



Herring-survey pioneers new approach to support fisheries management

03-10-2016 A pioneering industry-led survey of a key west of Scotland herring fishery is paving the way for fishermen to provide scientific support to fisheries management. In recent weeks, six midwater fishing trawlers have participated in an extensive scientific survey of Scottish west coast herring that is yielding valuable data on the health of the stock. The acoustic and biological data gathered by the vessels will contribute to the scientific international stock assessment process used by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) to provide advice on annual quota limits and other management measures.

West of Scotland herring is the initial focus of this new survey because even though it is believed by fishermen and scientists that the southern and northern areas contain different stocks, the information needed by ICES to make that distinction is not available. Existing catch and survey data is only available at times when the northern and southern components are mixed together. The aim of the survey is collect information so that the stocks can be separated again in the future so that they can be managed individually.

The ground-breaking project is being co-ordinated by marine scientists Dr Steve Mackinson of the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association (SPFA) and Martin Pastoors of the Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association (PFA). Dr Mackinson said: "Due to constraints on resources, there is often a shortfall in information from marine scientific surveys carried out by national governments. It therefore makes good sense for the fishing industry to contribute to the scientific process. The scope of the activities of our fishing boats, and the wide sea area they cover, offers the ideal platform for collecting relevant marine data that might otherwise not be possible."



The project is an international collaboration involving fishermen and scientists from Marine Scotland, the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, IMARES Netherlands, Thuenen Institute Germany, Marine Institute Ireland, University College Dublin, the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, PFA and SPFA. Part of the research involves determining the size of the various herring stocks by acoustic surveys and another element is to identify the separate components of the stock over the area.

Martin Pastoors says: "Identifying the different herring stock components within this area and their relative abundance will lead to better decision-making on the sustainable management of the fishery. It is great to see us making a meaningful contribution as fishing industry." Highlights of this industry-lead survey have been presented at the ICES Annual Science Conference that took place in Riga, Latvia, last week. The second part of the survey, off the coast of Ireland, is planned for later this year.

For more information please contact:
Martin Pastoors - PFA Chief Science Officer
mpastoors@pelagicfish.eu
+31 631901027



About PFA

The Pelagic Freezer-trawler Association (PFA) represents the interests of 9 European pelagic freezer-trawler companies, which fish for human consumption. PFA members are responsible, family-run companies, mostly going back to the late 19th century, who benefit from several generations of fishing experience, and operate a combined fleet of 19 vessels. This projects fits within the overall research ambition of the PFA which is to “initiate, develop, contribute and sustain knowledge development that is needed for sustainable management and exploitation of fish stocks in all areas where PFA members are active” and also in the recent MoU between PFA and Greenpeace to improve the knowledge base for sustainable fisheries management.



Calibrating the towed-body echosounder on the Wiron 6 (PH2200). © Dick de Haan, Wageningen Marine Research



Morphometric measurement of herring on board of Annie Hillina (ROS170) to determine the body shape of spawning herring. © Henk Krijgsman