Remote electronic monitoring and the landing obligation – some insights into fishers’ and fishery inspectors’ opinions

The European fisheries management is currently undergoing a fundamental change in the handling of catches of commercial fisheries with the implementation of the 2013 Common Fisheries Policy. One of the main objectives of the policy is to end the practice of discarding in the EU by 2019. However, for such changes to be successful, it is vital to ensure stakeholders acceptance, and it is prudent to consider possible means to verify compliance with the new regulation. Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) with Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) has been tested in a variety of fisheries worldwide for different purposes and is currently considered as one possible tool to ensure compliance with a European ban on discards. This study focuses on Danish fishery inspectors and on fishers with REM experience, whose opinions are less well known. Their views on the landing obligation and on the use of REM were investigated using interviews and questionnaires, and contrasted to some fishers without REM experience. 80% of fishery inspectors and 58% of REM-experienced fishers expressed positive views on REM. 9 out of 10 interviewed fishers without REM experience were against REM. Participation in a REM trial has not led to antipathy towards REM. Fishery inspectors saw on-board observers, at-sea control and REM as the three best solutions to control the landing obligation but shared the general belief that the landing obligation cannot be enforced properly and will be difficult for fishers to comply with. The strengths and weaknesses of REM in this context are discussed.