

NEAFC implements extensive measures regarding the protection of VMEs from significant adverse impacts (SAI) from bottom fisheries, based on the FAO International Guidelines.

NEAFC has closed extensive areas to bottom fishing, both on the grounds of specific identification of VMEs and for more precautionary reasons. NEAFC has outlined “existing fishing areas” where bottom fishing is authorised and “new fishing areas” which

migration of major fish stocks. The provider of scientific advice to NEAFC, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, ICES, in 2009 reported on this in a major study¹.

Changes in migration or spawning behaviour affect the catchability of individuals with fishing gear. Populations may move away from (or towards) an area where fishing fleets operate and/or an area where spatial restrictions on fishing are in place. Also, species distributions may shift across the boundaries between areas where quotas belong to different nations. For example, this situation could arise if distribution of species such as mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) (which already has been observed in some years), leading to potentially difficult political negotiations between nations regarding future access to key fish stocks and national allocation keys.

ICES however concludes that “Disentangling the effects of different drivers of variability in fish populations has been difficult for several reasons. How climate change will affect the major stocks in the Northeast Atlantic these requires further study.”

All Contracting Parties of NEAFC have national legislation requiring authorisation for fishing in the high seas

All Contracting Parties of NEAFC are parties to the Convention and the Agreement.

The NEAFC Convention was amended in 2004 and 2006 and both the 1982 Convention and the 2006 “NEW” Convention texts are on the NEAFC website. The 2004 and 2006 amendments have not gone through the full process of ratification in all Contracting Parties, but it was agreed with the “London Declaration” in 2006 to apply the amendments on a voluntary basis until ratification has been finalised. The amendments to the Convention in 2006 include a new Article with the following language: “The objective of this Convention is to ensure the long-term conservation and optimum utilisation of the fishery resources in the Convention Area, providing sustainable economic, environmental and social benefits. The amendments also include the precautionary and ecosystem approach as an obligation on Contracting Parties.” (New Convention Article 4).

NEAFC regularly reports to the FAO regarding the monitoring of the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

NEAFC has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, ICES, and the Council provides full scientific advice according to the MoU and specific requests. All management measures are underpinned by the scientific advice from ICES and its extensive databases. NEAFC is a partner to FIRMS and provides fact sheets on all its fisheries and management measures, which are in the public domain on the FIRMS website.

¹ ICES COOPERATIVE RESEARCH REPORT No. 301 May 2010 Resolving climate impacts on fish stocks
<http://www.ices.dk/pubs/crr/crr301/CRR%20301-Web-100531.pdf>

Where scientific advice is available, NEAFC has adopted management plans developed by coastal states. These plans include reference points and pre-agreed harvest control rules. These are reviewed regularly. In 2012 the NEAFC Contracting Parties will review existing management plans for blue whiting and Norwegian Spring Spawning (Atlanto Scandian herring).

~~NEAFC does not deal with pollution. The competent organisation in this respect in the North East Atlantic is OSPAR, with which NEAFC has an MoU.~~

The four major fisheries in the NEAFC Regulatory Area (herring, mackerel, blue whiting and redfish) are pelagic, almost clean fisheries without by-catch. NEAFC is still in the process of establishing management measures for deep sea fisheries. Effort in these fisheries has been reduced by 35 %. Large areas on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and 4 areas in the Rockall Hatton Bank area have been closed to fisheries and gillnets are banned in waters deeper than 200 m. Juvenile haddock in the Rockall Area is protected by the

assessments of stock status. Where gaps in data have been identified NEAFC has taken

NEAFC at the moment cooperates with FAO and IMO to establish a global record of fishing vessels, by supplying vessel data for pilot run of a Global Record database design. It is expected that the global record will be a powerful tool in combating IUU globally.

NEAFC requires Contracting Parties to report on quota uptake on a monthly basis. The reports are published on the NEAFC website. Work is ongoing to further improve

NEAFC adopted in 2009 a total ban on discards. It has closed an area on the Rockall Bank to protect juvenile haddock. It has rules that demand retrieval of lost gear and removal of unmarked gear.

The implementation of the 2004 Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations and the International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is handled by NEAFC Contracting Parties individually.

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Subregional and regional cooperation

NEAFC considers that it has taken major initiatives in order to address its responsibilities for implementing the relevant UNGA Resolution 61/105. It should be pointed out that this is a dynamic process and, in that context, NEAFC commits itself to keep under continuous review the measures currently in place.

During 2012, NEAFC is undertaking a comprehensive review of its bottom fishing regulation, which includes considering the implementation in the context of the relevant provisions of the UNGA Resolutions.

The NEAFC system of area management is described in detail earlier and in communications to UNDOALOS, including in April and November 2009. The NEAFC