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The 2011 Fishery at West Greenland Tabled by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)

At the Annual Meeting of NASCO in June 2011, the West Greenland Commission agreed to restrict the catch of Atlantic salmon at West Greenland to that amount used for internal subsistence consumption in Greenland. Furthermore, no commercial export of salmon was allowed.

In accordance with the Regulatory Measure adopted by the West Greenland Commission, the Government of Greenland decided to set the national quota for commercial landings of Atlantic salmon to fishing plants for export to zero tonnes. As a consequence, any export of salmon from Greenland in 2011 was prohibited. Only a subsistence fishery was allowed, i.e. fishery for private consumption, and fishery with the aim of supplying local open air markets, hotels and institutions etc. The latter activity is only allowed for professional fishermen holding licences.

In 2011, the fishery opened 1 August and closed at the end of October. During this period a total catch of 27.5 tonnes of salmon was reported to the Greenland Fishery Licence Control (GFLK). Of this, 16.5 tonnes were reported by licensed fishermen as sold at open air markets etc, and the remaining 11 tonnes were reported as used for private consumption. However, 179 kilos of the private consumption was reported by licensed fishermen. Compared to the previous year the total catch decreased by 10.6 tonnes corresponding to 28 %. The decrease mainly occurred in NAFO area 1A where the reported catches decreased from a significant amount of 17.3 tonnes to 1.9 tonnes while catches in all other areas were relatively stable. For the third year in a row, catches were reported from East Greenland in the amount of 117 kilos as compared to 1.7 tonnes in 2010.

The fishery is regulated in the Greenland Home Rule Executive Order No 21 of 10 August 2002 on Salmon Fishery. The executive order distinguishes between 1) commercial fishery for Atlantic salmon to be landed at fish plants for export, 2) subsistence fishery by residents of Greenland, and 3) rod fishery by tourists/non-residents.

All fishermen who wish to sell Atlantic Salmon must hold a licence as well as report the catches to GFLK. In 2011, 242 licences were issued, but only 30 of these were utilized for selling according to the reports received. The catches were either sold at local open air markets or to local institutions, hotels etc, or kept for private consumption. The number of salmon caught is reported to 8.381.

The wildlife and fisheries officers of GFLK make random checks at local markets in towns and settlements along the west coast of Greenland, and in hotels, restaurants, shops etc. in order to compare purchase of salmon with reported catches. In 2011, the wildlife and fisheries officers once again have put a lot of effort into handing out reporting forms to all fishermen whom they have observed fishing for salmon, and informing them that all catches must be reported to GFLK.

The Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture is contemplating amendments to the current regulation with a view to improving catch reporting so to establish a more comprehensive picture of the fishery as such. In this process scientists need much more detailed information and biological data. The Ministry will continue its information services in terms of reminding fishermen to report salmon catches, allowed gear to be used etc. and this information will mainly be disseminated by transmitting TV spots during the salmon fishing season.