



Agenda item 6.4
For decision

Council

CNL(00)20

By-catch of Atlantic Salmon

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1. At its Fourteenth Annual Meeting the attention of the Council was drawn to the enormous growth of fishing for pelagic species of fish in the North-East Atlantic Commission area, principally for herring and mackerel in ICES Division IIa. The concern had been raised that, even if a very small percentage of the catch in these fisheries is salmon post-smolts, the losses could be significant. Information previously provided by ICES suggests that the fishery with the greatest potential for catching post-smolts is probably the trawl fishery for mackerel. At its meeting in 1998 the Council had recognised that it needed further information on the possible by-catch of salmon in pelagic fisheries and asked that the Contracting Parties provide any available information. Information was provided by USA and Russia and was made available to the Council at its last annual meeting. Information was also sought from other sources including from Non-Contracting Parties whose vessels are involved in the fishery for mackerel.
2. Last year the representative of Iceland referred to anecdotal historical information from the purse-seine fishery for Atlanto-Scandian herring 80-120 miles east of Iceland which suggested there could also be a by-catch of salmon in this fishery. This information, from 1967, has been made available by the Icelandic delegation and is attached. It suggests that mainly post-smolts weighing up to 1kg, but also some larger salmon, were caught in the purse-seine fishery, up to as many as 30 salmon per haul.
3. In 1999 the Council again asked that the Contracting Parties be requested to provide any available information on by-catch of salmon but we have received no new information other than the material referred to above from Iceland.
4. Last year the Council again requested that ICES provide an estimate of the by-catch of salmon post-smolts in pelagic fisheries in the North-East Atlantic Commission area. In their response, ICES have indicated that only one country, the Faroe Islands, implemented sampling for post-smolts in its pelagic fisheries and reported that no by-catch of salmon was found. ICES reports some landings of salmon from pelagic trawl and artisanal fisheries near the river Minho, Portugal, in the period 1986-98 although it is unclear if these catches were from the sea or the estuary. However, most ICES countries do not have surveillance programmes for pelagic fisheries in the North-East Atlantic. Small-scale sampling from pelagic fisheries around oil installations in Norway in early June 1999, using trawls, resulted in the capture of post-smolts in 5 out of the 9 hauls where the upper panel of the net had flotation and stayed in an on-surface position.
5. The issue of by-catch has been identified by the Council for consideration in the second phase of implementing the Precautionary Approach. Under NASCO's Agreement on the Precautionary Approach it is stated that the absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures. While there is presently very little

information available on which to estimate the extent of the by-catch of salmon, there do appear to be reasonable grounds to believe that there could be a by-catch of salmon in pelagic fisheries, where there is spatial and temporal overlap of these fisheries and salmon migration routes, although the level of the by-catch and its significance are unknown. ICES has advised that a simple precautionary measure against post-smolt catches in commercial fisheries might be to operate pelagic trawls with the float line at a minimum 5m below the surface. ICES does not provide any assessment of the implications of such a proposal for the trawl fishery. No recommendation has been made in relation to purse-seine vessels.

6. To date, the Council has considered only the issue of by-catch in pelagic fisheries in the northern North-East Atlantic (ICES Division IIa) but one of our NGOs, the Atlantic Salmon Trust, has written raising the question as to whether near-surface trawling in southern North-East Atlantic waters might also pose a threat to post-smolts.
7. The Council is asked to consider what future action it wishes to take in relation to by-catch of Atlantic Salmon.

Secretary
Edinburgh
12 May, 2000

21st of December 1967

Institute of Freshwater Fisheries
Press release

(Original document prepared by Þór Guðjónsson)

Salmon catches at sea

The Institute of Freshwater Fisheries recently received an external Carlin tag from a salmon caught at west Greenland this autumn, which is the first Icelandic salmon reported from that area. The salmon was tagged and released as a smolt at the Kollafjörður Experimental Fish Farm on May 11th 1966 at a size of 15 cm. The salmon was caught in September 1967 at the town of "Sukkertoppen" in West Greenland (65°25'N and 52°50'W), which is of similar latitude as Patreksfjörður and is located approximately 900 km north of the southern tip of Greenland.

The length of the salmon was 67cm and it weighed 2,2 kg. gutted. This is the classical size of salmon caught in that area and the fish was in his second oceanic summer as most salmon caught in Greenlandic waters. Salmon, which spend one year in the sea (grilse), which make up over 50 % of the Icelandic salmon stocks, have not been caught in Greenland. In 1966 the Institute of Freshwater Fisheries Carlin tagged over 8500 salmon smolts.

In the spell of good herring fishing in late November some salmon were caught along with the herring at locations 80-120 miles east of Iceland. It is known that boats were catching from a few up to some 30 salmon per purse seining haul. Most of these salmon, which have spent less than a year in the sea, weighed about 1 kg and measured 44-50cm in length.

Additionally, some larger salmon were caught, which had spent 3 years in the sea according to scale analysis. The country of origin of these salmon is unknown and these are the first known reports of such large salmon being caught in Icelandic waters as a by-catch.

Translation by Árni Ísaksson
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