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# Norwegian fisheries management

# Contents

Norway – ancient traditions of harvesting the sea	3
Norwegian fisheries management – a sustainable harvest of marine living resources	6
International cooperation on fisheries	9
Combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is caring for marine resources	13
Norwegian fisheries authorities	15



## Norway – ancient traditions of harvesting the sea

Throughout Norwegian history, people in Norway have made a living from fishing, whaling and sealing. This has been the very basis of life and culture along the coast, and many of our coastal communities are still dependent on marine harvest.

Fisheries have always been a central component of Norwegian business and industry because Norway controls some of the richest fishing grounds in the world. The North Sea, Norwegian coast, Barents Sea and the Polar Front in the Norwegian Sea are all highly productive areas, and major fish resources spawn just off the coast of Norway.

The fisheries sector represents one of Norway's most important export industries. Ever since the 12th century, stockfish has been an important export product. Today, Norway is one of the largest seafood suppliers in the world including both

wild catch and aquaculture, and one of the largest exporters of seafood.





### Sustainable management

Norwegian fisheries policy and management are based on the principles of sustainable harvest of the marine living resources. Sustainable harvest depends on healthy marine ecosystems. Maintaining the health of the sea is therefore a fundamental principle for all activities concerning fishing, sealing, whaling and aquaculture.

Today, nearly all stocks with commercial value are regulated through quotas and licensing.

Norway has a diversified and technologically advanced fishing fleet, encompassing everything from small one-man inshore fishing vessels to large trawlers and purse seiners.

### Solid experience in the area of marine research and fisheries management

Norwegian fisheries management is based on scientific advices. Norway has more than hundred years of institutional experiences in fisheries management and marine research through the Directorate of Fisheries and the Institute of Marine Research, both established in the year 1900. In 1946, Norway became the first country in the world to establish a Ministry of Fisheries.

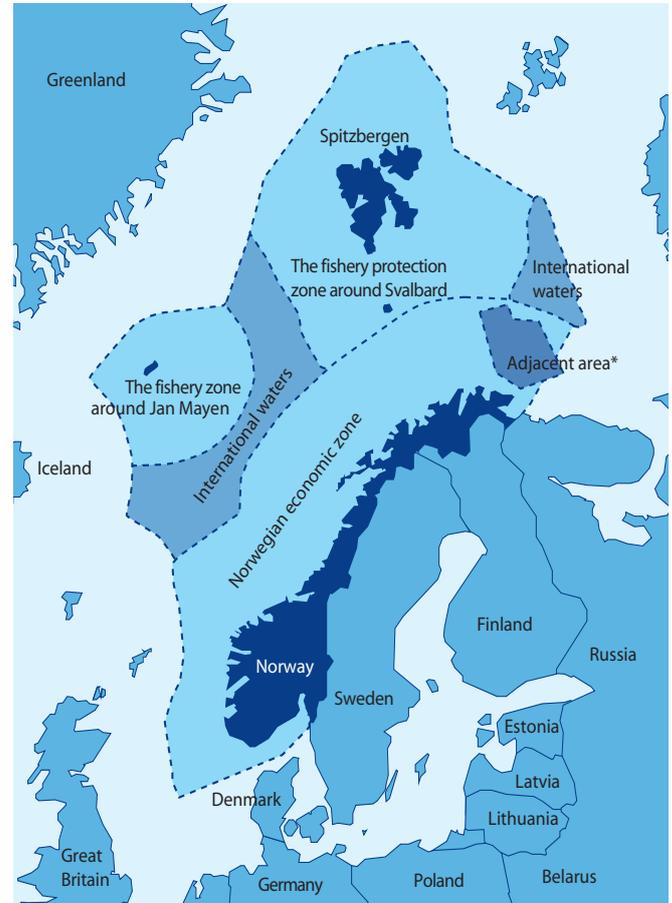
A sustainable harvest depends on healthy marine ecosystems. Maintaining the health of the sea is therefore a fundamental principle for all activities concerning fishing, sealing, whaling and aquaculture.

