Women in Fisheries

(Stage 1 Report)
CONTENTS

Introduction 3
Summary findings 3
Literary Review 5
   Women in shipping 5
   The world fisheries labour market 6
   Women as part of the labour force 6
   The roles played by women 7
   Women in other industries: farming, haulage and mining
      Farming 9
      Haulage Industry 11
      Miners’ wives 12
UK and Defra’s Equality Policies 13
The Equality Bill 14
EFF Operational Programme 14
2002 CFP Reform 15
   The EC Green Paper 15
   2002 study into women in fisheries 15
   The follow up to 2002 17
2012 Review of the CFP 18
Recent Defra Fisheries Policy and Research Documents 19
Conclusion 19
Sources 20
SUMMARY REPORT OF LITERATURE REVIEW –

STAGE 1 OF THE WOMEN IN FISHERIES PROJECT

Introduction

1. This paper is intended to demonstrate the progress of our on-going project. It is a summary of our findings to date and more detail will appear in the final report. Because the literature survey is being conducted continuously alongside stage 2 of the project, as a dynamic part of the investigation process, we expect to be able to refine the data in this draft and add to the information available in the final report.

2. The core aims of the project Women in Fisheries project are to offer a basis for identifying how equality of opportunity for women can be achieved within the industry and in influencing its future regulation. Key elements of this are the role of women in improving the economic efficiency of businesses, their contribution to the social fabric and sustainability of the fisheries and the coastal communities as well as their interaction with management authorities or organisations at the local, national and EU levels. The project is intended to provide a basis for creating and fostering networks and opportunities for exchanging experience and best practice with a view to:

   • fostering equal opportunities;
   • identifying the tools and means to improve skills;
   • creating and providing training opportunities and upgrading professional skills;
   • promoting access to employment; and
   • contributing to better management of resources.

3. The proposal that led to this study is based on a ‘hypothesis’ that women’s role and contributions to the fishing industry in England, as in other parts of the world, are under-recognised, nearly ‘invisible’ in many cases, and that action is needed to address this.

Summary findings

4. The main findings so far are:

   • The evidence supports the hypothesis.

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1 The Literature Review presented here has taken into consideration of the comments made by Defra on 8 March 2010 as much as possible, hence the amendment accordingly.
In the run up to and immediately after the 2002 reform of the CFP, equality for women in the fishing industry was a live issue. Some useful advances have been made, such as representation on most Regional Advisory Councils, but for most women in the industry the debate and discussion some 6 years ago seems to have had little impact. The possible exception is employment in public sector administration and research.

The statistical data about the number of women involved in the fishing industry is thin, and very probably understates the contribution made by women. This is despite an undertaking by the EC in 2003 to seek to improve the data.

The experience and obstacles faced by women in fishing communities are often similar to those in some other industries, such as shipping, farming, haulage and mining.

Among the difficulties documented in the fishing industry are lack of recognition of the contribution made by women, social isolation, lack of acceptance by men that women should do anything other than ‘women’s roles’, being overlooked or ignored by industry managers and policy makers, finding themselves towards the bottom of the hierarchy with limited opportunities to move up, and inequality of pay.

Public bodies in the UK have a legal obligation to demonstrate how they will eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and will actively promote equality of opportunity between women and men in terms of employment and in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

Under its Gender Equality Scheme, Defra has committed itself to making the Department’s services more accessible for women and to achieving more effective engagement with women to inform policies and service delivery.

Equality impact assessments are integral to Defra’s policy development and implementation process. Evidence of this can be found in the EFF Operational Programme where there is the undertaking to promote equality between women and men in the fisheries sector and it is stated that weighting will be given to projects that provide opportunities for women in sub-sectors or occupations in which they have been traditionally under-represented.

On the other hand, the Commission’s Green Paper on the 2012 CFP reform has been criticised for ignoring gender issues. The UK response to the Green Paper does not mention women, though does discuss the implications of reform on fishing communities.
Whilst the absence of reference to gender equality and the role of woman in other relevant Defra policy and research documentation might suggest that gender equality is not yet fully integral to the Department’s policy making and management processes, this project would indicate that the Department is aware of the issue and is taking steps to address it.

