

The North Sea Regional Advisory Council



NSRAC

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UK Implementation of the Data Regulation

Introduction

In conducting a feasibility study for collecting data on fishing activity in the North Sea, it is helpful to know what data Member States are required to collect under the EC Data Regulation so that the NSRAC is aware of the potential data available to access.

As a contribution towards this aim, this information paper addresses the implementation of the Data Regulation in the UK. The paper outlines:

- general requirements of the Regulation,
- the sources, scope and database handling of the data collected on vessels, catches, and landings that fall directly within the remit of the Fisheries Statistics Units at SEERAD (Scottish Executive Environment Rural Affairs Department) and Defra (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs);
- protocols on data access

1. The EC Data Regulation and the availability of statistical data on UK fisheries

EC Council regulation 1543/2000 (the Data Regulation) sets out the requirements on Member States to collect and manage a range of statistical data necessary for the evaluation of fisheries and fishing industries across the European Union.

The Regulation stipulates the range of data to be collected to meet the requirements of the European Community minimum and extended programmes of fisheries evaluation. The Regulation obliges each MS to collect statistical data on the following themes:

1. Fishing effort, including the following.
 - (i) Number of vessels in the national fishing fleet.

- (ii) Gross tonnage of these vessels.
 - (iii) Engine power (kW) of these vessels.
 - (iv) Vessel age.
 - (v) Fishing gear used.
 - (vi) Time spent at sea.
2. The monitoring of commercial fisheries, including the following.
 - (i) The quantity (tonnes) of landings and discards of the species specified in Annex II of the Regulation.
 - (ii) Biological sampling to determine catch composition in terms of maturity, growth, sex and fecundity – both of landed catches (fisheries dependent data) and as part of scientific surveys conducted at sea (fisheries independent data)
 3. The monitoring of the prices of first sale fish for species in Annex II of the Regulation.
 4. The economic monitoring of fishing enterprises and the processing industry through data on:
 - (i) production (quantity and value)
 - (ii) the number of enterprises and jobs
 - (iii) changes in production costs

The Fisheries Statistics Units (FSUs) of the UK fisheries departments are responsible for the storage and management of the data relating to fishing effort (1. (i)-(vi) above), landings and discards (2. (i) above). The collection and analysis of data from the biological sampling of catches and of fish populations at sea has been contracted by fisheries departments to the Fisheries Research Service (FRS), while that required for the economic monitoring of fishing enterprises has been contracted to the Seafish Industry Authority.

2. Sources of data held by SEERAD and DEFRA Fisheries Statistics Units

The statistical databases at SEERAD (FIN) and Defra (FAD) contain a wide range of information on the UK fishing fleet and its fishing activity. These data are obtained from a range of sources such as logbooks, landing declarations, sales notes, vessel registry and fishing licences.

The most important source of information on fishing effort, catches and discards is the EU logbook. Under the EC Logbook Regulation (EC 2737/1999) the masters of all vessels of 10 metres or over in overall length are required to record a range of information pertaining to a single voyage on a new page in their logbooks. In the UK, the logbook must then be submitted to the Fishery Office at the port of landing, within 48 hours of a landing being made.

Two further important sources of catch data relate specifically to fish landed: landing declarations and sales notes. The landing declaration has not in the past been mandatory and as a result has been little used as a data source. Most data on the accurate quantity and value of each species landed along with other relevant information such as size, presentation type (whole, gutted, etc.) and freshness grade, have been obtained from sales notes which sellers are obliged to submit to Fishery Offices.

Most of the information that can be recorded on logsheets, landing declarations and sales notes is mandatory but a few pieces of information such as hours fished, number of fishing operations (hauls), gear dimensions and quantity of discards per voyage, are optional. These

logbook data items are usually considered unreliable because of known and/or unknown biases related to their optional nature. Reliable estimates of discards are however, recorded by FRS Marine Laboratory observers on board a sample of actively fishing vessels.

The SEERAD and Defra databases also include information on vessels and their capacity and entitlements to fish, sourced from vessel registration documents and fishing licences.

3. Combining these sources

The data from logbooks, sales notes, landing declarations, vessel registration documents and fishing licences are entered into computerised databases (FIN in Scotland, FAD in the rest of the UK) by Fishery Office staff. The lowest levels of logbook information are the effort date and catch record, detailing for each day of a voyage, the estimated quantity of each species caught along with the ICES area and statistical rectangle where the majority of the catch was obtained on that date. Skippers have the option to record catches for every statistical rectangle where they fish but in practice this is rare with the vast majority reporting only the mandatory minimum of that where most fish were caught on each effort date.