### Zones under Norwegian fisheries jurisdiction

Norway has established three zones of 200 nautical miles. The legal regime for the Norwegian Exclusive Economic Zone around the Norwegian mainland is enshrined in the UN Law of the Sea Convention of 10 December 1982.

A fishery protection zone around Svalbard was established with effect from 15 June 1977, and the fishery zone around Jan Mayen was established with effect from 29 May 1980.

*\* Adjacent area in the Barents Sea is covered by a temporary agreement between Norway and Russia.*





## Norwegian fisheries management – a sustainable harvest of marine living resources

Norwegian fisheries have evolved into a highly regulated industry with quotas and licensing requirements. The most important fish stocks migrate between Norwegian and foreign waters and, consequently, good governance requires close cooperation with neighbouring countries. This means that the most critical management decision – the amount of fish that can be harvested from a given stock – is an internationally determined premise for a domestic decision-making process.

### The regulatory chain

A primary basis for determining fishing quotas is the advice and recommendation from the International Council for the

Exploration of the Sea (ICES). Scientists from member countries develop the various advice through groups and advisory committees. After ICES has given its quota recommendations, the negotiations on management issues between Norway and other states take place.

After the international negotiations are finalised, the domestic regulation process for quota allocation begins. The Directorate of Fisheries makes proposals for domestic regulation.

The involvement of stakeholders in management decisions is achieved through the Advisory Meeting for Fisheries Regulations representing fishermen's associations, the fishing industries, trade unions, the Sami Parliament, local authorities, environmental organisations and other stakeholders.

## The Regulatory Chain

Events that constitute Norwegian fisheries management



As a final step in this process, the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs decides how the quotas should be shared between the vessels and sets out the technical regulations for how the fishing should be carried out in the following year.

### Precautionary and ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management

The fundamental principle behind Norwegian management of our living marine resources is that of sustainable harvest. The term 'sustainable' is generally defined as "a use or development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In fisheries management, this can be interpreted as continuous harvesting of stocks in a viable condition.

The aim of the Norwegian government is to have an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management in order to secure a sustainable harvest of marine living resources.

### Great importance attached to scientific advice

The Norwegian management of living marine resources is based on the best available scientific advice. The implementation of an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management requires knowledge of the size of fish stocks and other

characteristics, as well as knowledge of the ecosystems of which the stocks are a part.

For most stocks of interest to Norway, assessments are made jointly with scientists from several countries under the aegis of ICES. Scientists from the ICES member countries work together on the collected stock data in annual working groups.





## International cooperation on fisheries

The regulation of Norwegian fisheries is based on international law and cooperation. The Law of the Sea Convention constitutes the global legal framework for all uses of the ocean, and the UN Fish Stocks Agreement provides a legal basis for improved control of fisheries on the high seas. Norway also participates in fisheries cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and in several global and regional agreements on marine environment. Norway is also a member of the International Whaling Commission, the global organisation for the management of whale stocks.

### Regional fisheries management cooperation

Norway is currently a member of five Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs). For Norway, the most

important are The North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). Norway is also a member of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission, a regional organisation for management of marine mammals.

Regional fisheries management organisations have grown in extent and importance in recent years. This is partly due to the increasing number of fisheries on the high seas and the power given to them by the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement, and partly because they provide a platform for cooperation in combating IUU fishing.

### Shared stocks

Around 90 per cent of Norway's fisheries are conducted on stocks that are shared with other states. For the most important

fish stocks, quota levels and management strategies are therefore set in cooperation with other countries. Norway has negotiated a series of agreements with neighbouring countries.

## Russia

Norway and Russia share the stocks of cod, haddock and capelin in the Barents Sea. The main part of the Norwegian



**For the most important fish stocks harvested by Norwegian fishermen, quota levels and management strategies are set in cooperation with other countries.**

cod exported is North East Arctic Cod. Only a very small amount of cod that is exported from Norway comes from other areas.

