

Executive summary

The ICES Working Group on the History of Fish and Fisheries (WGHIST), scheduled over 2012 to 2014, is a continuation of the Study Group on the History of Fish and Fisheries (SGHIST, 2009 to 2011) and the 2008 Workshop on Historical Data on Fisheries and Fish (WKHIST). The Working Group brings together fisheries scientists, historians and marine biologists working on multidecadal to centennial changes in the marine environment, and aims at improving the understanding of the long-term dynamics of fish populations, fishing fleets, and catching technologies. The results are used for setting baselines for management, restoration and conservation of marine resources and ecosystems.

The Working Group's 2012 meeting focused on (a) updates on new developments in historical fisheries ecological research; (b) a metadatabase and collection of bibliographical references on the history of fish and fisheries to be accessible to ICES; and (c) the preparations for a set of manuscripts as outcomes from the WG. Planned collaborative manuscripts are on (1) a long-term compilation on international trawling effort within the North Sea (and optionally including other regional seas), including spatial distribution of trawling; (2) long-term changes in the size composition of commercial catches of cod taken in specific fishing regions (i.e. categories 'large', 'medium' and 'small'); (3) evolution of fishing technologies as a basis to assess the impact of fisheries. The work on these manuscripts is scheduled to take place during and between WG meetings and potential collaborations for our manuscript describing international trawl fishing effort are invited.