The literature Review

5. We have divided our review of relevant literature into:

- Women in shipping
- The labour market for commercial fishing
- Women’s participation in the industry
- Women’s roles and the obstacles they face in the fishing industry.
- Lessons to be drawn from the role of women in three other industries: farming, haulage and as miners’ wives both during and after the 1984 miners’ strike.
- UK and Defra equality policies
- EU policy and actions, principally relating to CFP reform
- UK and Defra fisheries research and policies
- EFF Operational Programme

Women in shipping

6. Women have a long history of sailing on commercial ships, though for centuries, maritime history and literature have treated seafaring as a solely male domain. Women were historically recorded as having travelled as stewardesses, explorers or as captains’ wives. On the whole, however, women did not traditionally participate in the actual operation of ships (Creighton and Norling, 1996; Stanley, 1987).

7. The employment of women in merchant shipping in large numbers has occurred only since the 1990s. Today women still represent a small proportion (1-2%) of the workforce at sea. Many of these women are on passenger ships, cruise ships and ferries as ‘hotel’ staff members, in what is perceived as traditional women’s roles such as carers, cabin stewardesses, cleaners, bar maids, restaurant assistants and so on. (Beclcher et al, 2003; Zhao, 2002; Zhao, 1999).
8. The number of women serving as captains, engineers, officers, managers or department heads is small. Most women in the industry have positions towards the lower end of the ship hierarchy (Belcher et al, 2003)

9. The source of the female labour well reflects the global nature of the industry. Women, in the same way as men, are recruited from all over the world, increasingly from Asian and Eastern European countries (ibid)

10. Women’s representation in the trade unions and in the maritime education and training institutions is also low, though their performance has been widely recognised as ‘very impressive’ by most teaching staff in the Maritime education and training (MET) institutions (ibid)

11. Resistance by shipping companies to the employment of women in responsible positions, lack of acceptance by male colleagues, social isolation, sexual harassment and difficulty in dealing with sanitary materials are key issues of concern for women on board commercial ships. These are significant barriers and no doubt help explain the low proportion of women prepared to go to sea on commercial ships (ibid)

The world fisheries labour market

12. Fisheries and aquaculture play, directly and indirectly, an essential role in the livelihoods of millions of people around the world. Across the world, in the last 30 years, employment in the primary fisheries sector has grown faster than the world’s population and employment in traditional agriculture. While the number of people employed in fisheries and aquaculture has been growing steadily in most low-income and middle-income countries, employment in the sector has fallen or remained stationary in most industrialised economies. (Food and Agricultural Organisation Fisheries, 2009)

13. A characteristic feature of employment in the world fishing industry is the prevalence of occasional or part-time employment, peaking in the months of the year when riverine, coastal and offshore resources are more abundant or available, but leaving time in seasonal lows for other occupations. (ibid)


Women as part of the labour force

15. There are still very few women employed in marine fishing, although several countries in Europe have a relatively high percentage of women (Italy, Greece and Portugal); women tend to be involved in other activities that are not onboard vessels. (Salz et al. 2010:10).
There is no central database indicating the number of women engaged in the world fishing industry. According to ONS-Breakdown of employment data from the Annual Business Inquiry, in 2006 a total of 22,335 people were engaged in the fisheries sector in Great Britain (excluding Northern Ireland): 16,048 (72%) men and 6287 (28%) women. The statistics also show that the total percentage of female employment in the fisheries sector has been steadily declining since 2000 while that of male employment has been increasing. This was broken down into employment in: fishing: 3922 (88%) men and 539 (12%) women; fish farming: 1809 (89%) men and 232 (11%) women and production of fish products: 10317 (65%) men and 5516 (35%) women. These statistics do not cover employment of those that are self-employed and so excludes a significant element of employment in the fish capture industry. (European Commission, 2006).

The average earning and hours of full-time employees by industry division and by sex, in the UK, has very limited or no data at all for women in the fishing industry (ONS, 2009).

The roles played by women

Although a brief search of relevant databases and library catalogues for material on women in fishing only revealed some limited systematic study specifically dealing with women’s roles in English fisheries, including Paul Thompson’s *Women in the Fishing: the roots of power between the sexes* (1985), our search did reveal a relatively substantial literature on women in fisheries elsewhere in the world.

Research by the EC (2006) suggests that whilst women have become more prominent as vessel owners, operators and merchants they remain a small proportion. However, it was found that women play an important role across the fishing industry, ‘from administrative support to prominent positions in management and policy making organisations through to contributions to the research, development and technology fields’.

