

ECOREGION **General advice**
SUBJECT **Advice on threshold levels for longline fishing**

Advice summary

ICES advises the use of a threshold of 10 VME indicators caught per 1000 hook segment or per 1200 m section of long line, whichever is the shorter, to indicate the presence of a VME.

Request

ICES is requested to advice on the appropriateness of applying the threshold levels for VME indicator species for long line fishing as adopted in the SEAFO, and CCMLAR, in the NEAFC RA.

ICES advice

ICES advises that NEAFC set specific threshold levels for VME indicator bycatch by longlines. This is because of the substantial difference in the bycatch of VME indicators on longlines compared to trawls. ICES considers that the application of threshold levels for VME indicators for longline fishing adopted by SEAFO and CCMLAR would be an improvement on the current criteria to identify VMEs because it offers a way to standardize effort across fleets. However, the application of the SEAFO and CCMLAR thresholds are complicated, rely upon 100% observer coverage and are therefore unlikely to be operational in the NEAFC RA. ICES therefore advises to adapt the SEAFO and CCMLAR thresholds and to use a threshold of 10 hooks with VME indicators per caught per 1000 hook segment or per 1200 m section of long line, whichever is the shorter, to indicate the presence of a VME.

Background

Currently NEAFC operates a simple VME encounter measure for all fishing gear types including longlines, stating that if over 30 kg of live corals or 400 kg of live sponges is taken as bycatch per set a VME is considered to have been encountered and must be reported. This rule is considered inappropriate for long lines mainly because of the different selectivity of long lines compared to trawls and because of the heterogeneity of the long line fleet in the NEAFC RA. The long line fisheries in the NEAFC RA vary considerably according to target species, characteristics of the fishing areas and traditions, ranging from technically advanced and highly mechanized fisheries on large vessels to small-scale traditional artisanal fisheries. The differentiation also includes variability in the number of hooks.

SEAFO and CCMLAR consider a 'VME indicator unit' either one litre of the type of VME indicator organisms that can be placed in a 10-litre container, or one kilogramme of the type of VME indicator organisms that do not fit into a 10-litre container. The threshold is exceeded when 10 or more VME indicator units are collected per 1000 hook segment or a 1200 m section of line, whichever is the shorter.

Sources

CCAMLR. 2010. <http://www.ccamlr.org/en/measure-22-07-2010>.

ICES. 2013. Report of the ICES/NAFO Joint Working Group on Deep-water Ecology (WGDEC). ICES CM 2013/ACOM: 28.

SEAFO. 2011.

<http://www.seafo.org/ConservationMeasures/Conservation%20Measure%202211%20on%20Bottom%20Fishing%20Activities%20in%20the%20SEAFO%20Convention%20Area.pdf>.