INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES

Serial No. 2906
(B.e.72)

ICNAF Summ.Doc. 73/4

ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1973

Report of a Mid-Term Meeting of Panel A
Charlottenlund, Denmark, 9 November 1972

1. Welcome. The Chairman, Dr A.W.H. Needler (Canada) introduced Mr H. Lassen (Denmark) who welcomed the Panel participants on behalf of the Greenland Ministry. Mr H. Tambs-Lyche, Secretary General of ICES, expressed pleasure to accommodate the meeting at ICES Headquarters.

2. Attendance. The following were participants:

| | |
|---|---|
| Canada | - Dr A.W.H. Needler (Chairman); Mr J.W. Carroll; Mr K. Karlsen; Dr A.W. Mansfield |
| Denmark | - Mr H.J. Lassen; Mr L. Vesterbirk; Mr E. Lemche; Mr Sv.Aa. Horsted; Mr F. Kapel |
| Norway | - Mr O. Lund; Mr A. Aasbö; Mr E. Aas; Mr Aa. Aarseth; Mr P. Kibsgaard-Petersen; Mr G. Jakobsen; Mr T. Øritsland |
| ICNAF | - Mr L.R. Day |

3. Rapporteur. Mr L.R. Day (ICNAF) was appointed Rapporteur.

4. Agenda. The following agenda was agreed:

1) Opening by the Chairman, Dr A.W.H. Needler
2) Selection of Rapporteur
3) Adoption of Agenda
4) Report of mid-term meeting of Scientific Advisers to Panel A, Charlottenlund, 6-7 November 1972 (Dr A.W. Mansfield, Chairman)
5) Conservation measures for harp seals
6) Conservation measures for hooded seals
7) Other business

5. Report of Scientific Advisers. Dr A.W. Mansfield, Chairman of the Scientific Advisers to Panel A, presented the Report (Appendix I).

6. Conservation Measures for Harp Seals. The Panel members, having noted that there was no scientific evidence to support a change in the estimate of 150,000 as the maximum sustainable yield of harp seal pups, agreed that the catch quota recommended for the 1972 sealing season be applied in the 1973 sealing season, provided the Canadian Landsmen portion, whose amount cannot be controlled, be recorded as an estimated or average catch. It was, therefore, agreed that Panel members would submit to their Governments the following recommendations for regulation of the 1973 harp sealing fishery:

1) that a catch quota of 120,000 harp seals be allocated to sealing vessels as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Canadian | 60,000 |
| Norwegian | 60,000 |

allowing for an estimated catch of 30,000 harp seals by Canadian landsmen.

2) that the dates agreed to for the opening and closing of the 1972 harp sealing season be retained for the 1973 season in the "Gulf" and "Front" areas with the further provision that the season commence not earlier than 0900 hrs GMT on 12 March 1973, and close not later than 24 April 1973.

3) that the 1972 regulation prohibiting the killing of adult harp seals in whelping patches in the "Gulf" and "Front" areas be retained.

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The Panel members noted that there was a large escapement of pups from the 'Gulf' stock in 1972 and emphasized the need for further research to establish the relationship between the 'Gulf' and 'Front' stocks.

The Panel members discussed the need for improving enforcement of the sealing activities and agreed that the reports on sealing activities by the national sealing inspectors should be exchanged as provided for under the ICNAF schemes of joint enforcement.

7. Conservation Measures for Hood Seals. The Panel members took note of the 1972 hood seal regulation which required that the fishery commence not earlier than 12 March and close not later than 24 April and discussed the recommendation of the Scientific Advisers to delay commencement of the hood seal fishery for about a week. It was finally agreed that Panel members should submit to their Governments the following recommendations for regulation of the 1973 hood seal fishery in the "Gulf" and "Front" areas:

> that the 1973 hood seal fishery should commence not earlier than 0900 hrs GMT on 20 March 1973 and close not later than 24 April 1973.

The Panel members discussed the need for a catch quota for hood seals. The Canadian delegate proposed a quota of 15,000 hood seals to be shared equally between Canada and Norway on the 'Front'. However, the Norwegian delegate felt that there was insufficient scientific evidence to set a catch quota at this time. Following discussion, it was agreed that the matter of a catch quota for hood seals should receive further attention at the time of the 1973 Annual Meeting.

8. Other Business. Panel members discussed the timing of future meetings of the Scientific Advisers and the Panel. It was agreed that it was important to have a meeting of the Scientific Advisers previous to the Panel meeting at the time of the Annual Meeting. It was also agreed that Panel A should consider recommendations for regulation of the harp and hood seal fisheries in 1974 at the 1973 Annual Meeting of the Commission.

9. Adjournment. The Chairman thanked the Scientific Advisers for their report and the meeting participants for their contributions to the discussions. He extended the best thanks of the meeting participants to ICES for the meeting facilities and to the Ministry of Greenland for its hospitality.