In an analysis of women’s roles, the following broad categories have been identified by Allison *et al* (2000): fishermen’s wives; women in small family businesses and independent businesses; employment in fish processing; employment in fishing industry management; and women as political activists.

According to International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), the role of women in fishing has been looked down upon as being ‘an extension

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2 The source does not provide information to further explain if the figures of fishers refer exclusively to those men and women actually working on board of the fishing vessels.
of the “domestic” space’. According to the research carried out by MacAllister, little value is placed on unpaid work, therefore the role of women tends to be devalued. Furthermore, ICSF indicates that there is a significant lack of recognition for women fishworkers in terms among policy makers who seem to focus on fishermen and the actual act of fishing. (ICSF, 2010a,b; MacAllister, 2002).

22. In nearly all the studies, women reported that they felt strongly that they were under represented across the sectors in the industry. ICSF found that women in the industry earned considerably less on average than men and that a concern among women was the lack of recognition they received.

23. The majority of the women reported that they faced barriers in obtaining status or recognition in the industry. Women tend to be excluded from decision-making processes and governance at family, community and state levels. Women’s little or no involvement in decision making implies that women have limited opportunity to influence the decisions that affect their lives and the decisions made are less likely to represent their interests. (ICSF, 2009)

24. According to ICSF, the lack of recognition for women’s contribution in the sector is also a deterrent to the ability of women fishworkers to self-organise, to access and control livelihood resources, and to negotiate with different actors in the sector. (ICSF, 2010a)

25. An Australian study found a strong demand from women for change. They suggested actions to improve women’s status and recognition in the industry, such as:

- Better understand and promote women’s current roles
- Change the industry’s image and orientation
- Provide better information/education material about the industry
- Help women obtain appropriate training and education
- Develop networks and mentors for women
- Develop more ‘women-friendly’ and ‘family-friendly’ workplaces, develop affirmative action for industry (Alison, 2000)

26. Women in developed countries and those in developing countries, while sharing nearly all the aspects noted above, tend to play different roles in the industry. In developing countries, for example, most workers in processing factories are women; developed countries tend to have relatively more women
Women in Fisheries – summary progress report on the literature review.

as ship owners or operators, although they are not large in number (Alison, 2000; Kleih and Zhao, 2008).

27. One finding of our visit of the existing literature so far is the complexity of the labour market for women engaged in the world fishing industry as paid workers, but also as ‘invisible’ and unpaid workers with a wide range of tasks. They contribute significantly to the industry, but the literature indicates that they are often under-represented, unrecognised, underpaid and seem to have little say in decision making at various levels.

Women in other industries: farming, haulage and mining

28. This part of the literature review looked at the role of women in three areas, farming, haulage and as miners’ wives both during and after the 1984 miners’ strike.

29. The areas reviewed are very different for each of these three categories.

30. The literature suggests that there are three main roles played by women on farms.

- Farm wives in a supportive role carrying out their share of farm work alongside domestic responsibilities.
- Farm wives who are working outside the farm and their income helps to maintain the farm as an effective business and
- Women farmers who have sole responsibility for their farms.

31. For haulage, the emphasis is very much on improving access for women to the industry, recognising the barriers to effective participation and the steps necessary to removing these barriers.

32. Each of these three groups also has very different levels of participation in the policy agendas associated with their respective industries.

33. The lessons from the literature around the role of miners’ wives both during and after the 1984 strike highlights the triggers for effective participation and explores whether once the drivers for participation are removed, they return to focussing on the immediate needs of their family.

Farming

34. Possible lessons for the fishing community could relate to the fact that the contribution of farmers’ wives to the farm business is often overlooked and, importantly, the continued neglect of women’s involvement may jeopardise the future of the family business. (Dr. Gasson R, 2002, VL: 43, PG: 74-87.)
35. The fact that so many women need to work off farm as part of the household survival strategy could also suggest important comparisons. It is argued that women's off farm labour is part of a farm household survival strategy to maintain the business and the man's occupation. His occupation continues to be seen as the primary one, and there is no overt renegotiation of gender roles or domestic responsibilities. (Kelly R, Shortall S 2002)

36. There is another school of thought that argues that women who contribute more to family income expect to receive more equitable sharing of decision-making power. (Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983; Rogers and DeBoer, 2001)

