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U.S. Proposal Concerning Additional Conservation
Measures for Yellowtail Flounder in Subarea 5

Regulatory proposals were approved for yellowtail flounder in Subarea 5 at the 20th Annual Meeting of the Commission:

- (a) requiring $4\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mesh size (manila) in nets used in fishing for yellowtail flounder.
- (b) setting 1971 yellowtail flounder catch quotas of
 - (i) 16,000 tons from fishing grounds east of 69°W.
 - (ii) 13,000 tons from fishing grounds west of 69°W.

The Report of the January 1971 Mid-Year Meeting of the Subcommittee on Assessments emphasized the advantages of increasing mesh size requirements in this fishery to 5 1/8-inches (synthetic), equivalent to 5 3/4-inches manila. Long-term yield per recruit would be improved, discards would be reduced, and landings increased.

The scientists of the Subcommittee on Assessments also noted the need not only to continue catch quotas in the yellowtail flounder fishery, but also to consider reductions in these quotas to prevent further deterioration of this resource. Analyses by U.S. scientists reinforce this concern, particularly as regards the yellowtail flounder stock on southern New England grounds west of 69°W, in which fishing intensity remains significantly above levels recommended by scientists.

In the light of the above, the United States proposes that the Commission at the 1971 Annual Meeting consider:

- (a) amending trawl regulations to increase required mesh size in trawl nets used in fishing for yellowtail flounder to 5 1/8-inches synthetic or 5 3/4-inches manila.

- (b) setting catch quotas during 1972 for yellowtail flounder in Subarea 5:
- (i) in waters east of 69°W. at approximately the existing level (16,000 metric tons)
 - (ii) in waters west of 69° at a level significantly below the existing level of 13,000 tons, with added provisions for a mid-year closure of this fishery.

Historically, the yellowtail flounder fishery in Subarea 5 has been carried out almost exclusively by U.S. fishermen, using specialized short-range vessels. Few alternatives in other fisheries are available to them because of the serious depletion of other resources traditionally harvested by New England fishermen. We believe these circumstances dictate that special consideration be given to these fishermen and that the quota regulations be adapted to mitigate their hardships.

In the yellowtail flounder fishery, this can be done by closing the yellowtail flounder fishery in waters west of 69°W. to all but incidental catches of yellowtail flounder for a substantial part of the second and third quarters of the year when the small vessels active in the fishery have some fishing opportunities in areas further offshore. The small quota in this area west of 69° would then be available early in the year and perhaps late in the year when such vessels lack opportunities in more distant waters. Such procedures can greatly facilitate overall conservation objectives.

The United States may also propose certain minor technical refinements of the area in which the yellowtail flounder quotas are applicable to eliminate essentially unproductive yellowtail flounder grounds such as Division 5Y of Subarea 5.

Regulatory Procedure:

The United States has reviewed with interest the Assessment Subcommittee's comments regarding procedures for closing fisheries under quota regulation (ICNAF Doc. 71/1, Section 7). We favor the scientists' suggestion that flexibility be embodied in the closing procedures. We believe this might

be done by framing quota regulations so that the Executive Secretary would be authorized to close a fishery when catches plus estimated incidental catches for the remainder of the year equal the allowable amount under the quota limit. The Assessment Subcommittee would be called upon to estimate incidental catches when specialized fishing for species under quota might be closed, i.e., the latter part of the year. These estimated incidental catch rates would then be used by the Executive Secretary in calculating and settling closures to assure quota goals would be fulfilled. We would hope that this procedure could be incorporated into any existing or future quota regulations established by ICNAF. It would not appear that this would add any additional burden on member governments since no change would be required in national regulations.