

PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE MITIGATING MEASURES IN THE OFFSHORE BOTTOM SET GILLNETS IN NORTH EAST ATLANTIC

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Abstract

The Deepnet project highlighted that many problems are evident in the offshore gillnet fisheries in the slopes north and west of The British Isles, west of Ireland, around Rockall and Hatton Bank. There are three main gillnet fisheries in this area:

- a) Hake Fishery (100 – 700 m)
- b) Monk Fishery (200 - 800 m)
- c) Deep water shark, gillnet fishery (800 - 1200 m)

In addition there has been developed gillnet and pot fisheries for deepwater crabs in these areas. The Deepnet project only described the two deepest fisheries. The project revealed that the vessels fishing for Monk are using 130- 250 km of gear leading to long soak times (4-10 days) which, in turn leads to more than 50% of the fish is not fit for human consumption. The great amount of nets that are used makes it impossible for the vessels to carry the nets with them ashore when landing their fish. This leads to great amount of nets left unattended on the fishing grounds for weeks and months, which again leads to great amounts of fish are killed for no good reason.

These factors in combination cause a hidden exploitation of the resources and make it difficult or impossible to assess the exploited stocks and to manage them in a responsible way. In addition there are almost no data available from these fisheries on catch composition, effort, catch, discards and other important biological data such as length, age and sex distribution.

The Deepnet report made number of recommendations in order to improve the management of these fisheries.

Effort and soak time

The most important recommendations where to reduce the amount of nets that can be allowed. I was also recommended that the nets should always be attended. These two measures will if they are enforced effectively reduce soak times and thereby spoilage of fish. Enforcement of these regulations must be discussed between the Industry and managers.

Improve data collecting

The other basic problem in these fisheries is the lack of data. It was recommended to drastically improve landings data and to implement observer programs.

Retrieval programs

Organising retrieval surveys and mitigating measure to reduce the effect of ghost fishing.