The meeting adjourned at 1530 hrs.

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Appendix I

ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1973

Report of Mid-Term Meeting of Scientific Advisers to Panel A
Charlottenlund, Denmark, 6-7 November 1972

1. The Chairman, Dr A.W. Mansfield (Canada), met with the following participants:

Denmark - Mr Sv.Aa. Horsted; Mr F.O. Kapel
Norway - Mr T. Øritsland
ICNAF - Mr L.R. Day

The meeting was convened at this time to give full consideration to all scientific data from the 1972 sealing season in order to provide the best advice to Panel A on conservation measures for the 1973 season.

2. The Agenda, as proposed by the Chairman, was adopted. Mr L.R. Day was appointed Rapporteur.

3. The results of recent research on harp seals (Sergeant, Seal Doc. 72/1) were reviewed. In examining the catch statistics for Norwegian ships, it was noted that the figures in Doc. 72/1 were incorrect. The revised statistics are as follows:

| | Young harps | Immature and adult harps | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Canadian ships | 52,195 | 260 | |
| Canadian landsmen | 10,389 | 9,757 | |
| Norwegian ships | 51,914 | 1,386 | |
| | 114,498 | 11,403 | 125,901 |

Catches for the Quebec North Shore have still not been received.

Aerial photographic survey gave estimates of 100,000 young produced on the Front and 125,000 in the Gulf. However, the Front production was an underestimate since about 112,000 pups were taken by all agencies, including landsmen. If the Gulf population was underestimated by the same percentage, total production must have been at least 252,000. This figure for production in 1972 suggests that the figure of 300,000, estimated as the production of pups in 1970, was realistic.

Since only about 2,500 pups were taken in the Gulf out of an estimated production of at least 125,000, survival should be unusually high. The 1972 year-class, therefore, should be strongly represented in age samples collected in 1972 in West Greenland and in 1973 in Eastern Canada.

The Scientific Advisers noted the different estimates of sustainable yield given by Sergeant (Seal Doc. 72/1) and the Panel of Experts (1972 Meeting Proc. 8, App. I, Annex I, Attach. II) which result from the sensitivity of population models to small changes in adult mortality rates. It will be important in future research to obtain samples large enough to establish accurate mortality rates.

At this time, there appears to be no need to change the estimate of sustainable yield of 150,000 pups as determined by the Panel of Experts in September 1971 and confirmed by the Scientific Advisers in May 1972.

Future research on harp seals will include large-scale branding of pups and adults on the Front in an attempt to obtain direct evidence of movements of seals to the Gulf population. Collection of large samples of adults from ships at the Front is desirable but is precluded by selective hunting for pups and immature seals. The Scientific Advisers wish to point out that in order to obtain adequate samples of adults (ca. 1,000), special permission will have to be given for such catches when required.

The importance of age samples from the West Greenland coast was recognized and plans have been made to continue yearly collections and analyses of data from this area.

4. The results of recent research on hood seals were discussed. It was noted that in the catch statistics for 1972 (Doc. 72/1) there were some inaccuracies. Revised statistics are as follows:

(over)

| | Young hoods | Immature and adult hoods | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Canadian ships | 159 | 119 | |
| Canadian landsmen | 108 | 36 | |
| Norwegian ships | 6,661 | 5,517 | |
| | 6,928 | 5,672 | 12,600 |

Catches of hood seals (Table 2, Seal Doc. 72/1) have increased since 1965 to a yearly average of about 15,000, and mortality rates of adult females at Newfoundland (Table 1, Seal Doc. 72/1) have reached a level similar to that of adult females in the heavily exploited West Ice (Jan Mayen) stock. Until further information can be obtained on the level of sustainable yield of the Newfoundland stock, the Scientific Advisers recommend that, as an interim measure, future annual catches should not exceed the 1966-71 average.

A relation between the moulting seals in Denmark Strait and the Newfoundland breeding stock has not been established, but it may be significant that a two-year-old hood seal, tagged on the Front in 1970, was recaptured in Angmagssalik, just south of the moulting area, in 1972. It is hoped that marking of seals in future years will provide further information on the connection between the two stocks.

The Scientific Advisers noted that the proportion of males taken in the catches of adult hood seals tends to increase as the season progresses. It is, therefore, recommended that the season be delayed by one week in order to reduce the proportion of adult females in the catch.

5. After discussion of future research, it was agreed that information on marking programmes should be circulated among the Panel countries well in advance of each sealing season. Similarly, detailed information on the time and place of marking and the number of seals marked should be circulated as soon as possible after the sealing season.

The Scientific Advisers re-affirmed the importance of meeting not earlier than late October so that adequate analyses of data resulting from the current sealing season could be carried out. If future meetings take place at this time of the year, there would seem to be little need for a further meeting in June.