

Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
800 Windmill Road • P.O. Box 638 • Dartmouth • Nova Scotia • B2Y 3Y9 • Canada

Serial No. N004

NAFO/FC 79/VI/2¹

FIRST ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1979

Faroese comments on the stock assessment of cod in Div. 3M

by

H. J. Kass
Government of Faroe Islands
3800 Tinganes
Torshavn, Faroe Islands

The following comments were received from Mr Kass by telex on 1 June 1979:

"L. R. Day, Secretary General,
Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization,
Dartmouth,
Nova Scotia.

"Dear Mr. Day:

"It would be highly appreciated if you would be kind enough to circulate below statement as a Commissioner's Document by the Faroese delegation.

"Re: Stock assessment.

"The Faroese delegation supports the usual practice dealing with stock assessments, institutionalized by ICNAF. The scientists meet separately and deal with the data at hand, prepare a report, agreed or not agreed, which forms the scientific basis for the deliberations in the Commission. Thus the assessments are not re-opened for discussion at the Commission meetings.

"The Faroese Fisheries Laboratory has not been able to participate in the meeting of the Assessments Subcommittee 28 March-9 April 1979, and has not submitted any data, besides catch data, to this meeting. The reason for this is that the meeting of the Assessments Subcommittee coincides in time with the peak period of activity of the Working Groups of ICES, making it impossible for the small Faroese Laboratory to meet the requirements both in ICES and ICNAF.

"Reading the Report of the Assessments Subcommittee (ICNAF Sum. Doc. 79/VI/11), it is, however, evident that the opinion of the majority of the Assessments Subcommittee on the state of the stock of cod on Flemish Cap is in sharp contradiction to the general impression obtained from the present Faroese longline fishery on the Flemish Cap. Acting on this discrepancy, the Faroese authorities have urged the Faroese Fisheries Laboratory to give a very high priority to the working up of the Faroese longline data from the Flemish Cap.

"This is presented in a Res. Doc. which will be available at the NAFO Meeting, 5-8 June 1979. The Faroese delegation is, however, fully aware that other scientists have not had the opportunity to evaluate this material, and none of the scientific bodies, either in ICNAF or in NAFO, have had the opportunity to incorporate this piece of information in their general assessments work.

"This is regrettable, and from a formalistic point of view, the information should not be taken into account.

"The Faroese delegation feels that, in view of the drastic cutbacks recommended by the majority of the Assessments Subcommittee, there is a need to make clear our views on the present assessment, a view which will be based on the evidence from our own fishery.

"The main reason for bringing this point up is the impression that the assessments supported by the majority of the Assessments Subcommittee apparently does not take realistic account of facts as

¹ Originally presented to the First Annual Meeting as NAFO Doc. 79/VI/2.

(over)

established by the fishing fleet. When the discrepancy between the assessments of the fishery biologists and the experience of the fishing fleet is so large, as it is in this case, it is the reputation of the biologists that is at stake.

"To repeat, the Faroese delegation does not demand that assessments be re-opened for discussion at this meeting, to bring in the regrettable delayed Faroese data. However, we suggest that the Commission, in its choice of regulatory measures, pays attention to the evidence from these data.

"Summary of the Faroese research paper:

"The majority of the Assessments Subcommittee used a terminal F of 1.3 for 1978 and assumed that a fishing mortality of 1.14 has been the average level in the 1970's.

"These quite unusually high F-values for a cod stock would mean that 73 percent of the fully recruited year-classes will be removed by the fishery each year.

"This, of course, could be true with a constant level of effort, if the stock is drastically reduced, or this is compensated by very strong year-classes.

"However, a serious decline in stock abundance should be reflected in depressed CPUE's.

"From the Faroese data, it can be concluded:

- "1. The estimated numbers of fish of the 1973 year-classes caught per unit effort during January-April in 1977, 1978, and 1979 do not indicate a large reduction in this year-class, especially not from 1978 to 1979 where the year-class is under full fishing pressure.
- "2. The CPUE's in January-April 1979 are higher than in January-April 1978 and seem not to support the idea of fishing going on in a reduced stock.
- "3. In January-April 1979, a considerable part of the catch is made up of year-classes other than 1973. The fishery thus is not based on a single year-class.

"In concluding, it may be added that the research document² will be made available to the Commissioners upon arrival in Halifax next week."

² This paper was distributed as ICNAF Res. Doc. 79/VI/125, Serial No. 5519.