Close cooperation between the two countries is needed to ensure rational management of these fishery resources. The cooperation with Russia in the north takes place in the Joint Norwegian-Russian Fisheries Commission. The Commission has a thirty years history of developing management strategies and setting TACs (Total Allowable Catch) for shared stocks.

## European Union

The cooperation with the EU on the management of joint stocks in the North Sea involves a higher number of shared stocks than between Russia and Norway. Norway and the EU have developed management strategies for several joint stocks. These strategies are intended to ensure a national harvesting pattern and stable catch levels. The parties have agreed on long-term management plans for cod, haddock, saithe and herring.

## Greenland

The agreement on bilateral fisheries collaboration between Norway and Greenland, signed in September 1991, is based on a common understanding of the need to exclude illegal unreported and unregulated fisheries (IUU) in each country's exclusive economic zone. Under the agreement, vessels from Norway and Greenland are permitted to fish in one another's exclusive economic zone.

## Iceland

Norway, Iceland and Russia have a trilateral fisheries agreement where Iceland accepts that the northern fish stocks in the Norwegian Sea and the Barents Sea are regulated through the Joint Norwegian-Russian Fisheries Commission.

## Faroe Islands

Norway also has bilateral agreements with the Faroe Islands on fisheries. Norway conducts negotiations on quotas with the Faroe Islands every year.

## Norwegian spring spawning herring

On 18 January 2007, the EU, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway and Russia concluded an agreement on the man-





agement of the Norwegian spring-spawning herring fish stock. The Norwegian spring-spawning herring stock is the largest fish stock in the North Atlantic. With the new five-party agreement, catches of all the main fish stocks in Norwegian waters are now regulated.

### Mackerel

The coastal states, the EU, the Faroe Islands and Norway have, since 2000, agreed to a management regime for the fisheries of mackerel in the North East Atlantic. This management regime aims to ensure that the stock remains at a sustainable level.

### Agreement on blue whiting

In the late 1990s, there was an enormous expansion in the fishery on blue whiting, and a coastal state agreement was necessary. In December 2005, after six years of negotiation, the coastal states (the EU, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway) concluded an agreement on the allocation and management of the blue whiting stock. This will hopefully ensure long-term sustainable management of this stock. The agreement was renewed for 2007 and it is to be renewed on an annual basis.



## Combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is caring for marine resources

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing) is one of the most serious problems currently facing the management of the world's fisheries. Both legal harvest as well as marine ecosystems are threatened. Fighting this crime is the highest priority of Norwegian fisheries management.

Norway has instituted a range of measures to combat IUU fishing. We have sought a viable solution by combining efforts directed towards overcapacity in the commercial fishing fleet. We have implemented comprehensive measures aimed at strengthening control of fishing activities at sea and the landing of fish. The fisheries regulations are enforced both at sea, when the fish is landed and when it is exported. Both Norwegian and foreign fishing vessels are subject to

stringent controls in all Norwegian waters. The effective cooperation between the Norwegian Coast Guard at sea, and the Directorate of Fisheries and the sales organisations on land, is a key factor in this process. New tools for risk assessment and prioritisation of control activities are already producing results.

IUU fishing is, to a great extent, a transnational problem and can only be combated through international cooperation. An extensive framework of international measures has evolved, and the control of fishing on shared fish stocks requires close cooperation between affected states. Norway currently has co-operative agreements on this control and anti-IUU measures in place with the European Commission, Russia,

**Both Norwegian and foreign fishing vessels are subject to stringent controls in all Norwegian fishing waters.**



Iceland, the UK, Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark, Faroe Islands, the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Canada, Poland, Estonia and Morocco.

Norway adopted a black list of vessels that had been engaged in IUU activities in North East Atlantic waters in 1994, and banned such vessels from fishing in Norwegian waters. The concept of a black list has since been adopted by several regional fisheries management organisations where Norway is a member.

On a regional level, the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), on Norway's initiative, adopted a binding regional agreement on port state control for all fish supplied from catches in the North East Atlantic. The agreement is based on the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation's (FAO) model for port state control.

