Axis 4 Factsheet: ITALY

Geographical map: Italy

1. Context in which Axis 4 is being developed and main challenges faced.

Italy lies in southern Europe, extending into the central Mediterranean Sea with a coastline of 7,600 kilometres, including the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. It has a population of 56 million which, in terms of its annual consumption of fisheries products, finds itself in line with the EU average of around 21 kg per inhabitant[1].

Fisheries occupies a secondary position in the Italian agro-food sector. Indeed, fisheries and aquaculture production represents only around 5% of the entire production and added value of the primary sector[2]. Employment in marine fisheries and related activities totals around 30,000 jobs down from around 47,000 positions 2000[3].

Although the sector´s contribution to the national GDP remains limited overall (less than 0.3% of Italy´s GDP), it is more significant in certain regions, in particular in the South. Sicily is the first region both in terms of volume and value of the catch, concentrating around 20% of the national catch and 30% of its value. Puglia is the second largest producer region with around 15% in both volume and value, followed by Marche with over 10% of national volume and value. More than 50% of the total value of Italian landings comes from these three regions. Emilia Romana, Veneto, Sardinia and Campania are next in line with a little more than 5% of the total national value of landings[4].

The Italian fleet is the second largest EU fleet in terms of number of boats with around 14 000 units in 2008 and the first in terms of engine power[5]. However, as in many countries, the number of boats has been falling significantly since 2000, and by 2012 stood at 12 938. Most fishing activities take place in the Mediterranean sea with the distant water fleet (mostly fishing west African Atlantic waters) landing only around 10 000 tonnes a year[6].

Small scale fisheries is the largest segment of the fleet in terms of number of boats, with around 65% of the vessels. This segment is characterized by boats of under 12 meters and the use of passive gear only. Trawlers, while representing only 20% of the fleet in terms of number of boats (2 700 units), account for 50% of the fleet´s kW and more than 60% of the tonnage. Other less important segments are hydraulic dredges (mostly for molluscs), long lines and multi-purpose boats using passive or non passive gears[7].

Species targeted include bluefin tuna and swordfish for the large migratory pelagic fish. This fishing is concentrated in the southernmost regions. Small pelagic (anchovies, sardines) are caught both in the Mediterranean and Adriatic Sea, while the main demersal species targeted are hake, cuttlefish and deep water shrimps. Molluscs (cockles and mussels) are important activities for the north-eastern regions of the Adriatic coast.

Trout is the main fish species produced by the Italian aquaculture sector in terms of value, followed by sea bass and sea bream. All three species suffer from competition from both UE and non EU countries, with cheaper Greek and Turkish imports present on the Italian market. Mollusc production dominates the aquaculture sector in Italy in terms of volume, with cockles

[1] FAO 2005 (measured in live weight)
[2] Total primary sector includes Agriculture, Forestry and fishing sub-sectors
[3] Il settore ittico in Italia, ISMEA 2009.
[4] Year 2007, IREPA 2009
[5] Ibid.
[6] IREPA 2009.
[7] Ibid.

and Mediterranean mussels being the main species farmed. Mollusc farming activities are concentrated around the Venetia lagoon and the Po delta.

Total fish production in Italy is on a declining trend with current levels at around 470 000 tonnes down from 560 000 tonnes a decade ago (1996[8]). The capture sub-sector accounts for the majority of this decline having seen its production volume plummet by 30% between 1996 and 2007[9]. Aquaculture production, at 180 000 tonnes in 2007, has, on the other hand, been relatively stable over the past 10 years, while inland fisheries output is very limited and declining: figures from 2007 show a production of around just 4 000 tonnes. Profitability of the fleet has suffered in recent years from high input prices (mostly oil), low sale prices of some species and reduction in landings of high value species (swordfish, shrimps, hake and scampi).

