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the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries

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US Commissioners document on the preparation and implementation of ICNAF regulatory measures

Introduction

The US recognizes and appreciates the increasing rate of progress of ICNAF in developing an effective and uniquely comprehensive regulatory program clearly required by the crisis affecting fishery resources throughout the Northwest Atlantic. Decisions have been taken in an attempt to move from the more limited management tools of the past to a coordinated and integrated management scheme for the entire biomass of the Northwest Atlantic. Such an approach requires that the Commission address on a timely and comprehensive basis those immediate and longer-term objectives necessary to insure its successful implementation. The US wishes, therefore, to outline its views as to those organizational refinements, improved procedures, and continued initiatives required to provide continued management measures fully consistent with the scope and intent of the October agreements.

Meeting Schedules

It is the US view that continuation of the present procedure of considering herring and mackerel quotas at a Mid-Term Commission Meeting in January-February of their effective year is both unnecessary and inconsistent with the requirements of overall integrated management regime approved at the October 1973 Special Meeting. In proposing at the 1971 Annual Meeting that a January Special Commission Session be held, the United States argued that the condition of herring stocks required urgent action, and that lack of agreement on appropriate quota levels at the 1971 Annual Meeting should not be allowed to postpone regulatory action for another full year. Neither in this case, nor in the subsequent initial consideration of mackerel quotas in January 1973, was the intention to maintain this practice on a continuing basis.

Adequate assessments of both species can be available by the time of the June Annual Meeting to determine appropriate quota levels for the coming year. While there exists a potential loss in precision resulting from consideration of these quotas in June rather than the following January, this has not in practice proved to be large enough to justify the Special Session.

In addition, it should be noted that herring and mackerel assessments for 1976 will be needed in June 1975, since a complete assessment of all component stocks will be required for the Commission to establish the 1976 overall quota at the 25th Annual Meeting.

Moreover, it is clear to the US that any potential for improved precision which could be achieved by postponing consideration of these quotas until January of the year they are to take effect is outweighed by the need to provide for effective implementation of these species quotas, as well as the comprehensive quota system approved at the October Special Meeting. It should be noted that, while the Commission has taken action to provide for the early entry into force of herring and mackerel quotas established in the first part of the year, it nevertheless remains possible for one negative vote at the January Meeting to disrupt the management regime for these species. Establishing these quotas six months prior will lessen the likelihood that such regulations do not become binding for the full period intended.

Moreover, as the Commission is required in June 1975 to establish the size of the total global quota for 1976, it will be necessary to hold a lengthy mid-term scientific meeting in early 1975 after statistics are essentially final to provide the analysis required to advise the Commission on an appropriate level for this quota. Advice must also be provided on various species quotas, other related regulations, and the feasibility of effort management. Unfortunately, in recent years serious limitations on the ability of the Special Mid-Term Meeting of STACRES to provide such advice to the Commission prior to the June Meeting has resulted from the need to prepare for Commission actions in January. For the Committee to again concern itself at its 1975 Mid-Term Meeting with advice on herring and mackerel quotas in preparation for a Special Commission Meeting soon thereafter would place an excessive demand on the time of those involved during this extremely critical period. Consideration of all 1975 individual species quotas at the 24th Annual Meeting will allow scientists individually, and collectively within STACRES, the time required to prepare for those decisions which must be taken at the 1975 Regular Annual Meeting.

Finally, critical decisions on national allocation will be significantly facilitated by considering

herring and mackerel quotas in conjunction with the 1975-76 overall global quotas. In January 1974 national allocations of herring and mackerel became exceedingly difficult because of separate, prior establishment of national shares of the overall global quota. Similarly, at the 24th Annual Meeting, decisions must be made on the allocation of the 1975 850,000 MT global quota approved in October 1973. This task is made considerably more difficult if it must be completed prior to a decision on 1975 national quotas for herring and mackerel.

