

Request on by-catches of pelagic species

By request of the Commission the Scientific Group discussed the question of by-catches of mackerel, herring and blue whiting in the fishery of these species by Russian vessels in the Norwegian EEZ and Jan Mayen fishery zone.

Mackerel, herring and blue whiting distributions overlap and these species can occur in different proportions in the same hauls.

Russian vessels fish blue whiting and herring in the Norwegian EEZ and Jan Mayen fishery zone.

Not all Russian vessels are licensed to fish both blue whiting and herring.

During blue whiting fishery in the area under the jurisdiction of Norway the Russian vessels are allowed to have up to 10% by-catch of mackerel in each haul (paragraph 6 of Annex 7).

An allowed by-catch of mackerel in the herring fishery has not been established.

Permitted by-catches of blue whiting in the herring fishery and herring by-catches in the blue whiting fishery are neither implemented.

According to Russian data in 2005-2011 Russian vessels carried out more than 25 thousand pelagic hauls in the herring and blue whiting fishery in the Norwegian EEZ and Jan Mayen fishery zone.

Mackerel by-catches in the herring fishery have been observed, usually in summer. According to the official reports, mackerel catches recorded in 159 trawls range from a few kilograms to several tonnes. Catches with mackerel only have been recorded in 10 cases. In 16 hauls mackerel by-catches ranged from 10 to 99%. Most of the hauls had less than 10%. The average by-catch of mackerel in the catch, where it is less than 10%, is equal to 4.5%.

Blue whiting by-catches in the herring fishery have been recorded in 2400 hauls and ranged from 0.1 to 11%. The average by-catch of blue whiting for vessels that did not have permission to fish blue whiting, is 4.4%.

According to official statistics the by-catches of herring for vessels that fished blue whiting and did not have herring quotas, were registered in 174 hauls and ranged from 0.1 to 50%. Only a few catches with by-catches of herring exceeding 14% were registered. The average by-catch of herring in the catches, where it is less than 14%, is equal to 5.7%.

In order to comply with the Norwegian ban on discarding, the Scientific Group considers that permitted by-catches of mackerel and blue whiting in the herring fishery and herring by-catches in the blue whiting fishery should be established.

The Scientific Group recommends to establish allowed by-catches of mackerel and blue whiting in the herring fishery and herring by-catches in the blue whiting fishery of up to 10% in each haul, and up to 5% at landing. If necessary, the Commission may establish special quotas for by-catch of these species (herring, mackerel or blue whiting).

Noting that sometimes accidental catches happen, where “by-catch” exceed the allowed limits, the Scientific Group recommends to consider the possibility of keeping accidental catches onboard with an obligation to leave the fishing area.