

MSC status 2019

During the summer and autumn there have been several MSC audits in Greenland halibut, prawns, lumpfish and the fisheries in the Barents Sea. These have gone well, and everyone who contributed deserves a big thank-you for their help. In addition, SFG has received a pre-assessment on the snow crab fishery in West Greenland. The following is a brief description of the MSC status in relation to the various certificates.



Greenland halibut

In the case of Greenland halibut, there were two different initiatives: Firstly, it was added to the certificate that Greenland halibut can now also be fished with longlines. So far only one vessel is using longline, but the way is now open for future certification of other vessels. This was a major undertaking, as it involved new gear, with bycatch of Greenland sharks, in particular, and catches in new areas. There was input from the Greenland Fishery Licence Control Authority (GFLK), the seafood industry, the GINR and the Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture, and in effect a whole new certification process with all the necessary consultation parties. It was a lot of work, and thanks are due to everyone for their contributions.



In addition, the existing trawl fishery was audited for the second time, and this went off without any major problems. On the other hand, we are facing a major challenge in the 2020 fishery. We are behind schedule in relation to one of the conditions on the certificate: We must, and this is our last chance, create agreement between the NAFO advice and the actual combined catches in Baffin Bay, the Davis Strait and NAFO 1B-1F coastal region in 2020. Right now there is a discrepancy of around 2,000 tons, mainly due to the unrestricted coastal fishery, which has grown over the past five years to now encompass a catch of more than 2,000 tons annually. SFG is working on several fronts to find workable solutions to this problem – solutions that will involve all parties. Failing that, the MSC has indicated that the certificate is very likely to be suspended with an audit in 2020.

In addition, we need to give more consideration to how to involve benthic ecosystems in the management. If the fishery is to be expanded in relation to its current pattern, a good procedure must be put in place to ensure that it can be developed without conflicting with MSC principles. This simply requires that the wealth of data that exists and continues to be produced is used in a constructive dialogue between administrators, advisors and the industry.

Prawns

Prawns have been certified since 2013, and this year's annual audit was the first after re-certification in 2018. As always there was input from the GFLK, the Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture and the GINR, and overall the audit went well, as the fishery is continuing without major changes.



However, one condition on the certificate remains: the absence of an agreement with Canada on fishing concerning that part of the prawns' range that enters Canadian waters. Greenland has lived up to the plan that was drawn up to close this condition. This year it was limited to documenting an active effort to engage Canada, and the Ministry has documented this very thoroughly. In order for the condition to be closed, Greenland must have a signed agreement with Canada by 2022. The Ministry is actively working to secure a fair agreement, both at diplomatic level and through NAFO, but so far Canada continues to make demands that are in no way supported by the facts. This was pointed out during the audit and, in the light of this, the MSC will undertake a review next year of whether the condition requires an agreement, or whether the very limited quantities that Canada can



actually catch are not already satisfactorily managed by Greenland, with a quantity being set aside annually for Canada in the context of setting the TAC for Greenland.

Lumpfish

In lumpfish, it was the last annual audit of the first five-year certification period. In addition to the usual information on catches, bycatch, etc., there was one remaining condition we had to meet in order to retain the certificate: it had to be demonstrated that the fisheries management plan would actually work as intended (Harvest Control Rule). We succeeded in this at the last minute with



great help from the GINR, and thus the lumpfish was included in a re-certification. If the fishery is re-certified we will enter a new five-year period, with new conditions and measuring-points. However, the final report on the re-certification is not expected to be completed before mid-2020.

Snow crabs

The pre-assessment SFG received in April was unequivocal: the current fishery for snow crabs cannot be MSC certified. This is due to several factors, the most important of which is the lack of monitoring in a large part of the fishery's range. This means that the advice is inadequate or absent, and there is therefore no tool available with which to assess the impact of the management. In addition, a management plan



addressing bycatch, management areas, etc. is not yet in place. However, work is being done on all these aspects, and SFG is positive about the future possibilities of getting the snow crab fishery MSC-certified. All it takes is cooperation.

Barents Sea

The Barents Sea cod, saithe and haddock fishery was certified in 2015 and underwent its fourth annual audit this year. There are no conditions left on this fishery and the audit went off without problems. In addition, the fishery was re-certified and there are no conditions on the certificate, which is now valid for the next five years.