

# CORONAVIRUS AFFECTS FISHING COMMUNITIES BOTH ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY

**The coronavirus pandemic could have a huge impact on fisheries, predicts an international panel of researchers.**

Twenty-five researchers from 12 different countries met last week to discuss the social impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the fisheries sector. They are members of the 'social' working group at ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea), an international network for marine scientists.

## **BORDERS AND RESTAURANTS CLOSED**

Two main problems have arisen for the sector due to the coronavirus crisis. 'Firstly, fisheries are heavily dependent on international trade,' says Marloes Kraan, an anthropologist at Wageningen Marine Research and co-chair of the panel. 'That is now severely hampered by measures such as closed borders and fewer flights.' A second problem is that a lot of the trade is in fresh fish and shellfish destined for restaurants, hotels and cafeterias – a branch that is now closed nearly everywhere. 'It is precisely the



small-scale fisheries that seem to be affected by that,' says Kraan.

## **WAY OF LIFE**

'The researchers will continue to follow developments. Kraan will soon conduct a survey among fishers to see how they are doing. 'It's not just about the economic impact,' says Kraan. 'For

many fishers, fishing is a way of life. If your business goes bust, it would mean losing a big part of your identity.' Kraan hopes that science can learn from this situation. 'We are looking at which measures different countries are taking and what works, so we can advise governments better on how they can help fisheries get through this crisis.' **TL**