

Annex 9: Belgian self-sampling programme

Belgian self-sampling programme: cod in VIIfg

On request and initiative of the Belgian fisheries sector, the Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research (ILVO), in close cooperation with the fisheries sector, started a self-sampling programme to identify the impact of the Belgian beam trawl fishery on the Celtic Sea (areas VIIIf and VIIg) cod stock. Since February 2010, fishers of 10 commercial vessels are participating in the pilot project on a voluntary basis. The skippers and crew were trained by scientists of ILVO to follow a standard sampling protocol for collecting and recording data. Data are being collected from several levels:

- Trip/vessel-related data: vessel name, trip number, fishing gear used, departure and return time.
- Haul-related data: number and date of haul, time and position of shooting and hauling, ICES statistical rectangle, normal haul (Yes/No+why), Lengths recorded (Yes/No), remarks...
- Weight-related data from all hauls: Total landing weights of sole, plaice, haddock and cod (gutted weight) and discard weights (life weight) of cod
- Length distributions from every second haul: length measurements of landed and discarded cod

In order to ensure that the data from the self-sampling programme reaches the required high quality standards, the self-sampling data are cross checked in two ways:

- Cod landings from the self-sampling programme will be compared to the cod landings recorded in the fish market.
- The weights, numbers and LFDs of the landed and discarded cod from the self-sampling programme will be compared to observer data of vessels fishing with similar spatial and temporal attributes.

In total, 37 trips were sampled by fishers in 2010. Based on the cross-checks mentioned above, there will be decided which trips can be accepted and validated. Further analyses on the validated data will be conducted.

Based on the first results, it seems that the Belgian self-sampling project allows a serious increase in spatial as well as temporal coverage and reduces the problems of very large raising factors based on scientific observer data only. Furthermore, the engagement of the industry in the collection of fisheries data is creating a better relationship between the scientists and fishers and we hope that this cooperation will improve the quality of the data available to scientists and ultimately to the stock assessment workshops.

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