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by Thünen-InstitutSTATISTICS COMMITTEEChairman: Mr D. de G. Griffith
Rapporteur: Dr V.M. Nikolaev

1. The Committee met on 27 and 28 September. The Chairman checked the list of members and introduced the Draft Agenda and the Order of the Day, which were adopted.

2. Administrative Report

The Chairman presented the Administrative Report and requested members from the countries which had not submitted reports to review the state of their national statistical procedures verbally. The Committee was informed of the efforts of the Portuguese Institute of Marine Biology to improve the collection of basic catch statistics in the country. The general improvement in statistical procedures within, at least, 6 members countries to collect material on a statistical rectangle basis was noted with satisfaction.

3. Progress Report

- 3.1. Publications and STATLANT Forms

The Statistician submitted the Progress Report and introduced the Advance Release of Tables 1-5 of Bulletin Statistique, Volume 61 (for 1976), with inventories of data previously incorporated in the Statistical News Letters. No nominal catch data were reported by Norway and Spain, and French returns were submitted too late for inclusion into the Advance Release. Several decisions adopted at the previous Statutory Meetings were implemented in Volume 59 of Bulletin Statistique for 1974, published in August 1977. Computer print-outs of Tables 1-5 of Volume 60 of Bulletin Statistique (for 1975), incorporating the latest amendments, have been prepared by the ICES Secretariat, and work was proceeding rapidly on the introductory and auxiliary tables. However, the work on finalizing Tables 10 and 11 and preparing Table 7 of this Volume was hampered by the absence of STATLANT 27B returns for 1975 from some countries. The Committee noted with satisfaction that, provided the missing returns were obtained quickly, the publication of Volume 60 was expected early in 1978 and that, under the same proviso, Volume 61 (for 1976) could follow in the same year. The Committee urged once more the member countries to adhere to the established deadlines for the submission of STATLANT Forms noting with alarm the recent deterioration in meeting these deadlines.

3.2. Introductory commentary to Bulletin Statistique

The Committee discussed the re-iterated proposal by the ADP Working Group to re-instate in a somewhat extended form the introductory commentary to Bulletin Statistique, with the understanding that the contents of it would be the responsibility of the Editor. On this basis it would not need any further approval by the Statistics Committee. The general feeling was that, although there was no need for such a commentary by those directly involved in fisheries statistics, the wider circles of potential users might find it helpful. It was, therefore, agreed that the practice should be resumed.

3.3. Introductory tables

The Committee took note of changes being made in the introductory tables of Volume 60 of Bulletin Statistique, following the ADP Working Group proposals endorsed by the Committee at the 64th Statutory Meeting, and discussed computerization of production of Table K and its proper place in Bulletin Statistique. It was agreed that Table K should be produced from computer print-outs, using part of the ICES FISHDAT System, for Volume 60 and that its general lay-out would, as far as possible, be retained. The Committee also felt that, being one of the specialized introductory tables, Table K should be kept at its present place in Bulletin Statistique. Taking into account the developing interest in blue whiting, the Committee recommended that it should be transferred from Table K to Table 5 as a separate species item.

3.4. Tables 1 and 2

The Committee discussed the problem of available space for the 8-digit totals involved in Table 1, and recommended, while retaining entries for all years since 1962 in the Advance Release, to publish in Tables 1 and 2 of Bulletin Statistique data for the most recent ten years together with the data for 1962, as a reference year.

3.5. Table 7

The Committee considered Doc. C.M.1977/D:7 containing proposals on a new format of Table 7 of Bulletin Statistique, following C.Res.1976/1:20. The fishing effort measures to be retained in the Table and on STATLANT 27B Form were discussed in detail. Some members were in favour of leaving only effort level "A", in accordance with last year's advice from the Gear and Behaviour Committee provided under C.Res.1975/5:3. The others, while agreeing with the greatest priority of effort level "A" for estimating the implied fishing mortality rates, indicated other possible ways in which the different effort levels might be used, e.g., effort level "C" - number of days on grounds - appeared more practical for regulatory purposes. Outstanding problems with reporting effort level "A" in some national statistical offices were also taken into account.

The Committee noted that both Format I and Format II would be bringing the Table closer in uniformity to Table 5 of ICNAF Statistical Bulletin, in accordance with C.Res.1972/1:10 and

C.Res.1973/3:8. Since the adoption of Format II would retain the potentially important fishing effort measures currently reported on STATLANT 27B, and still provide room for the extension of Table 7 if required, the Committee recommended accordingly. The Committee was aware, however, that since this would lead to printing Table 7 in Bulletin Statistique in the "horizontal" lay-out, i.e., as the present Table 5, financial aspects might here be of some importance, but these were not discussed.

