



Joint effort leads to better discard estimates

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Summary

Discard estimates are important for management of commercially valuable species (e.g. plaice) in the North Sea. Traditionally, discards monitoring was conducted by scientific observer programmes. These programmes were time inefficient and expensive, resulting in low sampling coverage: often less than 1 % of fleet effort. Concerned about this low sampling effort, fishers started their own sampling programme. Intensive sampling resulted in high spatial and temporal resolution, but data quality was low. In 2009, research, industry and government started a joint project, aiming to combine the strong points of the observer and fishers' programme.

Research survey on board commercial beam trawlers: discard estimates for the Data Collection Regulation of the European Union. (2000-2008)

Advantage:
High quality of biological data
Disadvantage:
High costs & time inefficient: low sampling effort



Pilot survey by Dutch fishing industry: sampling to reach an alternative estimate of plaice discards. (2004-2008)

Advantage:
Intensive sampling: high spatial and temporal resolution
Disadvantage:
Poor data quality: gaps in data sets



Hypothesis

A new approach, a joint project between science and fishing industry, leads to better estimates of discard numbers.

Integration of the programs combines two strong points of both sampling schemes: 1) a vast amount of data collected at high spatial and temporal resolution; and 2) reliable and high quality biological data (e.g. length, age, maturity and sex). Emphasizing consistency and standardization of sampling technique is a key element. Fishers need to be confident that their task is properly done.



Sampling at sea
(Industry)



Discard samples at the auction
(Administration)



Samples measured in lab
(Research)