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FISHERY COMMITTEE FOR THE EASTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC

NINETEENTH SESSION

Cotonou, Benin, 4-6 November 2008

PROPOSAL FOR A REVISION OF THE CECAF-FAO FISHING AREA 34 STATISTICAL DIVISIONS

SUMMARY

At present, the CECAF capture database managed by FAO-FIES includes data by statistical divisions for a period of 37 years. Following increasing requests to incorporate more detailed catch location and a recent revision of the statistical divisions in the Southeast Atlantic Fishing Area, three possible options for the modification of the CECAF statistical divisions are proposed. When comparing the three options, continuity and consistency of the new statistical divisions with the data series presently held in the CECAF should probably be the main consideration. The Committee is invited to comment upon the relevance and importance of the proposed revision of CECAF statistical divisions and decide if, and in what terms, it should be implemented by FAO-FIES on behalf of the Committee.

INTRODUCTION

The FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Information and Statistics Service (FIES) manages the CECAF capture database on behalf of the Committee. The database is updated annually and presently includes data for a period of 37 years, from 1970 to 2006. Data are disseminated through the FISHSTAT+ software¹ and are also available on line at the FAO web site². Catch

¹ The CECAF database and the FISHSTAT+ software to consult it are downloadable at <http://www.fao.org/fishery/statistics/software/fishstat> or CD-ROM can be requested to FIES-Inquiries@fao.org.

² <http://www.fao.org/fishery/statistics/cecaf-capture-production/query>

statistics are provided to FAO by all countries fishing in the Eastern Central Atlantic area, whether they are bordering the region or if they are Distant Waters Fishing Nations (DWFNs).

To submit the catch statistics for the CECAF area (besides the National Summary questionnaire-NS1) FAO-FIES requests national correspondents to fill in also the STATLANT 34A questionnaire to assign the capture production by CECAF statistical divisions. For countries which fail to report data, notwithstanding several reminders, FAO estimates the missing data and marks them in the database with an “F”. Catch statistics for tuna species are mostly those provided by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

THE CECAF AREA OF COMPETENCE

The CECAF was established in 1967 and its area of competence is defined in the CECAF Statutes as being from Cape Spartel to the mouth of the Congo River (Figure 1). This area exactly matches with the FAO Major Fishing Area “34 – Eastern Central Atlantic”. Presently the Committee has a total of 34 members, 22 from nations bordering the area of competence, 11 members from DWFNs, and one member organization (the European Union, EU).

One of the latest nations to adhere to the Committee as member was Angola in 2006. Angola encompasses the province of Cabinda in the CECAF area of competence, while the main part of its marine coast borders the FAO Fishing Area “47 - Southeast Atlantic”. However, as there is no other fishery body dealing specifically with coastal resources in Fishing Area 47, given the geographical contiguity and the common biological characteristics of fishery stocks in southern part of area 34 and northern part of area 47, the CECAF Scientific Sub-Committee and its Working Groups’ meetings cover also Angolan fishery resources from the main part of its marine coast.

PRESENT SITUATION OF CECAF STATISTICAL DIVISIONS

Standards of data reporting for the CECAF area were established in the 1970s (Ansa-Emmin and Levi³, 1975) and, for statistical purposes, the CECAF area was split into four subareas, further sub-divided into twelve divisions (see Figure 1 and Table 1). Tuna catches are not allocated according to CECAF statistical divisions and are grouped together into a division named "Tunas". Two other divisions, namely "Northern coastal, not known" and "Not known", contain catches for which the exact statistical division is not known.

Boundaries of CECAF divisions were mostly set according to geographical coordinates than to match national borders between coastal countries. The most relevant case is that of Mauritania where the boundary between the divisions 1.3 and 3.1 is approximately in the middle of the Mauritanian coastline.

³ Ansa-Emmin, M. & D. Levi, 1975. Biostatistical data for stock assessment purposes: present situation and suggestions for improvement. Fisheries Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic, *CECAF/ECAF Series/75/2*, 13 p.

