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EUROGRID WHITEFISH SELECTIVE GRID PROJECT

Introduction

The project started in November 1998 and is partly funded by the European Commission (DG XIV).

There are five partners in the project:

- Institute of Marine Research, Norway (which has coordinating responsibility)
- Institute of Marine Research, Sweden
- Danish Institute for Fisheries Technology and Aquaculture, Denmark
- IFREMER, France
- FRS Marine Laboratory, Scotland

The total cost of the project is estimated at 2,216,878 euro and the contribution by the European Commission is 1,055,000 euro or 47.6 % of the total cost.

Objectives

The objective of the project is to develop a size-selective, user-friendly grid system for bottom trawl and seine net fisheries for whitefish in the North Sea and adjacent waters which would facilitate the escape of immature cod, haddock, saithe and whiting and thus provide a more sustainable exploitation pattern for demersal gadoid species. It was recognised from the start that many vessels fishing in these waters have limited working space on deck and that any grid designs produced must give the highest priority to ease of handling and robustness while shooting and hauling as well as possessing good selection properties.

Work activities to date

Research activities in the project were divided into specific tasks starting with a gear and deck layout survey of typical vessels working in the North Sea, Baltic and Eastern Channel to investigate the physical demands likely to be made on grid systems during fishing operations. Catch, effort and discard data were analysed to find the most relevant areas, species and fleets for testing the EUROGRID system. Current grid designs hav e been assessed, and prototype grids have been manufactured and tested both in a flume tank and during sea trials in the North Sea last summer. The grids are constructed in nylon (polyamide) which permits some flexibility in handling. The 60 cm x 120 cm version has a weight of only 9 kg in air. Technically, these prototypes function well, but adjustments to the rigging of the grid within the extension piece still hav e to be finalised to obtain optimum selectivity characteristics.

Future action

Fishermen's organisations will be contacted to elicit the views of fishermen on the practicalities of grid use and appropriate rigging arrangements for commercial fishing. Handling trials on chartered fishing vessels using various gear types from each of the respective countries together with studies of grid selectivity characteristics for each target species will be carried out this year. All data will be pooled and analysed. The final report will be presented to DG XIV in 2001 together with explanatory pamphlets in the language of each participating nation which will describe technical aspects of how to install the grid in towed commercial fishing gear.