The Committee requested the ADP Working Group to consider at its next meeting the validity of retaining "average HP", "average GRT", and "average length, overall" categories on STATLANT 27B Form, in the light of the adoption of much more detailed revised International Standard Statistical Classification of Fishing Vessels (ISSCFV), dealt with in paragraph 3.8 below.

3.6. Table 10

The Committee discussed the comments of the ADP Working Group on the draft format of Table 10 and endorsed them, but confirmed that both yearly countries' totals and monthly totals should be retained as originally stipulated by C.Res.1976/1:21.

3.7. Collection of data by statistical rectangles

The Committee noted with concern that while there were improvements in submission of preliminary annual catch statistics and monthly catch data, certain signs of deterioration in submission of data by statistical rectangles were evident in 1977 judging from the Inventories annexed to the Advance Release. Nevertheless, some countries are in the process of instigating or improving data collection schemes on a statistical rectangle basis (see section 2 of this Report), and so the situation should improve in future years.

3.8. Modifications in ISSCFV

The Committee reviewed the implementation of C.Res.1975/1:15 "ICES Data Form 6" on fishing craft and fishermen, incorporating ISSCFV categories, after having been considered by the ADP Working Group, was distributed by the ICES Secretariat among national offices (in February 1977) for completion with the 1975 and 1976 data. Returns for 1976 were received from Belgium, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Scotland as of 23 September 1977. The ICES Secretariat has as yet not received returns on Data Form 6 for 1975 from Belgium, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Finland, the German Democratic Republic, Iceland, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, England and Wales, Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, Scotland and USSR. The Committee expressed concern that the absence of required data prevents progress on Table 9 of Bulletin Statistique, Volume 60.

In preparation for the consideration of modified ISSCFV categories at the Ninth Session of the Coordinating Working Party on Atlantic Fishery Statistics (17-23 August 1977) a draft form, incorporating envisaged changes, was also distributed in February 1977 to national statistical offices for comment. Returns received from them contained no indications of negative attitudes towards the draft. Two countries (Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany) had actually completed the new draft form with data for 1976. The CWP, having considered the matter, adopted modified versions of the International Standard Statistical Classification of Fishing Vessels (ISSCFV) by GRT and HP categories. It also proposed some slight amendments in the International Standard Statistical Classification of Fishing Gear (ISSCFG). The Committee agreed to recommend adoption of these modifications to the Council. The Secretary of the CWP was requested to incorporate these changes in the "Notes for Completion of STATLANT 27B Form".

3.9. Three-Alpha species abbreviations

The Committee considered Doc. C.M.1977/D:6, which stemmed from the 1976 Statistics Committee request to the CWP to study the feasibility of introducing in selected tables three-alpha abbreviations and similar elements due to technical and space reasons. The CWP felt it desirable that a single code should be developed for the entire North Atlantic area, and the resultant common three-alpha species code, including the scientific names of North Atlantic species items, was given in Appendix 5 to Doc. C.M.1977/D:9. The Committee agreed to recommend the adoption of these abbreviations to the Council, with the understanding that the list of the abbreviations (together with the lists of ISSCFV and ISSCFG categories and ICES country codes) should be published in the introduction to each volume of Bulletin Statistique, as it is done in the ICNAF Statistical Bulletin.

3.10. Data on discards

The Committee reviewed the response by member countries to the Council resolutions on collecting data on discards. It noted that three papers giving data on discards were submitted to the 65th Statutory Meeting (C.M.1977/D:3, G:12 and G:13). It was also noted that the Netherlands and Scotland collect such data by placing observers aboard fishing vessels and bring the information to the relevant ICES Assessment Working Groups meetings. The recommendations of the CWP on this matter were discussed, but it was felt that it might prove difficult for member countries, at the present time, to submit data on discards in provisional form together with preliminary nominal catch data and broken down by month. Therefore, the Committee agreed to recommend to use the form, which as a draft had been earlier distributed by the ICES Secretariat, setting as a deadline for its return the same date as for the STATLANT 27A Form.

3.11. Data on seaweeds

In response to last year's request from the Statistics Committee, the CWP considered the matters involved in collecting and publishing data on seaweeds, and recommended that all regional agencies should make a special effort in 1978 and onwards to obtain from member countries (through the STATLANT System) better and more complete annual seaweed production data by species on a wet-weight basis. The Committee endorsed this proposal and recommended accordingly, with the understanding that the ADP Working Group at its next meeting should consider the appropriate place for the seaweed data in Bulletin Statistique.