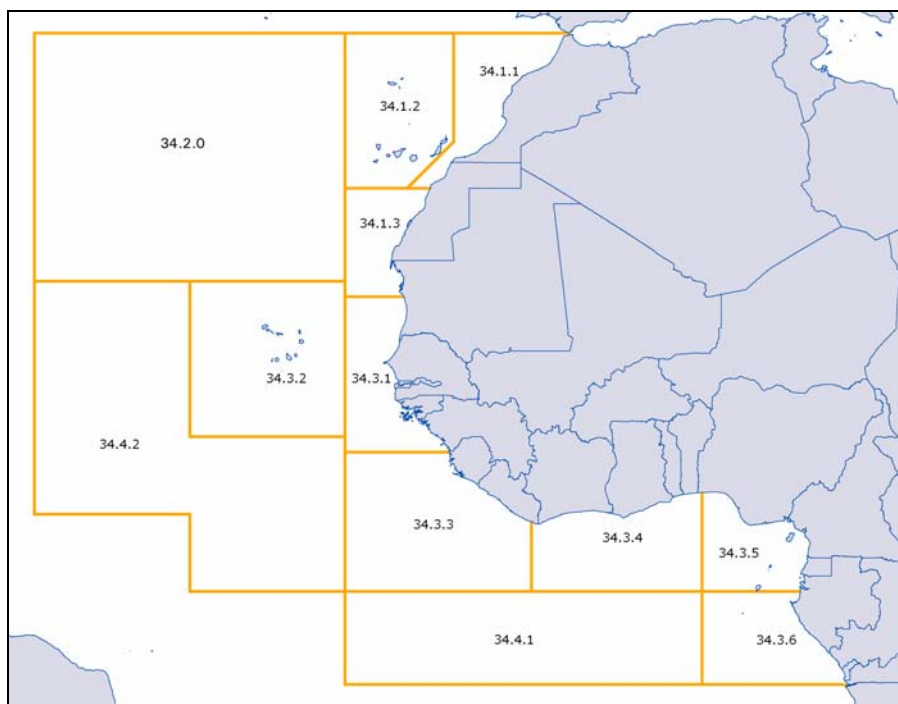


Figure 1. The CECAF area and its statistical divisions

Table 1. Codes and names of the CECAF statistical divisions

Division code	Division name
34.1.1	Morocco coastal
34.1.2	Canaries/Madeira insular
34.1.3	Sahara coastal
34.2.0	Northern oceanic
34.3.1	Cape Verde coastal
34.3.2	Cape Verde insular
34.3.3	Sherbro
34.3.4	Western Gulf of Guinea
34.3.5	Central Gulf of Guinea
34.3.6	Southern Gulf of Guinea
34.4.1	Southwest Gulf of Guinea
34.4.2	Southwest oceanic
34.1.9	Northern coastal, not known
34.9.0	Not known (CECAF area)
34.0.0	Tunas (CECAF area)

REASONS FOR A POSSIBLE REVISION OF CECAF STATISTICAL DIVISIONS

FAO receives increasing requests to incorporate more detailed catch location, especially separation between catches taken inside and outside national EEZs. In Northwest Africa where a significant share of catches within the EEZs is taken by DWFNs, some coastal countries have often pointed out that catch statistics in international databases, such as that of FAO, should not only be recorded by the flag of the vessel but also by the EEZ. A revision of the statistical divisions was also recommended by the CECAF Scientific Sub-Committee at its last Session held in Casablanca, Morocco, 4-6 December 2007.

Statistical divisions for FAO Fishing Area “47 - Southeast Atlantic” have been recently revised in agreement between FAO and the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO), a regional fishery body which Convention Area covers South East Atlantic high seas. As can be seen in Figure 2, offshore boundaries of coastal divisions have been modified to match the offshore EEZs boundaries, but boundaries between divisions have remained unchanged. This reduced as much as possible the disruption of the data series for coastal divisions. For the oceanic divisions, the borders of the SEAFO divisions have been adopted. The revised STATLANT 47A questionnaire has been included in the latest FAO fishery statistical inquiry and countries fishing in area 47 are expected to report 2007 data according to the new statistical divisions. In the same way, if the Committee should opt for a modification of the CECAF statistical divisions, FAO would modify the STATLANT 34A questionnaire accordingly.

