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Status of the Harp Seal Fishery and Research carried out

by

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Reports on research have been received from Canada, Denmark and Norway.

The following papers are pertinent:

Comm.Docs. 71/1, 12, and Res. Docs. 71/7, 8, 43, 49.

1. Status of the fishery

In 1971, the Harp Seal fishery, for the first time, operated under an ICNAF quota. This quota, set in 1970, for 1971 was 200,000 seals for vessels plus 45,000 allowance for landmen. The actual take in 1971 is believed to be less than the quota. The provisional figures on May 17, 1971 were:

Gulf (Canadian vessels)	37,000	
Gulf (Canadian landmen)	33,000	
Gulf total		70,000
Front (Canadian vessels)	49,000	
Front (Canadian landmen)	5,000	
Front (Norwegian vessels)	100,000 (?)	
Front Total		<u>154,000</u>
Total Harp Seals		224,000

It is believed that this catch, less than the quota, was primarily due to relative scarcity of seals. The escapement is not yet known or estimated but some information on this may come from observations of the northward migration.

In 1970, the scientific advisers suggested a sustainable catch of not more than 200,000 seals. In January 1971, the Assessments Subcommittee (Comm.Doc. 71/1) re-examined all available data and suggest a catch of not more than 120,000 from a stock of 300,000 adult females.

This stock may now be below 300,000 and the sustainable yield from it correspondingly reduced. Canada has suggested (Comm.Doc. 71/12) that the quota be reduced to a level compatible with a sustainable yield.

2. Research carried out

Research has continued on seal biology and population parameters by Canada (Res.Docs. 71/7, 43) and Norway (Res.Doc. 71/8). Denmark is initiating new research work in the Greenland area (Res.Doc. 71/49).