4. ADP Working Group Report

The Committee adopted the Report of the Working Group^{and} noted that the 3-phase programme of implementing the FISHDAT System was being completed virtually as it has been agreed upon in 1974, and that the future work of the ADP Working Group would now be concentrated on the final stage, i.e., choosing and implementing an ADP system for assessment purposes. The Committee expressed its gratitude to the Danish Institute for Fisheries and Marine Research, and particularly to Mr H. Lassen, Mr K. Laumann and Mrs B. Mörck-Larsen, for the great amount of work done on the FISHDAT System.

Reasons for changing the design philosophy of a computer system for handling ICES statistical requirements, which was approved at the 64th Statutory Meeting, were appreciated. At the same time, the Committee shared the view of the ADP Working Group that changes in the design philosophy would almost certainly lead to a considerable delay in implementing the full FISHDAT System. Deep concern was expressed over the inability of the originators of the system to provide to ICES the full documentation on the coding applied in the new relational approach after such lengthy and great work on the FISHDAT System.

The Danish originators of the System confirmed that the full trial run on the North Sea plaice, applying the new system, would be completed by mid-January 1978, and the ICES Statistician confirmed that the Secretariat was ready to punch the necessary cards as soon as the difficulties in transferring original data from member countries to punch forms were overcome by the originators.

A disappointment was expressed that it has not proved possible for the Systems Analyst to produce standard punch forms (for the "Input to the Biological File of the ICES FISHDAT System") accompanied by detailed notes on their completion to this Statutory Meeting.

The future major tasks of the ADP Working Group were discussed and recommended to the Council for adoption.

5. CWP Report of the Ninth Session

The Secretary of the CWP, Mr L.P.D. Gertenbach, presented the Report of the Ninth Session of the CWP (Doc.C.M.1977/D:9). Having discussed the matters raised, the Committee noted that changes in the Rules of Procedure were proposed to expand the activities of the CWP and that the Tenth Session of the CWP was scheduled for 26 June - 4 July 1979 in Madrid. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the Report, noting that the standard statistical concepts developed by the CWP in the Atlantic looked like being extended in the future to other areas of the world's oceans. The Committee drew attention to the outstanding contribution of Mr L.P.D. Gertenbach (Secretary of the CWP) over the last twenty years to the standardisation of fisheries statistical data collection, and the consequent benefits to a very wide variety of compilers and users.

6. Collection of Statistics and Sampling

Docs. C.M.1977/D:2, D:8 and D:11 were presented and discussed by the Committee in detail. The Committee noted with satisfaction that, following C.Res.1972/4:5 and 1973/4:8, a large number of papers had been submitted on fish sampling systems and national statistical systems. Noting that Eurostat has requested the member countries of EEC to update descriptions of national statistical systems submitted to ICES, the Committee considered it useful for the Council to publish the descriptions from all member countries of ICES, and recommended accordingly.

Papers on sampling systems and theories were always regarded by the Statistics Committee as being of great importance, and it was recommended that the Council publish these papers, together with an evaluation of the state of knowledge of biological sampling as provided in them.

7. Modified Catch Statistics for Previous Years

Following C.Res.1976/1:17, the Committee discussed this matter in great detail. It was confirmed that only official data from national statistical offices could be accepted for publication in Bulletin Statistique. Any later amendments to them should originate from the same national source and be accompanied by appropriate explanations as stipulated in the above-mentioned resolution. It was agreed that the level of detail in the explanation should be concomitant with the magnitude of the modifications involved. Such amendments for the previous year(s) should be published as an Annex to Bulletin Statistique which, however, should never be delayed by these later submissions. The Committee recommended that amendments for 1970-74, submitted to the

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ICES Secretariat before the adoption of C.Res.1976/1:17, should be published as an Annex to Volume 60 of Bulletin Statistique.

M R. Letaconnoux explained the changes in the French catch statistics shown in Appendix III to Doc. C.M.1977/Gen:4. The major reason for recalculations was that previously the weight of fish caught was calculated in standard "box units", without taking into account the differences in the actual weight of fish in the boxes. Besides that, the original statistics included only fish sold as fresh, and did not take into account "withdrawn" fish reduced later to fish meal. The Committee accepted this explanation and recommended that the amended tables be published.

