

EP(15)16

February 2015

*For immediate release***EUROPEAN FISHERMEN AND WFO PLEDGE TO ELIMINATE MARINE LITTER**

Europêche, the body representing 80,000 European fishermen, has teamed up with environmental group, Waste Free Oceans (WFO) to help combat the growing issue of marine litter.

At a meeting between the two organisations held this week in Brussels, Europêche pledged to work with its member organisations to raise awareness of the issue and encourage fishermen across Europe to get involved in clean up initiatives.

Across Europe, fishermen have taken part in initiatives such as the 'Fishing for Litter' scheme in the UK and the Isla Verde project in Spain which aim to keep the oceans as litter and pollutant-free as possible. These initiatives have seen fishermen collecting and disposing of their waste including plastics, ropes and fishing nets when back on land as well as participating in cleanup efforts in particularly badly affected areas.

The pledge comes in the same week as new research, published by the University of Georgia, USA, revealed that about eight million tonnes of plastic waste are dumped in the world's oceans each year which if left uncontrolled, will amount a total of 155 million tonnes entering the oceans by the year 2025.

Europêche, which represents both small and large scale fishing vessels from nine European countries, says the aim of the partnership is to encourage fishermen and the plastics industry to work together to prevent marine littering and proactively clear plastics in the ocean.

President of Europêche, Javier Garat, said: "We welcome this partnership to raise awareness of the issue and what fishermen themselves can do to help. It will also allow fishermen to



assist research into better tracing of marine litter. Whilst we are aiming to help prevent waste ending up in our oceans in the first place, our fishermen can positively contribute to the clean up effort towards more environmentally friendly European waters."

Under the general framework of promoting sustainable fishing activities, funding may become available from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) to support fishermen taking part in projects contributing to the preservation of oceans.

There are many factors which have contributed to a rise in marine litter over the last 20 years including a significant rise in plastic production, poor waste management practices in ports and marinas and general public attitudes towards littering.

An increase in marine litter would have major implications for both human health and marine ecosystems. Problems caused by marine litter can include entanglement, ingestion or transport of invasive species, all of which are harmful to fish stocks.

Europêche has pledged its committed to supporting these actions and believes all fishermen should be informed of the significant role they can play in not only taking precautions against littering but also actively engaging in projects to proactively protect the environment.

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**Europêche** represents the fisheries sector in Europe. Currently, the Association comprises 13 national organisations of fishing enterprises from the following 9 EU Member States: DE, DK, ES, FR, IT, MT, NL, PL, UK.

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### Notes to Editors:



Europêche is the representative body for fishermen in the European Union representing around 45,000 vessels, both artisanal and large scale, 80,000 fishermen and counting 16 member organisations from 10 European countries.

