

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR



THE NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES

Document No. 35

THIRD ANNUAL MEETING

Collection of Statistics on Fishing Effort

At the Second Annual Meeting the following recommendation 18 (5) was passed:

"That the Executive Secretary be asked to attempt to bring together for all vessels fishing in the Convention Area information on the number of vessels of each category on the fishing grounds, and that he also be requested to review the availability of more refined data on catch per effort for parts of the fishing and report his findings at the Third Annual Meeting, on the understanding, of course, that the actual collection of such statistics must be the work of the various Governments themselves."

Following this recommendation a circular letter "Basic Statistical Requirements of ICNAF" was issued on 1 Oct. 1952 to member Governments.

In the Statistician's Progress Report (Document No. 30) is shown to what degree the separate countries have met Commission's requirements in their statistics for 1952. A few have not as yet forwarded their statistics, some have given less than required, whereas others have given almost everything asked for. However, as it is the Commission's first try at collecting data on efforts together with catch figures, the results can be regarded as most satisfactory.

The statistical data have been coming in right up to date, two countries have as yet not reported. Of course it has not been possible to give the extensive material a full treatment. When this is done during the following months it will no doubt appear that the statistics have increased our knowledge of fisheries and stocks considerably.

When this full consideration has been given to the material we shall be in a far better position to review requirements and methods of collecting than we are now.

The present review of the matter can, therefore, be only provisional.

The collection of statistics has two main purposes, firstly to give, for economical and administrative aims, a picture of the state of the fisheries, of the efforts of the fishing industry, and of the results of such efforts, secondly to provide material to help the biologists in assessing the toll of fisheries on the stocks of fishes. Both purposes have their own separate values.

The Commission working with the conservation of fisheries by establishing due regulations for the protection of stocks is primarily interested in those statistical data which could further the assessment of the fish stocks and measure the toll on stocks by the various fisheries. However statistics bearing in the first place on economical matters should not be disregarded. They govern the whole trend of fisheries, leading to expansion or contraction of the various fisheries, to changing of efforts from one fishery to another, and from one area to another. Thus in the

longer run the purely economic matters are vastly influencing the fish stocks.

Such data are thus of importance to the biologists just as well as - perhaps even more - than the data that can be used directly for determining abundance. Therefore, in collecting our statistics we must collect the more basic data ("days absent from port") just as well as the refined data "hours dragged" or "dory hours".

The rapid progress in collecting of statistics during the Commission's first two years is highly encouraging.

It is felt that any greater change as to planning and collecting of data is not advisable at the present when a closer study of the comprehensive and varied data collected has not yet been possible.

The proposals for recommendations (Document No. 30) set forth by the Statistician, therefore, are mostly a rewording of the 1952 recommendations, being a little more definite than it was possible to make them in 1952.

It is submitted that the Commission in considering these and other possible recommendations for the statistical work should divide the recommendations in two parts, 1) those dealing with specific matters for just the coming year, and 2) those of a standing character being understood to be valid until changed by the Commission.

It has been suggested that the more refined data could be collected on sample basis, a few vessels being chosen from the fleet for such purposes.

Without doubt valuable information, f.i. on the present abundance could be obtained in that way. One should however be very cautious in using such material for calculations covering the whole fleet or for comparisons from one year to another. The efficiency of the separate vessels varies greatly owing to vessels, gear, crew and captains. The number of selected vessels would have to be rather high to give a reliable average that could be applied to the whole fleet, more so as it would be difficult to avoid a selection of just the better vessels, the more able captains. As for comparison from year to year, the difficulty arises, that vessels, crews, and captains change from one year to another.

One sure advantage could be obtained from such sampled collections: they could serve as a test of methods and possibilities for collecting.

The aim of the Commission must be the collecting of data from the whole fleet. A collecting by sampling will only be of value in certain special cases or as a provisional procedure.

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