

FROM DATA TO QUOTA IN FISHERIES RESEARCH

Demaré Wim

Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries Research, Research Area Fisheries (ILVO-Fisheries),
Ankerstraat 1, B-8400 Oostende, Belgium
E-mail: wim.demare@ilvo.vlaanderen.be

Many European countries are exploiting common fish resources in the EU community waters and hence the management of their fisheries is highly governed by the European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The main objective of the CFP is that it 'shall ensure exploitation of living aquatic resources that provides sustainable economic, environmental and social conditions' (Council Regulation 2371/2002, p61). Since the establishment of the CFP in 1983, the application of Total Allowable Catches (TACs) has been a key element in achieving the CFP's objectives. Each year in December, the TACs for the coming year are negotiated between the European Commission and the Council of Ministers for Fisheries, and all Member States receive a fixed share or quota from the agreed TACs.

Setting TACs is the final step of an annual process, which starts with the collection of fishery- and stock-related data at the national level. Data gathering is subjected to the provisions of the Data Collection Regulation (DCR; Council Regulation 1543/2000 and Commission Regulations 1639/2001 and 1581/2004) and ILVO-Fisheries is one of the partners who carries out the DCR for Belgium. Fishery independent data (derived from surveys at sea with research vessels) and fishery dependent data (e.g. landings and discard statistics, length and age compositions of fish caught by fleet segments, etc.) are used to assess the status of the stocks. The assessment of stocks in the North East Atlantic occurs under the umbrella of ICES, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. It is also ICES who advises the European Commission on the fishing opportunities for the coming year(s). The Commission makes use of the advice to formulate the TAC proposals for the Council of Ministers in December.