

The Black Sea – Georgia Overview

The **Black Sea** is an inland sea bounded by Europe, Anatolia and the Caucasus and is ultimately connected to the Atlantic Ocean via the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas and various straits. The Bosphorus strait connects it to the Sea of Marmara, and the strait of the Dardanelles connects that sea to the Aegean Sea region of the Mediterranean. These waters separate Eastern Europe and western Asia. The Black Sea also connects to the Sea of Azov by the Strait of Kerch. The Black Sea lies between Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

In the previous article we already talked about the Ukraine and its market. This time we would like to draw your attention on Georgia and its fishery sector.

The total area of Georgia is approximately 69 500 km². The country is rich in hydro biological resources and therefore suited to marine and inland capture fisheries and aquaculture activities. The country borders the Black Sea to the west and the total length of its coastline is 330 km. Small and medium-sized ponds and tanks are located across the country. Restoration of independence in 1991 found the country in difficult economic and social situation. The marine fishing fleet disappeared and catches sharply decreased. As a result, marine resources are neither fully nor properly exploited. In inland fisheries and aquaculture similar decline was experienced aquaculture farms and specific lakes suitable for aquaculture were privatized, unfortunately, the farms sometimes came into the hands of farmers who lacked the necessary skills. Due to a lack of finance and fish culture experience some of the farms were turned into agricultural areas, this led to the destruction of hatcheries, ponds and hydro technical structures.

Neither in past nor at present there are formal fisheries or aquaculture education and training facilities in Georgia. This means that Georgian children and students do not have the opportunity to learn about fisheries and aquaculture at school. Both university education and vocational school/practical training are lacking in fisheries. This will have consequences in the medium and long term for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development in the country. However, the lack of a vocational school for practical training in fisheries and aquaculture is something that would better be addressed within Georgia.

Georgia is gifted with considerable marine fisheries resources and a vast amount of unutilized clear freshwater-bodies, ponds, rivers and streams. The potential to create revenue for the country on the marine resources and development potential of the inland fisheries production is far from being utilized.

The production of both marine and inland capture fisheries and aquaculture is very low. Before independence the average yearly per capita fish consumption was 19 kg. At present it is 4 times less. Georgia imports (from different countries) more than exports.

The most important species of black sea fishes are anchovy (3 species), sprats (2 species), whiting, spiny dogfish, scads, pickerel, red mullet and mullet.

The most important ports of Georgia are Poti and Batumi. The main resource is anchovy. The yearly anchovy quota is 60.000 tones, which the Georgian fishing fleet doesn't have the capacity to utilize 100 %.

Unfortunately Georgia isn't accredited to export the fish to the E.U., it means that local production can be addressed only to local consumers and to the neighboring countries importers. This is the main reason why this sector is not developing. The accreditation of Georgia to export to the E.U. will attract many local and foreign businessmen willing to invest in fish farm development or marine catches therefore international trade of Georgian fishery products will be enhanced.

Eurofishmarket did the feasibility study on this issue in Georgia (June, 2011). Our project addresses the fishery sector in Georgia. The overall objective of the project is to support the development of the Georgian fishery system towards a technical and managerial framework that will ensure fishery product treated with food safety principle and will lead to accreditation of Georgia to export fish products to the E.U.

The project should also support communication on and coordination of fishery product quality system along the fishery chain to ensure traceability, fishery product quality and safety. All the public and private bodies involved in the fishery product process will be appropriately trained by international specialists. Improving fishery products safety will provide protection of the health of the Georgian consumers, and support the national and international trade of Georgian products in the EU.

So we hope that this project launches soon and in nearest future it will be possible to find fish products coming from Georgia in European supermarkets.