Consequently, the United States proposes that herring and mackerel catch quota levels for 1975 and 1976 be set at the 1974 and 1975 Regular Annual Meetings, respectively, and that the scientific data required to formulate these quotas be considered at the regular sessions of STACRES scheduled at these times.

Data Requirements

Effective management of fisheries in the ICNAF area by a totally integrated system as has been established in Subarea 5 and 6 requires sophisticated scientific monitoring and analysis in order to provide advice with appropriate precision to the Commission. These requirements for estimation of yearly TACs for all components of the fishery and an overall total quota combined with advice concerning the effects of the various gear restrictions, closed areas, and closed seasons, cannot adequately be met with the present level of the data base. In multinational fisheries, proper analysis must consider all national components, and thus no country's data base alone is sufficient to provide scientists with the information necessary for proper analysis. Presently, the ICNAF data base, i.e., the Statistical Bulletin and Sampling Yearbook, does not provide the required details. Therefore, catch and effort statistics and biological sampling data must be reported in greater detail and made available to the Research and Statistics Committee. Such improved data is required for adequate assessment of the overall biomass, individual stock or stock groups, and satisfactory estimates of by-catch and discards. In addition, such statistics are required to aid in the establishment of regulations that will move towards the attainment of more selective fisheries. A minimum would be bi-weekly by 30-minute squares (Report of STACRES, January 1974).

Assessment studies require not only data from the fishery but also direct observation of the population. In addition, major improvements in these studies await the development of a better understanding of population processes. Thus, research vessel cruises are imperative. They are the only source of pre-recruit data as well as data on overall stock structure. No nation alone has the facilities to do the required job, nor should it be done by one country alone. Only joint work can have a major impact on these problems. In addition, in order to increase the ability of the ICNAF management regime to achieve its goals of stock utilization on a yearly basis, it is necessary that the influence of environmental parameters be understood and monitored. This can only be accomplished by having continuing, coordinated multinational vessel cruises concern themselves with this as well as with the monitoring of stocks. Appropriate mechanisms also need to be developed within ICNAF for insuring and improving necessary coordination.

In addition, adequate progress in the consideration of total effort management may be enhanced by an analysis of an expanded data base related to past performance of vessels of various fleets. Consequently, member countries must commit the necessary effort so that such a data base is available for study in early 1975.

Finally, the US wishes to emphasize the need to expand the resources of the Secretariat in order to handle the increased amount of data that is proposed to be collected. The requirements have been considered at previous meetings of the Commission and should be reviewed at the 1974 Annual Meeting to allow increased activities at the earliest possible date. Further detailed advice should be available from STACRES at the forthcoming Annual Meeting.

Quota Allocation

At previous meetings STACREM has taken up the subject of principles of allocation of the total allowable catches into national quotas. These previous discussions did, in fact, provide reasonable guidelines for subsequent action by the Commission. However, the additional task of allocating the overall quota requires further examination of this issue. Adequate means must be found to deal with such problems as the varying amount of by-catch in different types of fisheries, which could cause inequities in allocations for certain directed fisheries. Moreover, the allocation of individual species quotas has, in practice, often related primarily to questions of immediate expediency rather than application of allocation principles. The US feels, therefore, that STACREM should proceed with further discussion of these principles.

Effort Management

The Report of the Effort Working Group to the Commission stressed that, in general, fishing mortality could be controlled either through regulation of fishing effort or catch. The US believes that there is an urgent need to continue examining means of managing fishing effort. A more effective study of this problem could be accomplished by dividing the work into two separate areas. First, technical aspects, such as the intercalibration of different types of gear and estimates of overall standardized fishing effort, fall within the purview of the STACRES Assessments Subcommittee. The other aspect, involving economic and allocation

questions, can be considered most appropriately in STACREM. Therefore, the US proposes that the ICNAF Working Group of Experts on the Practicability of Effort Limitation, which met several times in 1973, should meet for the last time at the Commission's 1974 Annual Meeting to delineate problem areas which the STACRES Assessments Subcommittee and STACREM can explore at a 1975 Mid-Term Meeting.