2. The National Response in terms of Axis 4

In Italy, 13 of the 19[10] Italian regions that access EFF funding are implementing Axis 4 (Sardinia, Liguria, Tuscany, Lazio, Calabria, Campania, Sicily, Puglia, Abruzzo, Marche, Emilia Romagna, Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia). The proportion of each region´s EFF budget allocated to Axis 4 varies from approximately 8% in a number of regions up to 23.8% in Calabria, depending on their priorities. In absolute terms, Italy´s leading fisheries regions, Sicilia and Puglia, have the largest Axis 4 budgets (€14.5 million and €11.8 million respectively), along with Calabria (€12 million). In percentage terms this implies 9.6% and 9.8% respectively. Campania is the fourth most significant region in Italy with regards its Axis 4 budget (€8.6 million). Other regions implementing Axis 4 have smaller budgets ranging from around €600 000 to €2.5 million.

The Operational Programme (OP) originally forecast that around 18 groups would be created for a total territory of about 20 000 km2 reaching a population of 500 000 inhabitants. However, extra funds were subsequently channeled towards Axis 4 and the final number of groups approved in Italy increased to 38. Despite some relatively generous allocations to Axis 4 in some of the Italian regions, given the large number of groups, FLAG budgets are fairly modest, ranging from €600 000 to €2 million. In most regions, FLAGs have been set up largely as an experimental initiative before deciding if and how they might be strengthened in the 2014-20 period.

3. The areas and their key characteristic

Criteria for area selection developed in the OP mention that selected areas should be smaller than NUTS 3, should be geographically, socially and economically coherent and should present at least one of the following characteristics:

- a minimum of 30 000 inhabitants (15 000 for island areas) in terms of critical mass of population;
- fisheries related activities should represent at least 2% of the total local employment
- the local fleet must have experienced a reduction in terms of engine power or gross tonnage of at least 10% over the period 2000-2006.

In the selection of the areas each of the 13 regional administrations implementing Axis 4 has assumed a specific orientation. In general, however, two main trends can be observed in the calls published to select the partnerships and local strategies:

- one group of regional administrations

Map of Italian FLAG areas

[8] Eurostat 2008.
[9] Decline from 360 000 tonnes in 2006 to 280 000 tonnes in 2007, Eurostat 2008
[10] 19 of the 21 Italian regions access EFF funding

indicated the list of eligible municipalities as well as some rules concerning their aggregation, leaving wider freedom for the actual definition of the areas (e.g. Calabria, Puglia and Sicilia).

- another group of regions pre-selected the areas from which applications can be submitted, leaving only a margin of flexibility in defining the perimeters (e.g. Campania, Emilia-Romagna and Liguria).

4. The selection process

The selection procedure for the groups and their local development strategies (LDS) included the following phases in the Italian regions, which act as intermediate bodies:

- Presentation and information about the initiative in each territory
- Call for tenders (for partnerships and strategies) according to the regional requirements
- Reception of tenders and verification of administrative eligibility
- Evaluation of tenders, selection of groups and distribution of resources.

Evaluation was based on an evaluation grid, published along with the call for tenders. These evaluation grids were based on at least 4 of the following criteria:

- Size of the territory (critical mass)
- Quality of the strategy (pertinence of the response to the socio-economic needs of the fisheries sector etc.)
- Participation of the fisheries sector (partnership should ensure the capacity to bring together the various local interests, with specific attention to fisheries activities)
- Management and financial capacity of the group
- Actions focused on environmental protection
- Complementarity of local development strategy with other development policies in the same area.

On top of these general criteria, a number of additional criteria were included in the different regional calls to select the strategies and groups. The most relevant among them are highlighted in the following table:

Specific selection criteria adopted by Italian regions

Selection criteria:	Lig	FVG	Ven	E-R	Tos	Mar	Laz	Abr	Cam	Pug	Cal	Sar	Sic
Participative approach in the LDS design	●			●		●				●		●	●
Use of skills and experience of Leader LAGs				●		●		●			●	●	
Evaluation of skills of the proposed FLAG managers	●	●	●	●						●		●	●
Specific strategic orientations[11] (i.e. diversification)	●	●	●			●			●			●	●
Formalized coordi-nation with other development actions	●	●	●			●			●			●	

Regions wishing to implement Axis 4 were expected to have published their calls for tender for FLAG selection by the end of 2011, with the aim to have all Italian FLAGs selected by July 2012.

