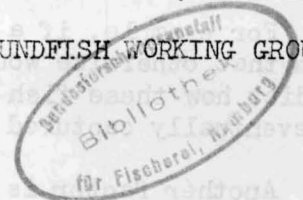


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International Council for the
Exploration of the Sea

CM 1974/F:36
Demersal Fish (Northern) Committee

SUPPLEMENT TO THE REPORT OF THE NORTH SEA ROUNDFISH WORKING GROUP



At the Liaison Committee meeting in 1974 two points arose concerning the report of the North Sea Roundfish Working Group which members of the Group were asked to resolve by correspondence. These were:

1. An incorrect figure for Sweden's catch of cod in 1972 was taken from a photocopy of a Bulletin Statistique manuscript and tabulated by the Working Group. The group was asked to investigate the effect of using this incorrect figure on the virtual population analysis for cod.
2. In addition to the whiting mesh assessment made by the Working Group the Liaison Committee had before it an independent set of calculations made by K.P. Andersen of the Danish Institute. The Liaison Committee noted that the two methods gave a completely different pattern of long term gains and losses and the Working Group was asked to resolve this discrepancy.

The cod virtual population analysis

At the Working Group meeting, the age compositions used for the virtual population analysis for the northern North Sea cod stock excluded those for both Sweden and Norway because the conclusion of previous Working Groups was that the catches of these 2 nations were not taken from the North Sea stocks for which age compositions were available. Thus, estimates of the total mortality rate were unaffected by the incorrect Swedish catch for 1972. In calculating the TAC for the northern North Sea, the allowable catch (that calculated from the age composition data obtained from the virtual population analysis) was raised to the total allowable catch by the ratio of the average total catch from the northern North Sea to that of the average of the catch less Norway's and Sweden's. In this calculation the data for 1972 were excluded because there was some doubt about the authenticity of the Swedish catch data. Also, it was felt that even if it had been correct, it would not have fairly represented the long term average catch by Sweden.

The cod analyses carried out are therefore in no way affected by the incorrect Swedish catch for 1972.

Whiting Mesh Assessments

Regarding the whiting mesh assessments, the Working Group had predicted long term gains for a number of countries, whereas Andersen had predicted primarily long term losses. The reason for this was that Andersen, and the Working Group, had based their calculations on different assumptions. Andersen, in his assessments, had assumed that a proportion of the fish released by UK and Dutch vessels would be recaptured by Danish vessels. The Working Group however had assumed that this would be unlikely and that it would be better to assume that none of the fish released by UK and Dutch vessels would be recaptured by Danish vessels.

*General Secretary, ICES, Charlottenlund Slot, 2920 Charlottenlund, Denmark.

One of the difficulties of making mesh assessments for North Sea demersal fish species is that the present state of knowledge about migrations is still incomplete.

For example, if a country increases its mesh size and releases some fish that otherwise would have been retained, it is not yet possible to predict how these fish would move and hence in what proportions they would be eventually captured by the various nations that fish in the North Sea.

Another factor is that Danish vessels take about 90% by number, of the total North Sea catch of whiting. This proportion is so large, that its inclusion or exclusion from the assessments makes a very big difference to the results.

The Working Group consider that the estimates given in the Working Group Report, and those arrived at by K.P. Andersen provide limits within which the current estimates might be expected to lie. The Working Group further consider that the correct estimates are likely to lie nearer to the Working Group estimates than to those given by K.P. Andersen, but that until more is known about the movements of whiting in the North Sea, it is not possible to be more precise.

The Working Group feel, therefore, that it will not be possible to improve significantly upon the whiting mesh assessments already made, until more is known about the movements of whiting within the North Sea.

Correction

There is a correction to be made to Table 2 of the Report of the North Sea Roundfish Working Group. The catch of cod for 1972 in Division IVa should read 800 and not 1699. The total figure for 1972 should read 3462 instead of 4362.

Chairman

North Sea Roundfish Working Group