

Fisheries Science Must Be Made Understandable to Fishermen, Says Ben-Yami

Contributed by B. Tyril

It is the responsibility of scientists, not fishermen, to make sure that fisheries management advice and consequential measures taken are popularly understood and appreciated by fishermen and the general populace of a fishing community, independent fisheries adviser Menakhem Ben-Yami told the participants of a mini symposium.

LEFT: Menakhem Ben-Yami, flanked by Auðunn Konráðsson, Petur Steingrund, Hjalti í Jákupsstovu.

Held in Tórshavn on 7 July (2006), the event, entitled "Bridging the Gap Between Fishing People and Fisheries Science," saw a good number of industry representatives gather at the Hotel Hafnia to hear Mr Ben-Yami along with Auðunn Konráðsson, chairman of the Faroe Coastal Fishermen's Association and member of the Days at Sea Advisory Committee to the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, Hjalti í Jákupsstovu, managing director of the Faroese Fisheries Laboratory (Fiskirannsóknarstovan), and marine biologist Petur Steingrund, likewise of the Fisheries Laboratory.

We organized the mini symposium on behalf of our clients the Faroe Shipowners Association (Föroya Reiðarafelag), the Faroe Fishermen's Union (Föroya Fiskimannafelag), and the Faroe Coastal Fishermen's Association (Meginfelag Útróðrarmanna), on the occasion of Mr Ben-Yami's visit to the Faroes from 2 through 9 July.

Speaking "on the need for scientists, regulators and legislators to pass beyond dependency on inadequate stock assessment models, and to make way for more effective communication with managers and fishermen," Mr Ben-Yami, an internationally acclaimed authority on fisheries development and management, pointed out that there is a serious lack of effective communication between government-sponsored scientists and the main stakeholders of the fishing industry.

Mr Ben-Yami said: "... and here comes a scientist and he's saying, the stock is so and so and the TAC will be so and so, and he's writing some formulas on the black board and uses, you know, scientific language, and the fishermen feel... you know... they cannot even dispute this because they haven't got tools to answer or react to this language. So what they do, they keep silent or, at the end, one of them gets agitated, so two guys take him out because he becomes violent... Such things happen.

"So, it is up to the scientists to popularize their science, so it is fully understood to everybody. And there is no science, there is no recommendation that cannot be put in such popular way that every word is understood by fishermen -- and fishermen are intelligent people. If they wouldn't be intelligent, they wouldn't be able to catch their fish. But mainly fishermen distrust scientists because, and it is all over now, the industry stopped believing that the methodology used in fishery science is adequate to explain the works of fishery ecosystems and to quantify fish resources."

[Link to Dr Ben-Yami's website...](#)