

BLUE BIOECONOMY: FROM OFFALS TO SEAWEED

The Faroese Chair of the Nordic Fisheries Cooperation 2015 shines a light on North Atlantic leadership in fisheries sustainability while exploring ‘Growth in the Blue Bioeconomy’—as well as linking coastal fishing with tourism business.

WITH THEIR CLOSE relationship to marine wildlife and their long-standing dependence on hunting, fishing, aquaculture and related trades and industries, the Northeast Atlantic and Arctic coastal communities share a unique position in the Nordic geography. Although sparsely populated, these communities tend to be highly productive when it comes to the blue bioeconomy.

Now, what would be the main growth factors of that economy?

These and similar subjects are being examined and highlighted through innovation projects, workshops, conferences and senior-level policy discussions on how Nordic cooperation can promote development in the blue bioeconomy.

Denmark holds the presidency in the Nordic Council of Ministers this year and the Nordic Fisheries Cooperation will be led by the Faroe Islands. This is for a good reason, as the self-governing archipelago is known to be an outstanding fishing nation, catching some 500,000 tonnes per annum—more than 10 tonnes a year for everyone living on the islands, man or woman, young or old.

Representatives of the Nordic Fisheries Cooperation will participate in public affairs activities to engage with the European Parliament in Strasbourg as well as with the FAO during a special event in Vigo, Spain, that will mark the 20th anniversary of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

According to Ásmundur Guðjónsson, Senior Advisor at the Faroese Ministry of Fisheries, both events provide an opportunity to present the Nordic region’s commitment to sustainable use of marine resources as well as drawing attention to the economic soundness of the North Atlantic fisheries, which could serve as a model for fisheries management in Europe.

“Neither Greenland, Iceland nor the Faroe Islands subsidize their fisheries industry,” Mr. Guðjónsson noted. “We’re proof that it’s possible to achieve a sustainable and profitable fisheries industry without subsidies.”

The Growth in Blue Bioeconomy Conference, an international gathering to take place in the Faroese capital Tórshavn on 2nd and 3rd June—organized by the Nordic Marine Think Tank in cooperation with the Nordic Fisheries Cooperation, the OECD and the FAO—will deal with “the political aspects of a well-functioning blue bioeconomy.” The conference will address three key topics from a policy perspective: blue growth at the global and regional level, potential growth in marine industries, and structures hindering or promoting blue growth.

“Differences in political frameworks, like trade and employment policies, production traditions and subsidies, challenge a level playing field for competition, and may introduce market barriers for marine industries,” Mr. Guðjónsson said. “Our ambition is to take political measures to facilitate blue bioeconomy cooperation, innovation and growth.”

He added that the Growth in Blue Bioeconomy program will allocate a budget of 8.3 million DKK (1.1M EUR) over the next three years for projects aimed at developing the region’s blue bioeconomy.

SEAWEED

Another key concept concerns residual biomass as a resource, one example of which is the prevention of discard of catch, a policy that is believed to have contributed to making fisheries sustainable. With discards prohibited since many years in Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland, the EU is in the process of gradually implementing

a similar ban. These discard bans, however, only apply to unwanted catch, whether linked to size, quotas or catch composition rules, and do not cover the residual biomass—offals—which could nonetheless be used to create value in the bioeconomy.

For instance, many factory trawlers fishing in the Barents Sea effectively discard more than one half of the fish—heads, tails, intestines, bones, and sometimes skins, too.

“One of the Faroese pelagic factory vessels is equipped to utilize all of the fish including the offals,” Mr. Guðjónsson said. “That ship is fitted with a meal and oil factory, which is certainly a step in the right direction.”

Putting together coastal fisheries and tourism is another way of creating value founded in the blue bioeconomy, while offering tourists a unique nature experience at sea.

“Coastal fisheries are facing difficulties



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all around the Nordic region and we believe that combining these two value chains could be a part of the solution,” Mr. Guðjónsson said. “Coastal fishermen’s knowledge on fishing techniques and traditions and related topics and issues would be very valuable in tourism.”

Another project focusing on new ways of utilizing biological resources from the sea is all about introducing people in the region to seaweed, a widely available but underutilized Nordic resource, with three events to be organized, in Denmark, Faroe and Greenland respectively, featuring local chefs and seaweed enthusiasts.

“We will also look into possibilities of farming and harvesting macroalgae in the Nordic Seas. Of particular interest is an analysis of the legal frameworks in the Nordic countries and whether in effect they promote or hinder utilization of this huge resource.”

Norden 2015

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The Nordic Fisheries Cooperation for 2015 under the Chairmanship of the Faroe Islands is part of the Danish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers 2015.

Growth in Blue Bioeconomy Conference

on 2-3 June 2015
• More info: <http://norden2015.fo/english-edition/growth-in-blue-bio-economy-conference/>

Underwater environment in the Faroe Islands with a shoal of saithe and marine vegetation visible;

Statue of Kópakonan (Seal Woman), Mikladalur’s new tourist attraction (above).



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