



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
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Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

COORDINATING WORKING PARTY ON FISHERY STATISTICS

Twenty-second Session

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Report: NAFO

NAFO 2007 Report to CWP

Although NAFO receives relatively complete fishery statistical data in a fairly timely manner, the data collection process and data quality can still be improved. In addition, the reliability of statistical data was questioned by Scientific Council in 2004. Accordingly, the Scientific Council recommended in 2005 that all Contracting Parties take measures to improve the accuracy of their catch estimates. To give Contracting Parties more time to prepare a high quality data submission, NAFO rescheduled the submission date for the 21B catch and effort data from 30 June to 31 August. To ensure, however, that the annual catch reports are available prior to the main Scientific Council meeting in June, the submission date for STATLANT 21A data was shifted forward, from 15 May to 1 May.

With the introduction of an all-electronic “Statistical Bulletin” NAFO “lost” the date on which statistical data became final (i.e. the year of print). It was suggested that the Secretariat determines when a dataset becomes final (upon input by national statistical agencies and after quality control) and keeps “provisional” submissions in a separate section of the web. NAFO still publishes the database on CD-Rom (upon request).

The FISHSTAT Plus software (from FAO) does not install properly on the computers of the NAFO Secretariat and therefore, NAFO can still not create its own data files. Very generously, David Cross (retired from Eurostat) will continue to update the data for the next few years, even after his retirement, until these difficulties are overcome. The Scientific Council recognized the usefulness of an interactive Excel application on the web to allow a quick overview (graphics or table) of NAFO fishery catches (www.nafo.int/fisheries/stats/NAFOstats_Excel.zip), developed by the NAFO Secretariat some years ago.

It has become clear that there are discrepancies between the fisheries statistics databases for NAFO and FAO. These discrepancies arise from a variety of reasons. FAO, NAFO and EUROSTAT have agreed to a study in the summer 2006 to determine the extent of the problem and to investigate methods of eliminating the existing discrepancies and of preventing the recurrence of the problem in the future. The Executive Secretary will report back to the committee on the progress of these discussions and on discussions of this issue at CWP.

One interesting development in NAFO has been the permission for Scientific Council to use, in summary form, the highly confidential NAFO VMS data for assessment purposes. These data can be used to calculate catch within the NRA and effort in terms of days at sea and Scientific Council recognized their potential value in assessing the status of stocks. NAFO requires 2-hourly position reports along with catch reports on entry, exit, and transshipment. Also, in 2007, NAFO introduced an alternative monitoring scheme according to which the presence of observers can be drastically reduced if the master of the vessels transmits daily electronic catch reports.

Recognizing the importance of using the identical measurement device on both sides of the North Atlantic Ocean, STACREC recommended that the new mesh gauge OMEGA be adopted as the standard for scientific purposes.

NAFO has started a reform of its mandate, structure and decision-making process. The final outcome will be reported in 2009. However, here it is interesting to note that NAFO widens its mandate to safeguard of the marine environment from any negative effects of fishing. In this context, NAFO has committed to use an “Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management”; it closed four seamounts to bottom fishing and requested the Scientific Council to assess sensitive (corals) habitats on these seamounts. This requires new approaches towards assessment and poses quite a few challenges to the NAFO Scientific Council, e.g. collection of relevant data and new expertise for the analyses of the new data types.

In addition to the closure of seamounts, NAFO has taken first steps towards the Ecosystem Approach by adopting a resolution (06/1) to protect and study sea turtles and by banning shark finning in the Northwest Atlantic (NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures, Article 13). However, it was noted that a detailed reporting on elasmobranch species, which is required by NAFO since 1998, has not been followed by all NAFO Contracting Parties and that this situation will be reviewed in September 2007.

In 2006, NAFO hosted the Symposium on “Environmental and Ecosystem Histories in the Northwest Atlantic – What Influences Marine Living Resources?” (www.nafo.int/science/research/conferences/2006/symposium06.html). In 2007, NAFO will, in cooperation with PICES and ICES, host a Symposium on “Reproductive and Recruitment Processes of Exploited Marine Fish Stocks” (1-3 October 2007, Lisbon, Portugal).

NAFO also announces a revision of the 1983 guide to early fish stages in the Northwest Atlantic. It is hoped that the update of this important book will improve identification of fish larvae. This two-volumes hard-cover book is distributed by the NAFO Secretariat for US\$ 100 (including shipment) (<http://www.nafo.int/publications/fahay/fahay.html>).