

DISCARD RESEARCH IN THE NORTH SEA

Commercial Catches

In 1997, UK commercial fishing vessels reported that 135 thousand tonnes of Cod, Haddock and Whiting, were landed from the North Sea. However this is not the whole picture as fish are discarded and landings may be mis-reported.



Bycatch in Mixed Fisheries

Even though fishers usually target one species, they catch many others. These are discarded because they are too small, have little value, or it is illegal to land them e.g. no quota.

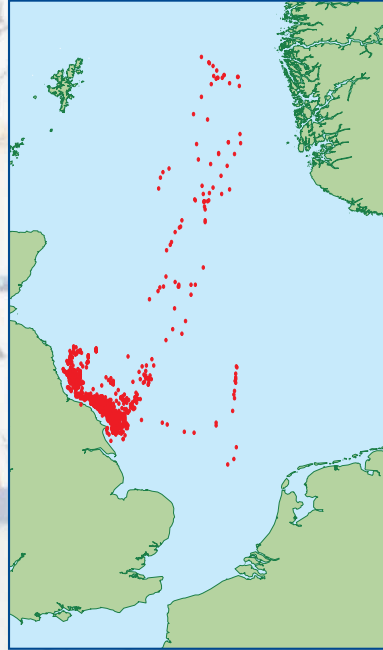


Catch Sampling

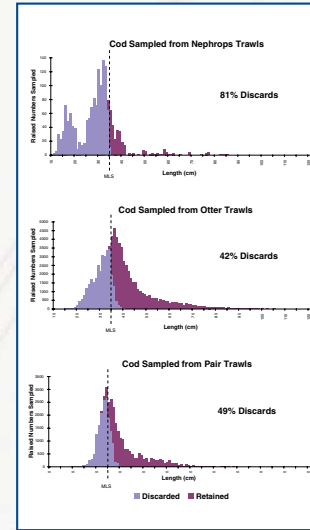
Sea-going staff measure both retained and discarded fish aboard commercial fishing vessels and collect otoliths to age the fish sampled. This allows percentage discard rates to be calculated. In addition, landings information, gear details and information about the fleet are also collected.

Sampling Effort

Positions of hauls sampled during the north east England Discard Studies since 1994.



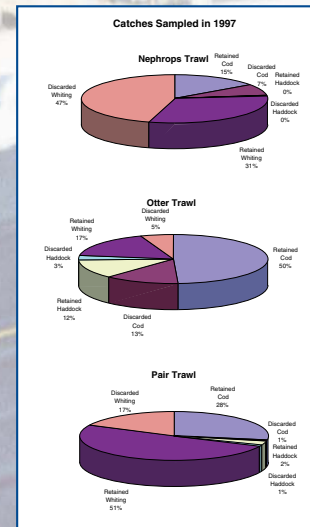
Data Analysis



These length frequency histograms show the lengths of Cod retained and discarded by each gear type in 1997. The percentage discard rates by number are also shown. Notice how the small meshed (70mm) Nephrops trawls had a very high discard rate and caught few large fish.

Uses of Discard Research

- North Sea Stock Assessments
- Assessments of Technical Measures
- Information about the Industry and Fleet
- Highlights reasons behind discarding practices
- Improving Relations with the Industry
- Ecosystem effects of fishing
- Biological information
- Estimating misreporting



These pie diagrams show how the proportions by weight of Cod, Haddock and Whiting differ in the catches of the gear types sampled.