

Assessing the capability and willingness of skippers towards fishing industry-led data collection

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Abstract

The land-all catch policy has led to a requirement for full reporting of fishing and on-board processing activity. As a result, a number of approaches and technologies have been trialled with the aim of supporting full documentation and deliver the information required for fully documented fisheries (FDF). These studies show that delivering FDF is not limited by approaches and technologies. However, recent work has shown that individually all the approaches and technologies have weaknesses. Further, fishers have preferences on some of them e.g. using a reference fleet or self-sampling to remote electronic monitoring (REM CCTV) systems. In this study, we explore the capability, willingness and practicalities of data collection by skippers, and the feasibility of using these data to document fishing patterns and catch composition in the English inshore sector. Thirty skippers of under 10m vessels in south coast England collected detailed information on the gear they used, species, size, proportion of catch retained and discarded as well as the reasons for discarding during daily fishing trips. Fisheries observers accompanied participating vessels on prearranged trips to independently record the catch levels and collect length data. Comparisons based on the mean discard rates for the main quota species collected by skippers and those collected by observers indicated consistent differences, implying that weighting factors will be needed if the data from skippers are to be used in stock assessments. We conclude that under 10m skippers are capable and willing to collect detailed data on their fishing practices, and could use validated self-sampling as a way to fully document their catches to meet the reporting requirements under the new Common Fisheries Policy.

Key words: English inshore sector; fishery dependent data; self-sampling; fully documented fisheries

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