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Spanish Research Report, 1961.  
C. Observations on the Fishery in  
Subareas 2 and 3 made by Captains  
of Spanish Trawlers.

by J. Arambarri.

The fishing season in the Subareas 2 and 3 which are closely related from the point of view of the Spanish commercial fishermen, was carried out by the Spanish trawlers from the last days of April until December, 1961. About 90% of the total fishing days were spent on the Belle Isle ground (3K) and the Hamilton Bank (2J). The peak of the fishing occurred in May, thereafter it gradually decreased to a low catch, which was maintained through the summer until October, with the lowest catch in August. During this period a few occasional good catches were obtained.

May was, in 3K and 2J, the best month of the whole season for Subareas 2 and 3. The average size of the cod (total length) was close to 60 cm.

Cod was the only species sought, although other species were caught accidentally. Redfish was the most frequent species mixed with the cod. Several species of flatfishes were taken regularly but in minor quantities. All redfish and flatfishes were discarded.

It was (as in previous years) reported that redfish often appear mixed with cod in large quantities on the eastern edges of the banks from Belle Isle to Hamilton Bank. It was also reported that both species move between depth zones from day to day and even from one trawl haul to another. Thus it happens that at the same depth one two hours' haul yields a catch of 100 kentals cod (split and salted) and about 10 kentals of round fresh redfish, and that another haul following backwards on the same track (same depth) yields completely reverse proportions of the two species. There is little doubt about the similarity of the hauls, as these were checked by electronic navigational aids. Cases like these are reported mainly from late spring and early summer.

The beginning of July, 1961, marked a steady decline of the cod fishery, and by August the fairly large and compact stocks found at the beginning of the season had apparently scattered over the area or disappeared from the banks. From this time on very few sizeable stocks were observed and cod were not as concentrated as during the previous months.

During the early fall and early summer, large schools of capelin were observed in 2L and 3K. The stomachs of the cod showed that cod were feeding heavily on capelin. It was also reported, but not technically proved, that the capelin were present in September, feeding on what appeared to be young of cod.

An important part of the large Spanish trawlers leave 2L and 3K during the summer for fishery in other subareas.

The weather conditions in 2L and 3K were normal in the beginning of the season, but improved further during summer and fall. Air temperatures were higher than normal for the season and long periods of fine weather were met. Gales and rough seas which could hinder the fishing operations were much less frequent than could be expected for the area. This is reflected in the small amount of time (less than half of that in 1960) lost without trawling as stated in log books of the trawlers.

It was the general impression that cod were less abundant on the banks, and more pelagic in occurrence on account of the fine weather.

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