

Serial No. 2743
(A.a.4)ICNAF Comm. Doc. 72/19ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1972CANADIAN PROPOSALCONCERNING REGULATION OF LANDED MEAT SIZES FOR SCALLOPS IN DIVISION 5Z

Scallop landings and catch per unit effort for the Georges Bank fishery have declined continuously since 1961 through a combination of overfishing and poor recruitment. Low stock abundance and a rapid rise in market price for scallops led to a lowering of cull size from that prevailing in the early 1960's. Cull size dropped still further to about 70 mm following recruitment of new year-classes to the fishery in 1970 and 1971.

The offshore scallop fleet is poorly adapted for transferring its efforts to other fisheries, so that the economic consequences of operating at low levels of abundance are of major concern, in view of the wide irregularities in recruitment typical of this stock.

Research has shown that dredge selectivity is poor; no clear-cut advantages have been demonstrated to result from an increase in mesh size. Since scallops are not landed in the shell, a regulation based on landed meat sizes is the only direct method of regulating cull size, until an effective savings gear can be developed.

The Assessment Subcommittee in January 1972 concluded that yield per recruit could be increased 30% by restoring cull size to that prevailing in the early 1960's, i.e., about 90-100 mm. Implementation of this recommendation in 1973 might not have an effect on the fishery for year-classes now being exploited, but will be a valuable safeguard for future rational exploitation of the stocks; further regulatory measures can be proposed at a later date when economic considerations so permit.

Canada proposes that the 1972 meeting of ICNAF consider a regulation requiring that scallop catches from Division 5Z not exceed an average count of 40 meats per lb, equivalent to an average meat weight of 0.4 ounces (11.3 gm). This would be a first step towards restoring the conditions prevailing in the early 1960's by causing return to water of small scallops which would otherwise have been retained and avoidance of grounds where small scallops predominate.