Norway has also been active in promoting the FAO model for port state control on an even wider scale. At the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) Review Conference in May 2006, a Norwegian proposal for the establishment of a global, binding regime for port state control obtained the necessary support.



## Norwegian fisheries authorities

### **The Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs**

The ministry acts as the secretariat to the Minister of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs and exercises its administrative authority through measures such as adoption and implementation of legislations and regulations.

### **Department of Marine Resources and Environment**

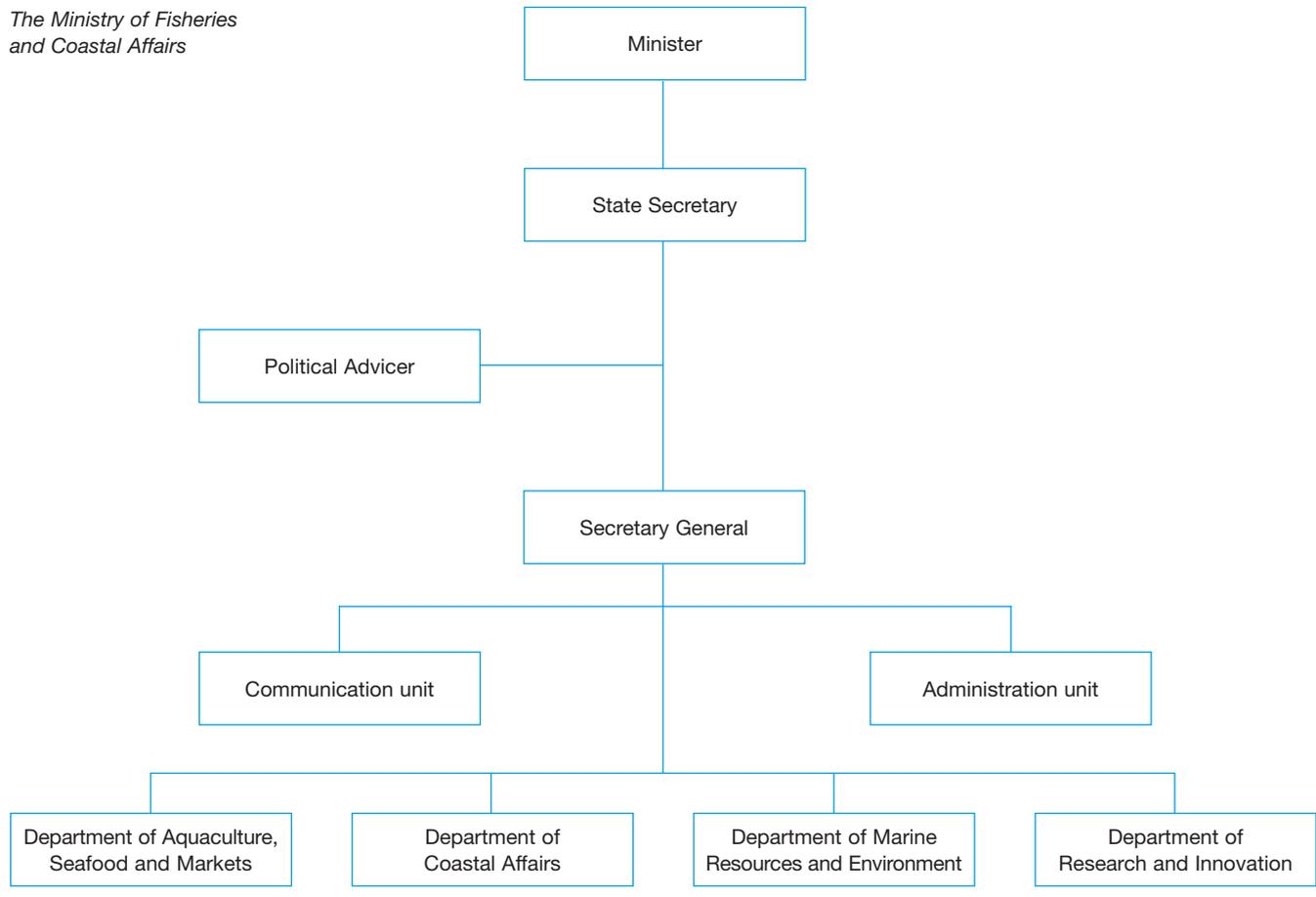
The responsibilities of this department include quota negotiations and international fisheries agreements, marine mammals, national regulation of fisheries, annual allotment of the right to participate in fisheries and first-hand sales. The department co-ordinates the Ministry's environmental policy and participation in international marine environmental organisations.

