Spatio-temporal trends in stock mixing of eastern and western Baltic cod in the Arkona Basin and the implications for recruitment

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The aim of this project was to improve the management of western Baltic cod by incorporating stock identification routines in order to discriminate between eastern and western Baltic cod stocks. In recent years evidence from fishery patterns and otolith structures have indicated an increasing degree of mixing between the two cod stocks which up until 2013 were managed as two separate stocks. Changes in fishing pressure and patterns would therefore result in a risk for local depletion of the smaller western stock. Stock identification methods were based on established approaches using genetic discrimination and otolith shape analysis, and improved by linking these methods. This method provides a tool to estimate the degree of stock mixing using the existing otolith archives. This approach documented an increase of eastern Baltic cod from 30% to > 80% in the eastern part of the western Baltic Sea management area. As a consequence of this stock mixing, a new procedure incorporating stock mixing on an annual basis was set in place in 2016, with the aim to improve stock exploitation and reduce the risk of local depletion. The knowledge gained also influenced recent management regulations, particularly a prolongation of spawning closer of the fishery in 2016.

The project was coordinated by Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science, UK. The project was funded by the Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF).
Pilot project for the preparation of certification (MSC) of gillnet fishing in the Baltic Sea (38974)

Fishing for some important stocks has been assessed in accordance with Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) principles for sustainable fisheries. All these fisheries have now passed the assessment and are certified, with a single exception: Gillnet fishing in the Baltic. This is due to the lack of evidence for gillnet fishing East of Bornholm not having by-catches of the very small population of harbor porpoises which are found in the Baltic Sea in Ices Subdivision (SD) 24 and East.

There has not been registered by-catch of porpoises in the Danish gillnet fishing East of Bornholm, neither in biological studies nor by fishermen themselves. But as the Swedish and Polish studies have shown individual by-catches in some gillnet fisheries and the current estimates of stock size means that the by-catch of even a few individuals can prevent it from being restored, the MSC considered that it was not sufficiently proven that the Danish gillnet fisheries did not constitute a threat to the population.

There is therefore a need for documentation of the level of by-catch of harbor porpoises in the Danish gillnet fisheries.

This project is coordinated by Danish Fishermen's Association.

National Institute of Aquatic Resources
Section for Monitoring and Data
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