37. However, these findings will need to be considered in the context of the limited nature of opportunities for women in rural areas and the fact that there are fewer local work choices than those in urban areas. (Countryside Agency, 2003)

38. The sometimes distressing reality of patriarchal family farming may also offer comparison with fishing families. The high number of farming suicides is one indicator of the pressure that rural family businesses, which are strongly identified with the expression of rural masculinities, are placed under. (The Samaritans, 1996, Defra 2007)

39. One outcome is the creation of strongly male-gendered spaces, such as farm fairs, which are critical to knowledge production and exchange, yet to which women have almost no effective access. This can serve to restrict their learning, particularly experiential learning. (Farnworth C and Hutchings J, 2009).

40. Another lesson for fishing could lie in the fact that women established that the major stress in their lives and the lives of their families is the financial crisis created primarily by what they see as current government policy directions and the corporatisation of the industry. Women stated that if these root causes of the financial crisis were solved, the quality of life in rural communities, and their health and environment would improve. (Roppel C, Aurélie A, Desmarais D, Martz April 2006)

41. An American study found that a better understanding of women's roles could assist policy makers and conservation professionals who wish to impact decisions with their programmes. (Bridges T.R and Napier T.L 2007)

42. For example, women tend to practice organic farming in a different way to men. Thus, the continuing lack of women's voice in farming means that the mainstream alternative agriculture paradigm fails to capture important elements of why women are engaged in sustainable farming. (Farnworth C and Hutchings J, 2009)
43. The findings suggest that women need structures, mechanisms and processes to ensure their concerns and interests are heard and responded to, and are given equal weight in policy development. Thus, an inclusive policy must address social and cultural, as well as economic, needs. (Roppel C, Aurélie A, Desmarais D, Martz April 2006)

44. In the case of farmers, a real difficulty is that long held social constructions of farming women as “farmwives” rather than farmers or decision-makers influences the direction of most educational programming delivered. Consequently, many women farmers generally view these spaces as hostile, rather than helpful environments. (Trauger, A. and Sachs, C. 2006)

45. Examples of successful pressure/support groups is the Women in Rural Enterprises (WiRE) which works with RDAs and Business Links to deliver public funded projects in order to boost the number of women starting and growing rural businesses in specific regions.

The haulage Industry

46. The main focus for consideration when looking at the role of women in haulage relates to access to and working conditions within the industry. We could not identify anything on the role of women in supporting partners running haulage businesses.

47. A literature search has suggested there are six main areas for consideration:

   a. Women’s involvement in the sector
   b. Barriers to participation
   c. Improving representation
   d. Women’s Influence on Policy
   e. Campaign/Support Groups
   f. Recommendations for change.

48. Despite their growing presence, women’s participation in the transport industry is still limited, particularly in certain transport sub-sectors. Moreover, available evidence suggests that a large proportion of women working in the transport sector are affected by poorer working conditions than their male counterparts. (Corral, Antonio; Isusi, Iñigo 2007)

49. There is, of course a very similar pattern in the fishing industry. For example, The European Community Strategy (2007-2012) on health and safety at work notes that the transport sector, along with construction, agriculture, fishing
and health and social services, continues to be a sector which is particularly dangerous.

50. Other barriers to participation include

- Pregnancy and family status
- Working hours that are not always family friendly including unpredictable shifts and overtime.
- Women cannot get a job to match their level of qualifications. (Bias)
- Workplace ergonomics usually reflect the male work environment;
- Health and Safety issues are male centred.
- Risks of violent or aggressive behaviour (including poor behaviour from male colleagues/managers).

51. On improving representation the point is made that the industry cannot survive on those in their middle age, and it's estimated that around 80,000 of them could be retiring in the next 10 years - with nobody to replace them. “The haulage industry needs to fish outside its usual demographic to secure its future.” ....The point is also made that changing technology means that there is no longer the same need for specific skill sets linked to power and strength. (Cresswell L 2009).

52. It is clear from work undertaken in this area that the involvement of users is still an undeveloped area of transport thinking and consideration of the gender differences connected with such involvement even less so. (Turner et al, 1998; Hodgson and Turner, 2003).

53. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm for participation, as expressed in documents that were produced shortly after the Transport White Paper was published in 1998, seems to have waned considerably.