Additionally, the department co-ordinates issues related to distribution of resources, the structure of the fishing fleet, licensing and issues relating to the right to participate in fisheries, as well as matters pertaining to the overall economic and industrial situation of the fisheries sector and the fishing fleet. It also formulates and implements Norwegian policy aimed at curbing IUU-fishing, especially through international cooperation.

### **Department of Aquaculture, Seafood and Markets**

This department administers all matters concerning the aquaculture industry in relation to the Aquaculture Act and the Act relating to sea ranching. The department deals with quality control of fisheries products from the initial producer

*The Ministry of Fisheries  
and Coastal Affairs*



to the end-user, and oversees regulations and monitoring of seafood for the entire production chain, including fish feed and fish health.

### Department of Research and Innovation and the Department of Coastal Affairs

The two other departments of the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs are the Department of Research and Innovation and the Department of Coastal Affairs. In short, these departments administrate, respectively, research and regional policies, including innovation and industrial development within the marine sector and maritime infrastructure as well as preparedness in the event of acute pollution and long-term planning for sea transport. Research and innovation constitute one third of the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs' financial assets.

### The Directorate of Fisheries – the Ministry's advisory and executive body

The Directorate of Fisheries, with its main office in Bergen, acts as the Ministry's advisory and executive body in matters concerning fishing and the management of aquaculture.

The Directorate of Fisheries' role is to provide professional input in the policy-making process.

The Directorate was created in 1900, and its main goal is to promote profitable economic activity through sustainable and user-oriented management of marine resources and the marine environment.

### Norwegian Coast Guard – exercising resource control

Together with the Directorate of Fisheries and the sales associations, the Coast Guard is responsible for exercising resource control. The Coast Guard is subordinated to the Ministry of Defence and one of its primary missions is to monitor the fisheries.





The ocean areas subject to Norwegian fisheries jurisdiction and surveillance are six times bigger than the Norwegian mainland. The Norwegian exclusive economic zone, the fishery zone around Jan Mayen and the protection zone around Svalbard have traditionally been, and still are, the Coast Guard's highest-priority task.

### Institute of Marine Research

With a staff of close to 700, the Institute of Marine Research (IMR) is the largest marine research institution in Norway and a leading organisation within scientific investigations and advice on marine ecosystems and aquaculture. The Institute is the main adviser to the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs on these issues.

Traditional marine monitoring programmes have generally focused on individual elements of the ecosystem, such as a single fish species or a single environmental factor. The IMR now takes a holistic approach to marine ecology, using modern research vessels and facilities to monitor and study the whole marine ecosystem. Measuring all components of the ecosystem simultaneously offers new and improved prospects for understanding ecological relationships.

The Institute monitors and studies the ecosystems of the Barents Sea, the Norwegian Sea, and the North Sea, as well as ecosystems in the coastal zone.

Creditation for photos: Scanfishphoto,  
Institute of Marine Research, the Norwegian  
Coast Guard and the Norwegian Seafood  
Export Council

Design: [www.lucas.no](http://www.lucas.no)

Print: M. Seyfarth Trykkeri AS

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fisheries.no is a portal for the Norwegian Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs in cooperation with the Institute of Marine Research, the Directorate of Fisheries, the National Institute of Nutrition and Seafood Research, the National Veterinary Institute and the Norwegian Food Safety Authority.



**NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF  
FISHERIES AND COASTAL AFFAIRS**