

Small scale, big deal: Sampling catches from European small-scale fisheries.

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Small-scale fleets (SSF) are important components of many ICES fisheries and are receiving growing attention within the CFP-reform and Marine Spatial Planning initiatives. In order to assess the importance of SSF within Europe, 2015 ICES WGCATCH compiled descriptions and data (effort, catch and value) of SSF fishing in EU waters, using 2012 as reference year and categorizing fleets by vessel length. The compiled information covered 17 countries describing a range of scenarios, spanning from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean. The <10m and 10–12m vessels were ranked highest in importance in nearly all countries in terms of number of vessels and employment. They were generally involved in multi-gear and multi-species fisheries developing seasonal or part-time activities into coastal areas with generally more sensitive habitats as nursery grounds or spawning aggregations. SSF were also found to be important for several fisheries in terms of effort, value and landings, and to represent a significant share of some TAC-quota or catches of regulated species, even though their landings may be under-reported. Group members also described the way SSF are sampled and estimated in their countries. The wide diversity in methodologies used to sample and estimate the impacts of SSF creates challenges to harmonize and standardize data quality indicators across European countries. We put forward some best practice guidelines for sampling SSF and show that these will have to be adapted at regional level in order to encompass existing variability at fleet and fisheries level.

Keywords:

Small-scale fleets (SSF) dimension and importance in European countries, Data quality indicators, Estimation of transversal variables, discards and fleet-based biological variables, Sampling strategy, Sampling best practices, CFP, Marine Spatial Planning.

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