



**SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC
COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES (STECF)
OPINION BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE**

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**STECF advice on sampling strategies in
fisheries for blue ling**

MARCH 2009, WRITTEN PROCEDURE

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OPINION OF THE SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE FOR FISHERIES BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE

Request to the STECF from the European Commission on sampling strategies in fisheries for blue ling.

MARCH 2009

Background

In December 2008, the EC introduced protection areas for spawning aggregations of southern blue ling in ICES Division VIa from March to May, based on information from the EU POORFISH Project and additional information collated by ICES WGDEEP in 2008.

The spatial and temporal boundaries of these protection areas were set based on the best information available at the time, but it was recognised that these areas were provisional and required fine-tuning (or addition) as and when further information becomes available.

In the absence of fisheries-independent data, the two main sources of information are likely to be from deep-water observers (deployed under EC Regulation No. 2347/2002) and from fishers. Under this EC Regulation No. 2347/2002, Member States (MS) must submit Sampling Plans to the Commission describing the level of observer coverage and the sampling activities to be carried out.

Consequently the Commission requested ICES to provide guidelines on possible sampling strategies and collation processes with the aim to fulfil commitments under Article 8 Of Regulation (EC) NO 2347/2002. ICES provided its advice in March 2009 (ICES Advice 2009, Book 9)

Request to STECF

STECF is requested to review the ICES advice on sampling strategies for fisheries for blue ling and make any appropriate comments and recommendations. Given that fisheries for blue ling in ICES Division VIa are already underway and in order to commence sampling at the earliest opportunity, STECF is requested to provide its advice by written procedure at the earliest opportunity.

ICES advice

“ICES advises that information on the proportions of spawning blue ling (defined as running males and females, including females with hyaline eggs) and of non-spawning blue ling (all other maturities) at length are recorded at the individual haul level, and that geographical coordinates

and depth are also recorded. Sample size should be at least 50 fish at all sampled hauls. Data to be collected should, for each fish sampled, include length, sex, and whether spawning or not.

ICES recommends that the above information be made available for the period January to June for all areas in ICES Divisions Vb, VIa, and VIb in order to obtain a full overview of spawning aggregations across the known range of spawning blue ling.

ICES recommends that MS review their Sampling Plans to ensure that the maturity of sampled blue ling is recorded and that adequate sampling is carried out in, and adjacent to, the blue ling protection areas.

These data should be compiled and preserved in a database by MS, and be made available to appropriate ICES expert groups for analysis.

Fishers have expressed an interest in contributing information on spawning blue ling. ICES recommends that fishers be requested to record the presence/absence of spawning blue ling on a haul-by-haul basis and to pass this information (along with position and date) to the appropriate RAC and/or national laboratories. The collected information will be used to identify spawning grounds as well as areas where the species occurs but does not spawn.”

STECF observations and conclusions

STECF agrees with the ICES advice.

Furthermore, STECF recommends that in addition to providing observer data and fishers' data to ICES Expert Groups and the appropriate RAC, the data collected under the provisions of Article 8 of Regulation (EC) NO 2347/2002 should also be transmitted to the STECF Secretariat. This is to ensure that such data are available to the STECF in anticipation of any future requests from the Commission to STECF on fisheries for blue ling.

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Abstract

The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries gave its opinion by written procedure in March 2009 on request by the European Commission to review the ICES advice on sampling strategies for fisheries for blue ling and make any appropriate comments and recommendations.

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