitrina Kostova: The association she represents and which is established under an EC program focuses on the analysis of female participation in the sector. The fisheries sector lacks any preferences for young people. Very often, after the death of an older fisherman, there is no one from the family to inherit his craft. Following the example of “Young Farmer” program, a similar program for fisheries should be made.

Mrs. Michaela Mirja: this assistance should also be in the organization of courses to attract women in the aquaculture sector.

Ms Pinelopi Belecku: Very interesting information has been gathered about the meeting and DG SEA is waiting to receive it, as this information gives a clear idea of the fisheries status in the Black Sea. Regarding the topics raised in the discussion, the EU has always supported the role of women in fisheries, as well as the preservation of the livelihood of small-scale fishing. It is a good idea for BISAC to make a recommendation to the Member States, related to attracting women and young people in the fisheries sector. The new plan for fisheries and aquaculture provides funding, but through the operational program.

The meeting will be closed.

Minutes of the meeting: Mrs. Elena Peneva

President of BISAC: Mr. Yordan Gospodinov