Effective Fisheries Management Key to Further Opening of World Fish Markets,
Says OECD Report

Further liberalisation of world fish markets is possible, says the OECD, but to reap the full benefits effective management must be in place to ensure the sustainability of stocks. In a new report, *Liberalising Fisheries Markets: Scope and Effects*, the OECD says both developed and developing countries could gain from additional tariff and subsidy reductions but warns that governments should ensure that their trade and fisheries management policies are mutually supportive.

The report, the culmination of a three-year study, will be presented at a press briefing at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday 27 March, 2003 at the OECD, 2 rue André-Pascal, Paris 75016. The speakers will include Stefan Tangermann, OECD Director for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, and Lori Ridgeway, Chair, OECD Fisheries Committee.

The study says that much progress has been made in opening up fisheries markets. Although average import tariff rates imposed by developed countries fell by 26% in the wake of the Uruguay Round of international trade talks in the 1980s and early 1990s, there is still room for reductions. In many OECD countries, for instance, tariffs are in place to protect processing industries. Other measures which can hinder or distort trade include the widespread use of government subsidies, port access rules, foreign investment restrictions and differing health and hygiene regulations.

The report warns that many OECD countries still do not effectively constrain catch and the size of fishing fleets which may mean that they do not fully reap the benefits of liberalisation. In the short term, countries with ineffective fisheries management may gain from trade liberalisation as they increase production and expand capacity. But over the longer term, they will suffer as their fish stocks decline.

The report also warns that government subsidies to the industry often result in unnecessarily large fishing fleets and tend to insulate the sector from commercial realities. Without effective management, subsidies can also have a major negative impact on trade, fish stocks, and on the longer-term health of the industry.

The study on fisheries market liberalisation was launched to gain a better understanding of the impact on trade and resources of various market measures applied in the fisheries sectors of OECD countries. It also assesses the important changes experienced by the industry over recent decades, from the growth in technology and capacity, to the stagnation of production from the sea and the surge in world trade.

To obtain a copy of *Liberalising Fisheries Markets: Scope and Effects*, or to register for the press briefing, journalists should contact Nicole Le Vourch, OECD’s Media Relations Division (tel: [33] 1 45 24 80 88 or nicole.levourch@oecd.org). Further information on the report can be obtained from Carl-Christian Schmidt, OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Division (tel: [33] 1 45 24 95 60 or carl-christian.schmidt@oecd.org) or from Stephen Di Biasio, OECD Media Relations Division (tel: [33] 1 45 24 81 03 or stephen.dibiasio@oecd.org).