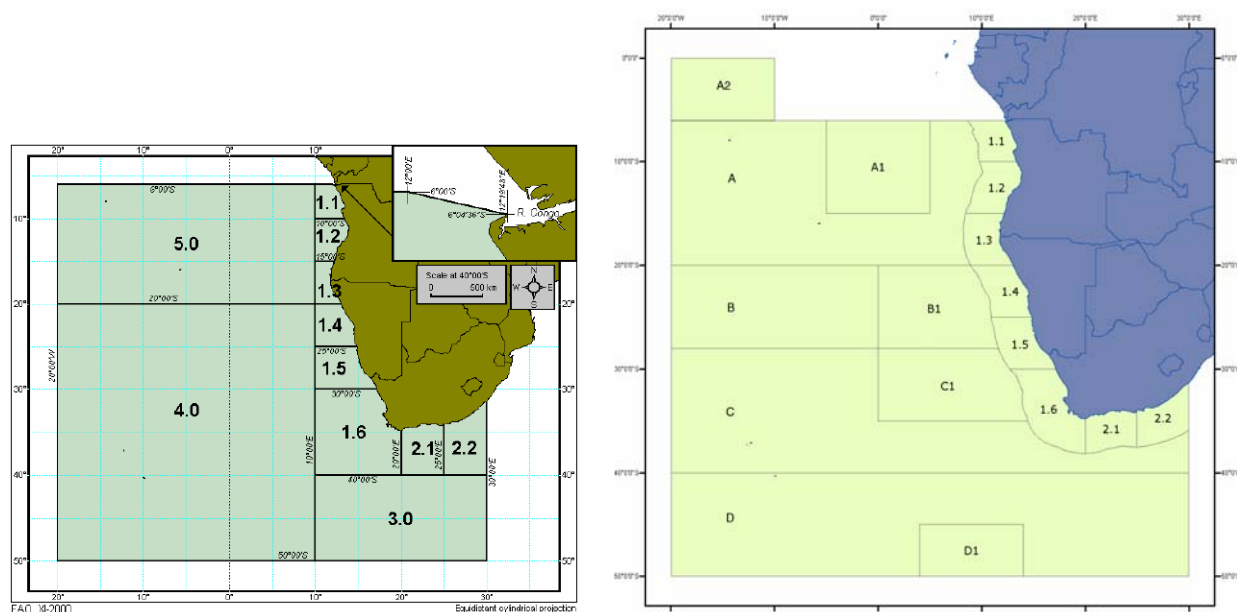


Figure 2. Fishing Area 47 - Southeast Atlantic: former statistical divisions (left) and revised statistical divisions (right)

POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR THE REVISION OF CECAF STATISTICAL DIVISIONS

Three possible options for the revision of the CECAF statistical divisions are proposed. Similarly to that already done in the paper⁴ proposing the revision of statistical divisions in area 47, the “coastal” and “oceanic” statistical divisions in which area 34 is presently subdivided have been considered separately. As modifications of the oceanic divisions (i.e. 2.0, 4.1 and 4.2) and of the “3.2 - Cape Verde insular” division are the same in all three options, the summary of options listed below deals only with changes in coastal divisions and in “1.2 - Canaries/Madeira insular” division. The following maps⁵ show the possible new statistical divisions according to each option and the major pros and cons are considered.

⁴ Garibaldi, L. and H. Hamukuaya, 2007. Proposal for a revision of FAO Fishing Area 47 statistical divisions with a view to a collaboration between FAO and SEAFO in the compilation of national capture data. *Report of the 3rd SEAFO Scientific Committee*.

⁵ Boundaries of EEZs taken from: Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee (VLIZ), 2005. Maritime Boundaries Geodatabase. Available online at <http://www.vliz.be/vmcddata/marbound>, consulted on 2008-08-21.