5. The groups

In order to ensure fishermen involvement, the MA set eligibility criteria requiring groups to include representatives from the fisheries sector (minimum 20% and maximum 40% of the members). They must also include public entities (minimum 20% and maximum 40%) and of

[11] Diversification, small scale fisheries development, women, young etc.

other relevant socio-economic or environmental stakeholders (minimum 20% and maximum 40%). These proportions must also be respected on the groups´ boards.

Most regions further encouraged the presence of fisheries sector representatives in the local partnerships by introducing criteria in their calls that reward groups in which the sector holds 40% of the shares.

The first groups were selected at the end of 2011 in several regions: Abruzzo (2 groups), Calabria (5 with another one expected at a later stage), Marche (2), and Sardinia (1), with all other regions selecting their groups by the end of June 2012.

6. The strategies

The national Axis 4 strategy is focused on two main elements: firstly the implementation of local strategies for fisheries areas that demonstrate a willingness and capacity to develop and implement sustainable and integrated local development, based on representative partnerships. In this context, priority is given to initiatives aimed at reinforcing the competitiveness of fisheries areas, the diversification of fishing activities, infrastructure and services for small-scale fisheries, and tourism in small fishing communities. And secondly, the setting up of interregional and transnational cooperation between FLAGs with the aim of promoting projects that will encourage the exchange of experience and good practices.

Both the national OP and the different calls published by the Italian regions are clear about the political role of Axis 4 and its main mission: to support the competitiveness of small scale fisheries mainly through diversification and the development of marketing and tourism activities. At the time of writing, only 10 FLAG strategies had been officially approved but these focus largely on the national and regional objectives, transferred and adapted to their local context.

7. Key features of administrative and financial systems

Italy´s EFF budget 2007-2013

% of EFF Budget on Axis 4	EFF Budget on Axis 4 / €	National & Regional Funding /€	Total Public Budget for EFF/ €	Average Public Budget per group / €	Number of Groups
11.3	31.3 million	31.3 million	62.5 million	1.6 million	38

Due to the regional organization in Italy, the Axis 4 programme is coordinated by the national administration, but its implementation is in practice carried out at regional level. Each region, following the national guidelines, has set up its own organizational system, with the level of financial and administrative responsibilities devolved to the FLAG varying from region to region.

In terms of the degree of autonomy devolved to the FLAGs (both at decisional and functional level), two main decentralization models can be identified:

- The “Community-Led Strategy”, which provides a very high degree of autonomy for FLAGs: they can conceive different kinds of actions (including experimental activities), decide on selection criteria for projects and beneficiaries of different measures and are responsible for preparing and publishing calls; project assessment and ranking; controlling payment claims and making payment to project promoters; and project monitoring.
- The “Governance & Animation Centre”, which instead gives the FLAG the role of strategic reflection and local animation, but keeps almost all management activities under the responsibility of the regional administration.

8. Networking and capacity building

In the second half of 2011, the national MA (with support from FARNET) promoted a wide range of initiatives to strengthen the capacity of regional administrations for the start up of the Axis 4:

- A task force was set up and has been able to offer direct support for the preparation of selection procedures to most of the regional administrations.

- Two practical guides were prepared and published, one concerning the selection of groups and strategies, and the other one on the preparation of the LDS and the organization of the partnership.
- Several training sessions, seminars and meeting have been organized both in Rome ad in other Italian towns.

With a total of 38 FLAGs in Italy, the added value of setting up a national network is clear. The first selected Italian FLAGs have expressed their interest in the creation of such a network and its organisational structure is being examined by the national MA and regions.

9. Resource or ideas that may be of interest to other countries

Italy has significant experience in local development, thanks to 20 years of Leader experience as well as its history of “territorial pacts” for fostering employment and development. This, combined with a number of different organizational models within Italy´s small scale fisheries sector could produce some interesting examples of integrating fisheries communities into broader territorial development. Moreover, its legal context offers favourable conditions for supporting direct sales of fisheries products as well as tourism activities which could allow for some interesting project ideas for other, and in particular Mediterranean, fisheries areas.

10. Contacts and links

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