54. The first is that the participatory approach contained in earlier documents is much more ‘watered down’ and participation is more often replaced with ‘consultation’. Secondly, the more general terms, ‘users’ and the public are replaced with ‘stakeholders’ or ‘stakeholder’.

55. Nearly 100,000 women road transport workers around the world are members of unions affiliated to the Federation, and women road transport workers met for the first time in London in September 2005. As a result, some new initiatives were developed for the Road Transport Section of the International Workers Federation outlined in the main body of this review.
56. A list of recommendations is included in the main body of the report. Although these relate specifically to managing health and safety there are important findings that cross sectors and issues.

57. Solutions need to involve customers as well. Employers of drivers can find it difficult to ensure the safety of their employees whilst they are working at customer premises. The competitive nature of the business makes haulage firms reluctant to make demands of their customers, who can wrongly assume it is not their responsibility. The Meridian Report (2003)

**Miners’ Wives**

58. For miners’ wives we have focused very much on the reasons for their roles as key participants in the Miners’ Strike of 1984/1985. There is a consensus in this material that their involvement stemmed not from the fact that this was a traditional dispute around pay and conditions but that the ramifications of the Government’s proposals were seen to impact on their families, homes and communities.

59. There could well be links here with some of the pressure groups established within the fishing communities.

60. It is generally recognised that many who were involved in the action ceased to be active following the strike and that those who continued campaigning has previous histories of activism. Community networks which were so important to the political solidarity of the strike are now more likely to be mobilised as welfare support rather than as political action. Strangleman (2001),

61. However, it is suggested that this depiction is based on a masculinist view which sees political action as organisationally based and which fails to recognise the importance of small scale and emotional political work which women did and continue to undertake within their communities. (Spence J and Stephenson C (2007)

62. It is argued that the Support Groups created a new atmosphere in the mining-communities - “an atmosphere of more equality and more respect for the women, of a higher sensitivity for sexism and chauvinism.” Whilst male dominance has not disappeared from the mining-communities altogether, the strike has been seen to change women’s consciousness of themselves as well as challenging male working class culture and gender relations. (J., Miller, S. and Walker, M. (1984)).

**UK and Defra Equality Policies**

63. Public bodies have a legal obligation to demonstrate how they will eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and will actively promote equality of
opportunity between women and men in terms of employment and in the provision of goods, facilities and services. Public bodies are required to prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, showing how they will meet their general and specific duties and setting out their gender equality objectives. Among the other duties is the requirement to assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.

64. Defra's Gender Equality Scheme sets out a number of high level objectives and is accompanied by an action plan. The objectives include making Defra’s services more accessible for women and more effective engagement with women to inform policies and service delivery. Under the Scheme all existing and new policies should be screened to assess the gender impact.

65. The Department’s Community Engagement Strategy includes processes to enable seldom heard groups to be heard. In addition to identifying the communities and individuals affected, there is the undertaking that ways will be found to overcome any cultural and/or access barriers, for example, using women’s organisations as trusted intermediaries, providing child care facilities and accessible venues to encourage women’s involvement. The Department has committed itself employing active and innovative measures to promotion equality of opportunity for women on public bodies.

66. Equality impact assessments are now integral to Defra’s policy development and implementation.

The Equality Bill

67. The Equality Bill is intended to simplify the law by bringing together nine major pieces of legislation and around 100 other measures into a single Act. In addition, new provisions include:

- a new public sector duty to consider reducing socio-economic inequalities;
- a new equality duty on public bodies;
- using public procurement to improve equality; and
- extending the scope to use positive action;

68. Seemingly of direct relevance to fisheries management and policy making will be the duty on Government Ministers, departments and key public bodies to consider what action they can take, when making strategic decisions about spending and services, to reduce the socio-economic inequality people face.
EFF Operational Programme

69. Evidence of the application of Defra’s equality policies can be found in the EFF Operational Programme and the accompanying impact assessment. It is stated that ‘the Programme will be delivered within the UK’s legal framework covering equalities’. The programme document explains that ‘the delivery bodies will be responsible for ensuring the proactive promotion of equality at all stages of programme implementation (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). This will include, for example, the preparation of literature and publicity material, guidance for delivery staff, and the criteria for targeting of support under the programme’.

70. Specifically, equality between women and men active in the fisheries sector is to be promoted. In addition, there is the commitment to put processes in place that will seek to prevent discrimination on grounds of gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation.

