

Recommendation paper

Title: Skate 'F' licence - change to 350-mm diamond mesh size

Date: 20th August 2020

Report of: Senior Fisheries Scientist

1. Background:

- 1.1. Currently, vessels working under F-license (skate) use a 110mm mesh in the cod-end of their trawls. These vessels are permitted to use one or several tickler chains in front of their ground rope to 'lift' the skates from the bottom, which increases the effectiveness of their catch.
- 1.2. In November 2018, a specialised research cruise was carried out by FIFD to assess the impact that using different cod-end mesh sizes may have on the composition and quantities of the main catch, as well as finfish by-catch. The 3 trialled sizes were 110mm, 300mm and 400mm diamond mesh.
- 1.3. The results of the cruise showed that use of the 400mm mesh size cod-end produced the same (or greater) amounts of large commercial-size skates, compared to both the 110mm and 300mm mesh cod-ends. Additionally, the 400mm mesh dramatically decreased the number and volume of finfish by-catch and also greatly reduced the catch of immature commercial and non-commercial skate species.


2. Presentation and consultations:

- 2.1. A paper showing the results of this cruise was presented to Fishing Industry representatives at the December 2018 Fisheries Committee Meeting – item 8 on the Agenda. Following a discussion, the group felt it was desirable to repeat the survey using a Korean F licensed vessel.
- 2.2. Unfortunately, Korean vessels have not taken up F licences since 2018 and it appears unlikely that they will do so in the foreseeable future. In order that FIFD can be better prepared for vessels fishing under this licence type, it is appropriate that a change in the mesh size is agreed and adopted.
- 2.3. In August 2020, Fishery Officers measured the mesh size of codends used during the 2018 skate survey, and revealed that the 400 mm codend had the following measurements: 400 mm (knot to knot) and 350 mm (the widest clear distance of the maximum stretch of the mesh). The mesh in the trawl net had 250 mm distance between the knots and 230 mm clear distance of the maximum stretch of the mesh.

3. Recommendation:

- 3.1. It is recommended to implement a new 400-mm diamond shaped mesh size (with 350 mm clear distance of the maximum stretch of the mesh) regulation in the F-licensed, Skate fishery.
- 3.2. This measure will not only improve the size catch composition for skates but will also prevent the by-catch of small finfish in the F licence fishery.

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Clasen". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Director of Natural Resources