



Status April 2021

The MSC and various projects relating to sustainability

The following is an overview of the status of MSC certifications and projects relating to sustainability.

MSC certifications:

- *Prawn fishery in West Greenland*

When the prawn fishery was re-certified in 2018, a single condition (derogation) was attached. This condition requires that by the start of the next re-certification process in 2022, an agreement must exist between Greenland and Canada on the sharing of the prawn stock in Shrimp Fishing Area 1 (SFA 1). Despite several years of attempts, the authorities have failed to reach such an agreement. The parties are very far apart. So far, this issue has been dealt with by Greenland setting aside a small part of the prawn quota each year for the Canadian fishery in SFA 1. According to the new management plan, which entered into force on 1 January 2021, this share will remain at around **1%** of the total West Greenland prawn quota. NAFO scientific advice recommends a maximum fishery of 115,000 tons for 2021, which is 5,000 tons more than the current year. The Ministry of Fisheries has stated that the last meeting or consultation between Canada and Greenland took place in February 2021. No further meetings are currently planned. Finally, in relation to MSC certification, it may be mentioned that it is important that the bycatch of *Pandalus Montagu* does not exceed 2% of the total catch of *Pandalus Borealis*. This has been a challenge in the past.

- *Lumpfish fishery in West Greenland*

The fishery achieved re-certification in February 2021, and the new MSC certificate is thus valid until 2026. Five conditions are attached to the new certificate, all of which relate to bycatch of birds in the fishery – primarily long-tailed ducks and eider ducks. The year 2020 proved to be challenging in terms of MSC certification, because at the end of the season the Government of Greenland (Naalakkersuisut) chose to override the adopted management plan and increase the quota by approximately 200 t. above the scientific advice from the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources. According to MSC guidelines, such a decision **may** trigger a so-called 'expedited audit', in which an extraordinary review of the MSC certification and its conditions is carried out. For the time being, however, the decision on such an expedited audit has been postponed until the new management plan for the lumpfish fishery, currently under preparation, has been politically adopted. The new management plan will then be assessed by the MSC to see if it meets the standard. Only then will a final decision be taken on a possible expedited audit. Challenges remain in

reporting bycatch of birds (eider and long-tailed ducks) in the lumpfish fishery. The monitoring of the fishery (Greenland Fishery Licence Control Authority – GFLK) is inadequate to reliably document the level of bycatch, and there is a presumption of some under-reporting. In 2021, Sustainable Fisheries Greenland (SFG) is therefore once again obliged – in cooperation with the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources – to conduct an independent study of bycatch in the fishery, in order to provide documentation for the MSC. Finally it may be mentioned that in late 2020, Iceland regained MSC certification for its lumpfish fishery. This means that Greenland, Iceland and Norway can all supply MSC-certified roe to the international markets. In conclusion, trials with modified nets in the lumpfish fishery will be launched in 2021 to see if the proportion of birds taken as bycatch can be reduced.

- *Greenland halibut, West Greenland – offshore*

In 2020, the MSC certificate was extended to *also* cover the offshore longline fishery for Greenland halibut off West Greenland. This has brought about a new condition or derogation in the MSC certificate concerning bycatch of Greenland sharks. In February 2021, an annual surveillance audit was conducted in relation to the MSC certificate. Here, three out of a total of five conditions in the MSC certificate were closed. This means that two conditions now remain in the MSC certificate:

1: Seabed surveys in recent years in West Greenland have resulted in a wealth of new knowledge of benthic conditions, including the incidence of corals, marine sponges and possible Vulnerable Marine Environments (VMEs). This available knowledge must now be incorporated into a strategy for seabed management. The Ministry of the Environment and Research (PAN) of the Government of Greenland is developing a comprehensive management plan for the seabed throughout all Greenlandic waters. It is intended that this will enter into force at the turn of 2022, and that this will mean the condition in question may be closed. It is also expected that the new management plan will make redundant the geographical restrictions imposed on the offshore trawler fishing for Greenland halibut.

2: Additional focus is required on bycatch of Greenland shark in longline fishing for Greenland halibut. There is currently only one active vessel in the fishery. It is important that the vessel records and reports catches of Greenland shark, and ensures that the sharks are released alive whenever possible.

In November 2021, the re-certification of offshore fishery for Greenland halibut will begin – a process that is expected to be completed in November 2022, when the current MSC certification expires.

- *Cod, haddock and saithe in the Barents Sea*

The situation regarding the MSC certification for the Greenlandic cod, haddock and saithe fisheries in the Barents Sea is very calm. No conditions or derogations are attached to the

certificate. The fishery was re-certified earlier in 2020, and the MSC certificate is therefore valid until 2025.

Other projects:

- *Fishing for snow crabs in West Greenland*

In 2019, an MSC pre-assessment report was produced for the snow crab fishery, in which it turned out that there were some points in which the fishery did not meet MSC standards, and it could not therefore be certified immediately. These points mainly concerned the scientific advice. In several of the management areas, there has so far been no specific scientific advice from the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources, while in other areas the scientific advice is based solely on catch data – and thus not on scientific studies. In addition, the pre-assessment report made recommendations on the introduction of a possible fishing season on the basis of bycatch of soft-shell crabs with low meat content.

A management plan for the snow crab fishery in West Greenland was drawn up in 2020, and the plan entered into force on 1 January 2021.

The management plan includes, inter alia, a new calculation method in relation to the scientific advice for the crab stock in each management area, and guidelines for the fishing season, pending further studies on the incidence of soft-shelled and low-meat snow crabs. It was intended that, following the adoption of the management plan, SFG would initiate MSC certification of the snow crab fishery. However, some parts of the management plan were found to contain provisions or guidelines which would have had significant negative consequences for certain operators in the fisheries sector. Accordingly, the Ministry of Fisheries and Hunting is carrying out a review of the management plan and a reassessment of the TACs set for 2021. Once this review has been completed, SFG will once again consider the possibility of MSC certification of the snow crab fishery.

- *Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP)*

Since 2018, Sustainable Fisheries Greenland has spearheaded a Fisheries Improvement Project to pave the way for a possible future MSC certification of coastal fishery for Greenland halibut in the Upernavik, Uummannaq and Disko Bay management areas. In late 2020, the FIP project gave rise to a report with a wide range of recommendations for coastal fishery for Greenland halibut. The report may be read on the SFG website: www.sfg.gl.