71. Women are clearly part of the communities in which they live and work. Therefore, a section of the Operational Programme of particular relevance is the section that deals with Axis 4. Axis 4 is designed to support coastal communities to continue with the business of aquaculture and sea fishing, increase the economic value of these activities and the social cohesion arising from them, and support diversification away from these activities where appropriate.

72. One of the aims is to “build the capacity of local fisheries areas actors to encourage greater active participation in local area groups and develop their skills in preparing local development strategies.”

73. The EFF Operational Programme impact assessment explains that, as part of the application process for the grants, some weighting will be given to projects that provide opportunities for women in sub-sectors or occupations in which they have been traditionally under-represented.

2002 CFP Reform

The EC Green Paper

74. It is worth noting that in the run up to the reform of the CFP in 2002 and for a while during the aftermath gender equality was a live issue. Although there were only brief references in the European Commission’s Green Paper, published in 2001, the Paper did state that the Community was concerned to
ensure that the substantial role played by women in the fisheries sector was recognised and enhanced. This applied not just to women in member states, but also women in other countries with which the EC had partnership agreements.

2002 study into women in fisheries

75. A meeting of women in the sector, held in Turku, Finland in 1999, led to the EC commissioning of a study, released in 2002, to gather detailed information about the situation of women in the sector (MacAlister Elliott and Partners 2002). The research revealed that ‘for all the cultural and economic diversity within the EU, the position and perception of women in the fisheries sector across the EU showed a considerable degree of commonality. Among the findings were:

- Women felt unwelcome in the seagoing fishing sub sector, but expressed little interest in participating anyway. It was thought that the former (the unwelcoming ship culture) contributed to the latter (women’s lack of interest in participating in fishing)

- Women also felt discriminated against in aquaculture, but to a much lower extent, and were far more representatively involved.

- Seafood processing was perceived to hold few career prospects for women.

- Women had made significant inroads into fisheries management and administration, which was both better rewarded and more positively viewed by women. It was particularly in the public sector that women had been successful.

- The role of women as support to seagoing spouses (“collaborating spouses”) was found to both very important and highly undervalued by the fishing community. This was seen as providing the most relevant and potentially productive avenue to explore in order to better women’s position in fisheries.

- There was significant economic discrimination against women in the sector, but much less so than the overall earnings discount women face across the EU economies.

76. In the light of these findings the principal recommendation concerned acknowledging, upgrading and expanding the support role for women. It was recommended that support should be provided to promote the enhancement of this role for women, possibly containing specific support for (a) enhanced mutual support networks, (b) assistance with improved communication
(especially internet-based), (c) public awareness campaigns to enlist wider community support (especially from fishermen), (d) training including a mix of specific local technical and managerial courses plus IT skills to encourage women to become the internet managers for their family enterprises. Training should include management, marketing, selling, quality control, modern processing, business planning, accountancy & bookkeeping, employment regulations and taxation, safety at sea, environment and long term resource management.

77. It was also concluded that, whilst there should be no unfair barriers to women going to sea, there was little point in pushing for greater involvement. However, for some small scale, discrete inshore fisheries there could be scope for community based management providing women with a more significant role in the primary production segment.

78. Aquaculture was identified as an area where there should be focussed training to enhance access to technical and managerial positions for women. Again, community-based management was seen as the most appropriate approach.

79. As far as the processing industry was concerned the report recommended that it was perhaps best to help women exit the industry in non-fisheries dependant areas, rather than try to upgrade what were likely to be always low grade jobs. In fisheries dependant areas it was felt that there was justification in assisting women to become co-managers of family businesses.

80. Public sector administration and research were where women’s involvement and equality were relatively high. It was suggested that this could be enhanced through training for in environmental and resource management issues, as well as core management subjects.

The follow up to 2002

81. The Commission tabled an Action Plan, as part of the CFP reform, which addressed the social, economic and regional consequences of restructuring the EU fishing industry in November 2002. This Plan contains specific recommendations regarding training for women as well as support for those wishing to add value to the production chain.

82. In May 2003, the Commission issued a call for proposals specifically targeted at women involved in the fisheries sector. The main aim of this call for proposals is to promote the creation of networks, the exchange of experience and the development of training activities. Information about the call for proposals was widely disseminated to women’s organisations and networks in Europe. It is not evident from the literature review how much impact this had.
83. Efforts were made by the Commission to fill in some of the gaps in the data available from individual Member States, when the MacAlister Elliott and Partners study was carried out. However, we could find no evidence of an improvement in the data among member states, including the UK.

