Overview of fisheries management in Icelandic waters

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Stocks, advice and decisions

- Most of the stocks are confined to Icelandic waters although some are straddling stocks.
- The *Marine Research Institute* (MRI) conducts systematic research on the distribution, size and yield potential of the main species stocks.
- The MRI provides scientific advice on the total allowable catch (TAC) for each year (or fishing year, Sept.-Aug) with the objective of promoting sustainable use; *The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea* (ICES) also provides advice on many stocks.
- The competent government minister decides on the TAC for each species stock based on scientific advice.

Management approach

- Fisheries management in Icelandic waters is primarily based on catch limitation (output control) through individual transferable quotas (ITQs);
  - Each vessel is assigned a quota share (%) in each stock, initially based primarily on catch history over a reference period.
  - The annual allowable catch for each vessel from each stock is obtained by multiplying the TAC of the year and the vessel‘s quota share (as a proportion).
- Quotas can be transferred between vessels; this applies both to quota shares and annual catch allotments. Quota transfer is mainly intended to promote rationalisation and thus increase profitability in the industry.
- 5.3% of the TAC is retained by the government authorities intended for meeting social objectives.

Supplementary measures

- Discarding of commercial species is prohibited by law.
- Extensive area closures to fishing for the protection of juvenile fish:
  - Large nursery areas closed on long term basis;
  - temporary real time closures.
- Fishing gear selectivity in demersal fisheries ensured through requirements for minimum mesh size and/or the use of sorting grids to allow small fish to escape capture.
- Closure to fishing of main spawning grounds for the major demersal fish stocks during peak spawning season.

Flexibility

- In order to facilitate matching of the species composition of the catch and the quota portfolio for individual fishing vessels or companies, and also to reduce incentives for discard, a variety of flexibility provisions are in place.
- The main provisions, in addition to **quota transfer**, are the following:
  - A provision, in mixed demersal fisheries, allowing the use of catch quota for one species to count against a limited catch amount of another species.
  - Auctioned catch; a provision allowing the landing of a small fraction of the year‘s catch without use of quota; such catch goes to auction and the proceeds go to a public fund for supporting research.
  - A provision permitting the year‘s catch to exceed the year‘s quota by 5% in some species; the excess is then deducted from the vessel‘s quota for the following year.
  - It is permitted to postpone fishing for part of the quota and to transfer up to a certain percentage of the year‘s quota to the following fishing year; postponement of fishing is considered beneficial to the growth of long-lived fish stocks.
  - Catches of undersized fish in some cases (e.g. cod <50 cm) count only as half their weight against quota; this is to discourage discards; the actual amounts are small.

Implementation

- A central fishing vessel registry is maintained; only registered vessels that have been granted a fishing licence may engage in commercial fishing.
- Before embarking on a fishing trip, the vessel‘s operators must ensure that the vessel has quota registered which suffices for the expected catch.
- Recording of vessel catch quotas and catches is done in the Fisheries Directorate‘s central data base which is accessible to all; thus transparency is ensured.
  - All catches shall be landed in officially designated landing harbours;
  - Accredited harbour officials weigh the catch by species and record in the central data base;
  - Landed catch is subtracted from the vessel‘s quota.
- When quota is used up, the vessel owner must acquire additional quota for the vessel, else fishing must stop; failing that, the vessel loses its fishing licence.
- The Directorate of Fisheries and The Icelandic Coast Guard monitor and control commercial fishing and the landing of catches.

Thank you for your attention !