New policies may call for new approaches: the case of the Swedish Norway lobster (Nephrops norvegicus) fisheries in the Kattegat and Skagerrak

The European Common Fisheries Policy has in its 2013 reform increased in complexity, such as a call for coherence with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and a landing obligation, posing new requirements and challenges to managers, scientists and the fishing industry. Therefore, re-evaluations of current practice are important as a basis for management actions. The Swedish fishery for Norway lobster (Nephrops norvegicus) in the Kattegat–Skagerrak area provides an interesting case study of relevance to emerging policies. Sprung from an unbalance in available fish- and Nephrops quotas and an ambition to protect coastal areas, the current fishery has been directed towards three separate fisheries (mixed trawling, directed trawling using a sorting grid and creeling). Studying direct and indirect effects from alternative Swedish quota allocations among gear types is therefore interesting. Accordingly, a screening study was conducted, taking into consideration area-gear interactions in catch rates, to compare the three different fisheries regarding quantified pressures on the target species, the by-catch species, and on the seafloor, as well as to qualitatively discuss social and economic dimensions. In the next step, alternative quota allocations were studied. In Swedish fisheries, we show that creeling offers a substantial reduction of fishing mortality of both undersized Nephrops and fish and a reduced seafloor pressure per landed kilo of Nephrops. Given that the fishing areas in many cases may be interchangeable between gears, allocating a larger quota share to creels in the Swedish fishery would therefore contribute to the integration of fisheries- and environmental management as called for in the new policies.

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