- Option 1. offshore boundaries of coastal divisions would match the offshore EEZs boundaries but boundaries between divisions would remained unchanged (Figure 3)
- Option 2. new coastal divisions would match the EEZs of coastal countries (Figure 4)
- Option 3. coastal divisions would be re-arranged according to membership of coastal countries to the three sub-regional bodies⁶ established in area 34 (Figure 5)

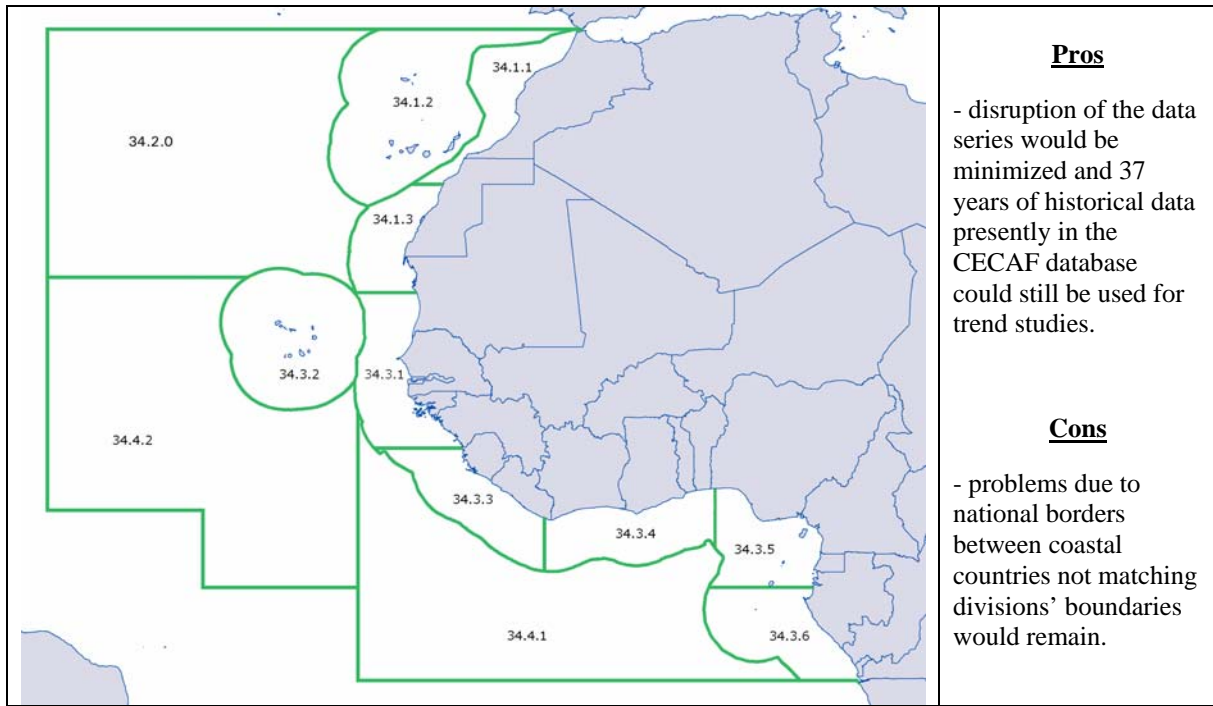


Figure 3. Option 1

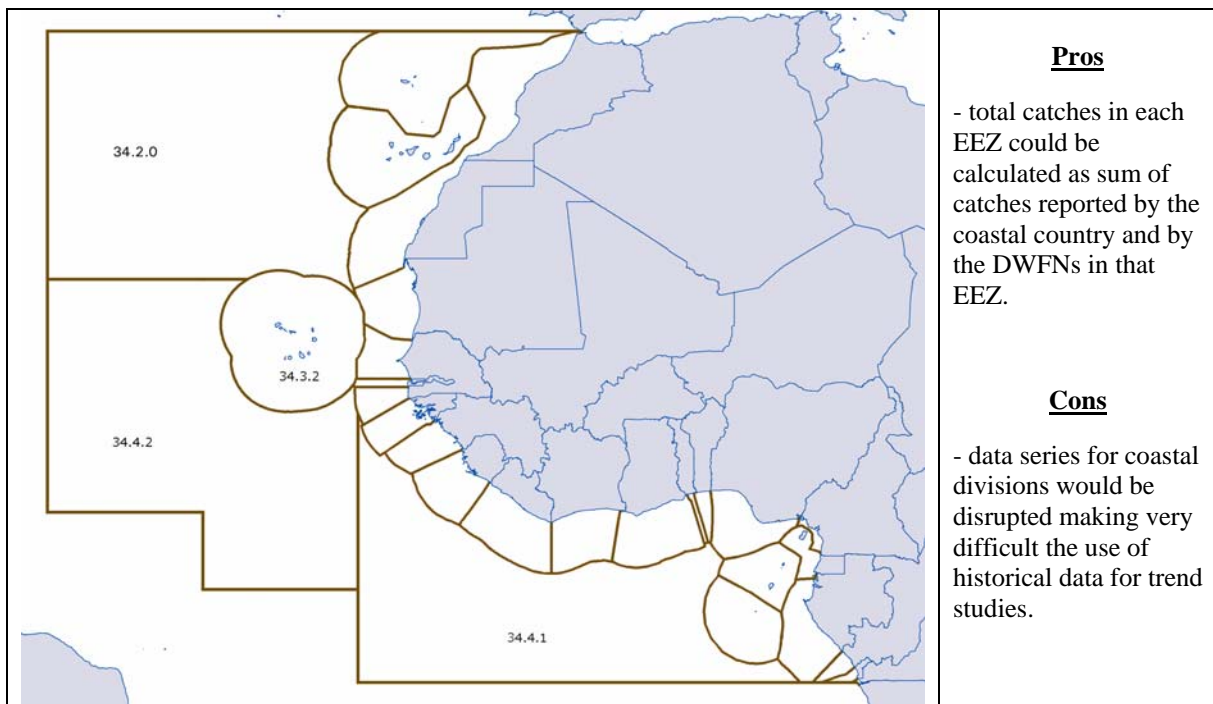


Figure 4. Option 2

⁶ Sub-regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC); Fishery Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC); Regional Fishery Committee for the Gulf of Guinea (COREP).

