



MARITIME FORUM

Study 2006-15 lot 8: Joint data collection between the fishing sector and the scientific community in the Baltic Sea

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Using information collected by the fishing industry in the production of scientific advice can be a cost effective way to improve the quality of data while strengthening cooperation between scientists and fishermen.

Why this study?

Good management of fisheries requires sound scientific advice, which requires good quality data on the fish stocks and fisheries. In recent years the quality of this data for many European stocks has been questioned by the scientific community and the fishing industry. Most of the data we use today is collected through scientific programmes (surveys, biological sampling etc.), but there is also much information available from the industry itself although not necessarily systematically or in a way that makes it directly usable for the production of scientific advice.

This study aims to bring scientists and industry together in improving the quality of the data available for advice, through exploring systematic scientific use of industry generated data and joint data collection programmes – while at the same time extending the current efforts to build an atmosphere of collaboration between scientists and fishermen.

Goals

1. Improve the quality of the data available for scientific advice on Baltic Sea stocks and fisheries
2. Identify, design and test the feasibility of new programmes of joint data collection in the Baltic Sea
3. Contribute to a general atmosphere of cooperation between European scientists and industry

Results

The scientific assessment of fish stocks requires detailed information on fishing effort, catch composition (e.g. discards) and the biological characteristics of the catch. These data are usually derived from fisheries logbooks and scientific sampling of commercial catches. However, the spatial and temporal coverage of scientific sampling is rather limited due to restrictions in personnel and funding. As a result, the quantity, quality and reliability of the data are often topic of debate and cause uncertainties in the assessment and the management. The participation of fishermen in the process of collecting relevant data could overcome those problems. Compared to other areas, there are only very few cooperation programmes between

fisheries and fisheries science in Western Baltic countries.

Concerning the collection of additional information from fisheries the implementation of a reference fleet was tested, gathering representative data on the spatial and temporal distribution of fishing activities, fishing effort and catch composition. The test showed that this approach can improve the input data used in the Western Baltic cod assessment, but regular training of fishermen and compensation for additional effort is called for. The collection of length data of cod was tested but proved to be more difficult as, according to the fishermen, there is relative low compensation compared to the additional effort required.

For the improvement of the estimation of Western Baltic cod recruitment two alternative strategies to investigate the year class strength of Western Baltic cod were evaluated and tested. A joint cod recruitment survey was conducted onboard of commercial fishing vessels. This approach showed not to be optimal due to restricted spatial coverage, difficulties in sampling shallow waters and limited temporal coverage. The self-sampling of pound-net fisheries was tested in Denmark and in Germany. As the test produced promising results it will be tried to continue this program.

Originally it was planned to set up a common international basis for the self sampling programmes in the Western Baltic, including joint meetings and joint training. Linguistic barriers hampered such approach for some fishermen. Therefore, international coordination meetings between scientist and fishery representatives and national meetings with fishermen may be a good solution.

Reference

Full title: Joint data collection between the fishing sector and the scientific community in the Baltic Sea

Organisations: VTI

Full report: http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/studies/data_collection_baltic_sea.en.pdf [2]

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