The structure of the SEERAD and Defra databases enables these basic catch and effort data to be aggregated by vessel, by voyage, and at many other levels e.g. by port, administrative district, quota stock, time period, sea location, nationality, MAGP segment, gear type, etc.).

An important recent database development has been the introduction of the IFISH, a system which brings together much of the data in FIN and FAD into a joint data "warehouse". Through IFISH, each department can now retrieve complete UK data on catches and landings by ICES sub division, without the delay associated with the manual exchange of data between the two statistics units. A second planned phase of IFISH development will see the spatial resolution of the data improved to statistical rectangle level. At present however, rectangle level data can be retrieved separately from FIN and FAD and manually combined.

The main types of data contained in the databases are listed in Annex I

The level of detail on landings and effort data necessary for some scientific work (including that proposed by the North Sea RAC) is however, not covered by the Regulation. For example, some of the effort work on the North Sea and other areas that the Marine labs wish to carry out requires rectangle level data for effort at a very detailed level of gear type. The regulations however, only cover broad brush gear classifications (e.g. mobile gears rather than individual types of trawl) and do not cover relevant items such as gear/mesh size combinations. As outlined previously, the rectangle level effort and gear information available from logbooks does not cover every rectangle fished, only that where most fish was caught on each effort date.

The Data Regulation and associated regulations do allow a relatively high level of consistent data to be available for fundamental, aggregated evaluations of fisheries, but for much of the work needed this level of detail is not sufficient. This leads to important gaps in the data available to Member States which will limit the conclusions that can be drawn by the North Sea RAC if it is constrained to the data available under the regulations.

4. The impact of Registration of Buyers and Sellers of First Sale Fish (RBS)

The statistical databases at SEERAD and Defra are about to change slightly to accommodate the new system of registration for buyers and sellers of first sale fish which begins on 1st September 2005, or early 2006 for sales of Nephrops. RBS will enable all first sale fish and shellfish to be tracked and audited including, for the first time, all landings by

vessels 10metres and under in length. Other data quality benefits will flow from the introduction of a new style, mandatory landing declaration including, (i) the validation of landings data between landing declarations and sales notes and (ii) that landings data will become more up to date due to the requirement on skippers to submit a landing declaration within 48 hours of a landing being made. Previously, accurate data on quantities landed were only available once all of the sales notes had been received for a particular voyage and this could take several weeks or longer.

5. Data access

Data collected under the Data regulation is freely exchanged among the UK fisheries departments and the FRS Marine Laboratory, as necessary for each body to perform its statutory duties. The vast majority of these data are also available to anyone on request, under the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA).with the main exceptions being information that is disclosive under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or is otherwise exempt from release under the provisions of the FoIA. For example, fisheries departments cannot release personal information, data on the activities of individual vessels (unless there is written consent from the person to whom it relates) or data that is commercially sensitive. However, much of this information may be given out in an anonymised or aggregated form.

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ANNEX 1. Inventory of the main types of statistical data obtainable from the fisheries statistics units at SEERAD and Defra

	Characteristic	Comments
VESSELS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification by RSS number, PLN, name or radio call sign Vessel type Age Home port and district Nationality Engine make, type and kW power Vessel dimensions (length, breadth, depth) Vessel tonnage Vessel capacity units Number of crew Ownership details History of activity If/when decommissioned Details of licence and fishing entitlement MAGP segment Vessel fishing method as stated on licence 	
LICENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licence number Licence owner Vessel capacity unit entitlement Aggregation history Entitlement category (relating to stocks that can be fished) 	
VOYAGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voyage identifier Vessel identity Voyage start, end and landing dates Port of departure, return and landing Details of the Master Days absent from port Nationality during voyage Number of fishing operations Fishing time Voyage fishing method Gear and mesh size used on each date Dimensions of gear Target species Estimated quantity of each species caught on each day of voyage and by each gear type used Details of fish transferred to another vessel during voyage Estimated quantity of each species discarded overboard 	<p>OPTIONAL</p> <p>OPTIONAL</p> <p>OPTIONAL</p> <p>OPTIONAL</p>
VMS LOCATION DATA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The precise location during voyages of vessels fitted with VMS equipment. 	<p>VMS fixes at two hourly intervals</p>
LANDINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Origin as ground, statistical rectangle and zone for each species landed Presentation breakdown (whole, gutted, etc) for each species landed Size categories for each species Freshness category for each species Quota stock based on species and origin Number of units (boxes, baskets, etc.) landed and the unit weight Gear used to catch each species on each date Total landed weight of each species Standard weight for each species Live weight equivalent for each species Whether caught in a Western Waters effort zone 	