



MARITIME FORUM

Study 2007-07 lot 3 Scientific advice concerning the impact of the gears used to catch plaice and sole

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A biological and socioeconomic impact assessment of fishing gears used to catch plaice and sole in the North Sea and an investigation the use of alternative fishing gear which would improve selectivity and improve the sustainability of the fisheries concerned.

Why this study?

The Council, on the basis of a proposal from the Commission, has adopted a Regulation concerning a multi-annual plan for the management of plaice and sole in the North Sea. The plan establishes rules for setting TACs and effort levels.

It is foreseen to accompany this plan with changes to technical measures that, where possible, would improve the selectivity of fishing gears and reduce the negative consequences on the ecosystems and the marine environment.

Goals

1. Evaluate the impact of fishing gears currently used to catch plaice and sole in the North Sea.
2. Investigate (and if appropriate, recommend) the use of alternative fishing gears for the fisheries concerned.

Approach

1. Evaluate the impact of fishing gears currently used to catch plaice and sole in the North Sea, including (but not limited to) beam trawls, trammel nets, gill nets, otter trawls and demersal (Danish) seines. The evaluation should include:
 - an assessment of the size- or age-selectivity of the fishing gear with respect to sole and plaice as well as where possible to other species caught by these gears;
 - an assessment of the impact of the gears on non-target and non-marketable species, including benthic invertebrates, and the long-term consequences of such impacts on the ecosystem, the marine environment, (including the wider environment and the emission of greenhouse gases) and effects on the commercial yields from the fishery;

- an assessment of the consequences of using alternative fishing gears for the by-catches of other marketable fish (including turbot, brill, skates and rays, lemon sole, dab etc.) and where possible the stocks from which these catches are taken;
- an economic and social assessment of the consequences of using various fishing gears, in terms of their cost-effectiveness, implications for employment and profitability of the activity;

The study should evaluate the different impacts of using different mesh sizes.

1. Investigate (and if appropriate, recommend) the use of alternative fishing gear that could be used to catch plaice and sole which would improve the selectivity of the gears used to target flatfish, reduce any unnecessary or unproductive impact on the ecosystem, and improve the sustainability (in economic, ecological or social terms) of the fisheries concerned.

This evaluation could include a wide range of conditions attached to the use of fishing gear, e.g. use of different or restricted fishing gears in certain marine areas.

The evaluation should include an assessment of the impact of any large-scale changes to the structure of fishing gears. All evaluations should be made with regard to both the long-term consequences for at least ten but preferably more than twenty years, and the short-term or transitional consequences, in social, economic and ecological terms.

Time plan

Duration: 18 months

Month 9: Interim report

Month 17: Draft final report for discussion in a meeting with the Commission

Budget

€ 500,000

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