8. Modifications in Boundaries of Fishing Areas

The Committee was informed that matters arising from C.Res.1976/1:19 (on separation of Sub-area XIV) and C.Res.1976/1:21 have been agreed upon and implemented on STATLANT 27 Forms and in the notes for their completion through the exchange of correspondence between the Secretary of the CWP, the Chairman of the Statistics Committee and the ICES Statistician. Furthermore, a description of Divisions XIVA and XIVb will be published in Volume 60 of Bulletin Statistique.

Dr R. Monteiro explained the reasons behind the Portuguese proposal to split Sub-area IX into three divisions (Doc. C.M.1977/D:10). They appeared to arise mainly from management considerations and the inability of the Portuguese and Spanish statistical services to monitor fisheries by ICES statistical rectangles. The Committee feared that such a division, not being based on any biological grounds, might become a dangerous precedent, and felt that the management problems might be easier overcome on the basis of bilateral arrangements between Portugal and Spain. Besides, the problem would be automatically solved as soon as both Portugal and Spain would abide by C.Res.1974/4:8 and 1976/4:10 on reporting data by ICES statistical rectangles. Therefore, it was agreed not to recommend such a division of Sub-area IX.

9. Other matters

Doc. C.M.1977/F:38, dealing with a proposed sub-division of the North Sea for biological sampling of roundfish, was considered, and the Committee appreciated the way in which validity of at least part of the proposed breakdown had been examined statistically by the method described in the paper.

10. Communications

A full list of communications will be given in Procès-Verbal de la Réunion 1977.

STATISTICS COMMITTEE

The Statistics Committee recommends that:

- I (1) Updated versions of the descriptions of national statistical systems as submitted to the Council should be published in the Cooperative Research Report series under the editorship of the Chairman of the Statistics Committee.
- I (2) In order to overcome the problem of spacing the digits, Tables 1 and 2 of Bulletin Statistique, commencing with Volume 61, should contain the nominal catch data in metric tons for the ten most recent years together with the 1962 data, as a reference year.
- I (3) Poutassou (Blue whiting) should be identified as a separate species item in Table 5 of Bulletin Statistique, commencing with Volume 61, in view of the developing interest in the species.
- I (4) ICES adopt the standard abbreviations for North Atlantic species items proposed by the CWP at its Ninth Session (C.M.1977/D:9, Appendix 5), and that these abbreviations may be incorporated in Tables 5 and 7 of Bulletin Statistique.
- I (5) Following C.Res.1976/1:20, Table 7 of Bulletin Statistique should be prepared in accordance with Format II described in C.M.1977/D:7, commencing with Volume 61.
- I (6) Official amendments to previously published national nominal catch data for 1970-74, available at the ICES Secretariat, should be published as an Annex to Volume 60 of Bulletin Statistique.

The Statistics Committee recommends:

II(1) The ADP Working Group should meet for four days at Charlottenlund in 1978 immediately after the next meeting of the North Sea Flatfish Working Group in order to:

- a) evaluate test runs of that part of the ICES FISHDAT System dealing with the interactive requirements of Assessment Working Groups. These test runs should use at least data for the first quarter of 1974 for North Sea plaice and should meet the specified requirements of the North Sea Flatfish Working Group;
- b) on the basis of a full trial run of North Sea plaice data, make a final decision on the design philosophy on which the FISHDAT System will be based;
- c) review procedures for the input of data to the System including notes for the preparation of input records and data vetting procedures;
- d) review the status of programs and coding procedures for handling the production of Tables K, 7 and 10 of Bulletin Statistique;
- e) consider ways of publishing the seaweed harvesting data in Bulletin Statistique.

The Statistics Committee recommends that:

IV(1) International Standard Statistical Classifications of Fishing Gear (ISSCFG) and of Fishing Vessels (ISSCFV), as adopted earlier by the Council, should be modified as proposed by the CWP at its Ninth Session¹⁾

IV() member countries should submit their annual returns on discards to the ICES Secretariat not later than 31 May in accordance with the form described in C.M.1977/D:5 (Annex 1).

IV() i) Member countries should report, commencing with the data for 1977, through the STATLANT System their annual seaweed harvest data by species on a wet-weight basis;

ii) the Secretary of the CWP should be requested to include this provision in the "Notes for Completion of STATLANT Forms" and in the STATLANT 27A Form itself.

1) C.M.1977/D:9, section 6.2.2. and Appendices 6 and 7;
It is understood that HP division code "05" should refer to "749.9" as an upper limit, not "799.9".