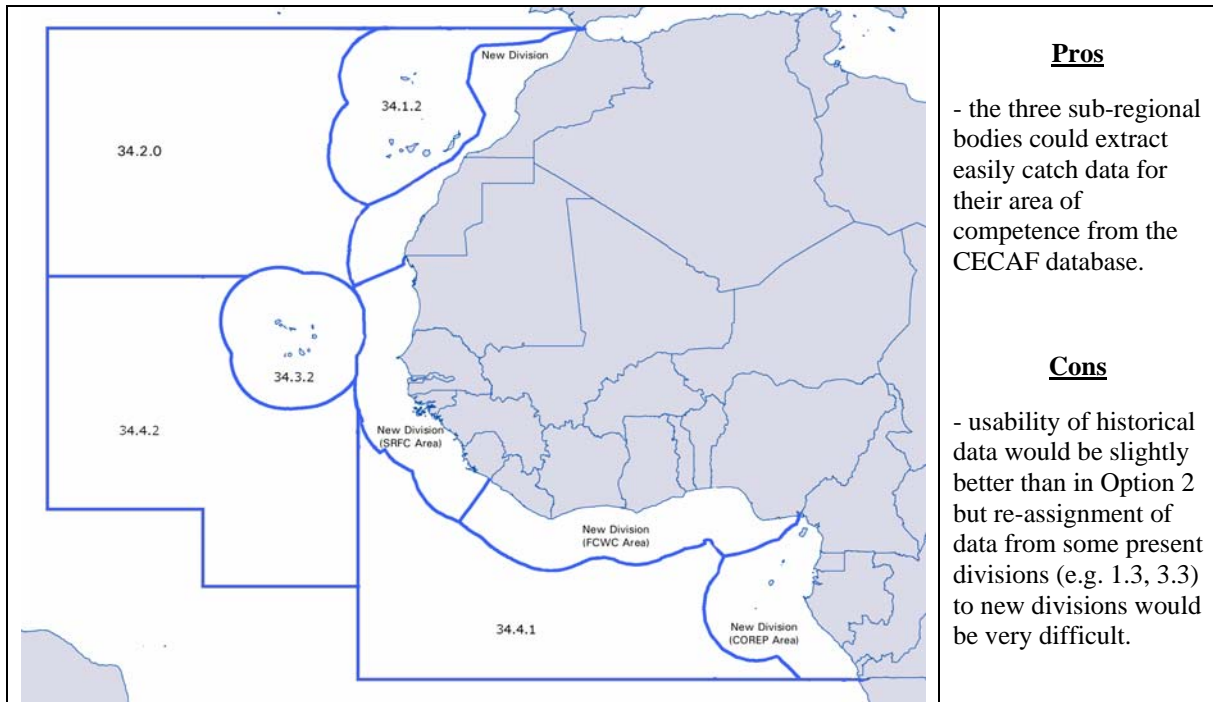


Figure 5. Option 3

When comparing the three options and evaluating the level of disruption provoked by each one on the historical data series, one should strongly consider the great relevance of DWFNs in the CECAF area. This is clearly reflected in the catch data presently available in the CECAF database, which include data series for 47 DWFNs and, as can be seen in Figure 6, share of DWFNs exceeded half of the total catches for most of the 1970s. While the majority of the historical data for coastal countries could be re-assigned to the new division bordered by the country as only a few coastal countries had reported data for a statistical division other than that bordered, most of the catch data by DWFNs could not be re-allocated in many cases (e.g. for present divisions 1.3 and 3.1) if options 2 or 3 should be chosen.

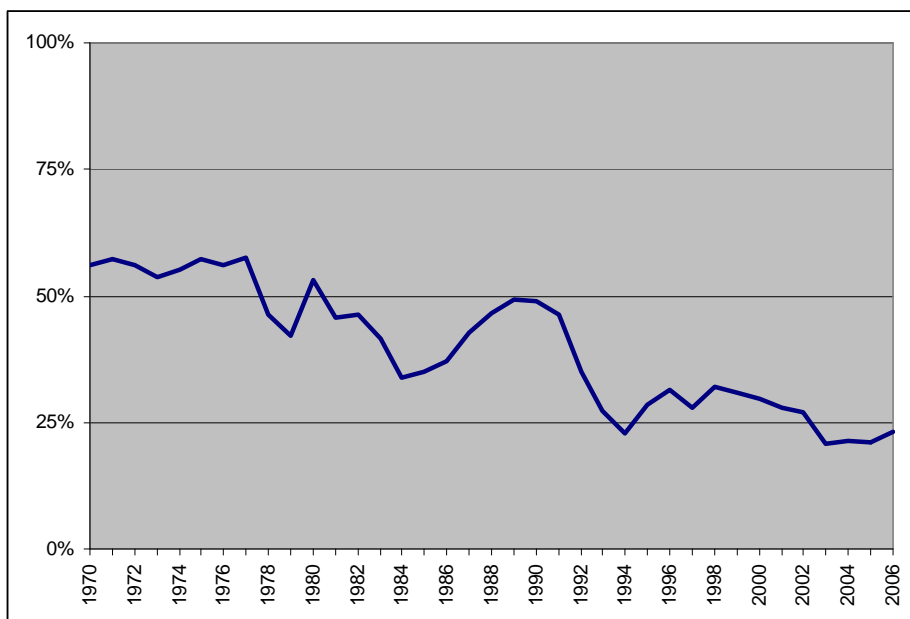


Figure 6. Share of catches by DWFNs on total catches in the CECAF area

Whatever decision is taken by the Committee regarding a possible revision of CECAF statistical divisions, it should be kept in mind that the internationally agreed rule that catch statistics have to be reported according to the flag of the vessel would not be affected, i.e. coastal countries will still have to report only catches caught by the vessels flagging their national flags and not all those caught within their EEZ. Also, it is reminded that statistical divisions are set only for statistical purposes and possible new divisions would not have any legal effect, although some countries or organization (e.g. the EU) should probably modify accordingly their own legislation. The major burden for the implementation of a revision of the statistical divisions would however fall on the DWFNs as they will have to update their systems to collect and compile catch location, whereas the great majority of coastal countries is only fishing in their own EEZ.

SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is invited to comment upon the relevance and importance of the proposed revision of CECAF statistical divisions and decide if, and in what terms, it should be implemented by FAO-FIES on behalf of the Committee.

If a revision of the statistical divisions should be implemented, representatives of member countries are kindly requested to promptly communicate the decisions taken and the relevant background to their national offices in charge of fishery statistics or to member countries (in the case of the EU), so that they will be able to provide to FAO catch statistics according to the new statistical divisions starting with 2008 data onwards. It is hoped that a possible modification of statistical divisions in the CECAF area may also provide a stimulus to bordering countries and DWFNs to pay increased attention to the collection and reporting of catch statistics.