84. In January 2003, the Commission sponsored a conference to discuss the role of women in fisheries. The findings of the 2002 study were discussed. It was attended by nearly 200 women delegates. The main conclusion from the conference was that women must have a greater ability to voice their concerns, experiences and opinions, both within professional producers and union organisations as well as in policy-making bodies, if the problem of women’s ‘invisibility’ in the sector is to be counteracted. It was considered that legislation affording women greater access to social benefits and improved legal status was also greatly needed. The ability of women to network in order to facilitate broad exchanges of experience and information was seen as essential to their advancement in the sector. Repeated calls were made at the conference for more training in many areas and for the mechanisms to be put in place to better inform women of training opportunities as well as of funding sources for their training projects.

85. 2003 saw the Commission effectively pass the baton to member states. In a report published in July 2003 (European Commission, “Women in Fisheries”) the Commission commented that member states had a critical role in supporting women’s advancement in the fisheries sector. It was the member states that had to address legislative changes affecting the legal status of women in fisheries and the allocation of sufficient funds for training and other support activities.

86. Most of the Regional Advisory Councils now have women representatives. It seems doubtful whether this would have been achieved without the push from the various statements and initiatives relating to women in fisheries surrounding the 2002 CFP reform. Less clear is the extent to which women in the industry have seen other material advancements as the result of the deliberations in 2002 and 2003.

2012 Review of the CFP

87. The Commission’s Green Paper published in April 2009 discusses the implications of fisheries reform for coastal communities but does not mention the specific issue of women in fisheries. This absence has been noticed and commented upon.

88. The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) has argued that the review and reform process should consider the role of women in fisheries, and in the wider social and economic contexts of Europe’s fishery dependent coastal communities. It is interesting that more than five years after the major
conference on the role of women in fisheries the ICSF is saying that the role of women, though vital, remains ‘often hidden or invisible’.

89. The same point is made by the AKTEA, a European network of women’s organisations. In their response to the Green Paper, AKTEA are critical of the Green Paper for referring to fisheries dependent communities without making any reference to the role of women within these communities. The AKTEA response goes on to explain the many ways in which the Commission’s proposals could impact on women and that the implications for women can be different then for men.

90. The UK’s response to the Commission Green Paper addresses issues concerning fishing communities, but is silent on the role of women in fisheries and the implications of reform as far as women are concerned.

Recent Defra Fisheries Policy and Research Documents

91. Fisheries 2027 set out the UK Government’s long term vision for fisheries. This was encapsulated by a number of vision statements. One of these was that those with a stake in the marine environment would have a role in decisions that affect them. Although Fisheries 2027 is gender neutral in expressing its aims, the Department has recognised (most notably in the EFF Operational Programme), that women have a strong stake in the future of fisheries.

92. Measures to implement Fisheries 2027 are set out in Defra’s marine programme. The document “Achieving sustainable fisheries through the implementation of Fisheries 2027” recognises the contribution to local communities, but does not specifically mention women.

93. However, under the Sustainable Access to Fisheries Project, Defra has commissioned a study being undertaken by the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) of the impacts of fishing on both those people and communities who are directly dependent on it and those who are indirectly involved with it. Alongside that study there is there the project we are undertaking to see how women in the industry can be afforded the opportunity to have more say over their future.

94. A Typologies study of fishermen was undertaken by Creative Research in 2009 on behalf of Defra. There was one woman in the sample, who crewed for her husband. The low incidence of women among the sample groups is not surprising since the catching sector is heavily male dominated and that was the sector on which the study focussed. The report contains one reference to women in fisheries, in the context of their historical support role. Despite this, the experiences, attitudes and perceptions discussed in the
report would seem to have a direct bearing on the role of women in fisheries (e.g. the pessimism about the future of fishing communities, and the lack of formal academic qualifications and poor literacy levels among the men), as much as the absence of any substantive commentary on the support provided by women.

**Conclusion**

95. These are preliminary findings, but they do seem to confirm that women in the fishing industry are disadvantaged. We will be exploring this further during the course of the interviews now underway and will be examining ways in which the various obstacles could be overcome.

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