

History of the North Atlantic cod stocks

Guðrún Marteinsdóttir

Institute of Biology, University of Iceland, runam@hi.is

During the last decades, all cod stocks of the North Atlantic have been exposed to gradually rising fishing pressures due in part to improvements in technology that result in increasingly efficient fishing practices. At the same time, all stocks have experienced changing environmental conditions, which, together with increasing fishing pressures, are thought to be responsible for the historical fluctuations in stock abundances and structures. Stock sizes, and the age and size structures of stocks have consequently been depleted. Such drastic changes in population sizes have raised concerns about potential (selective) changes in genetic composition and loss in genetic diversity. Today many of the stocks are heavily overfished and some are considered to have reached the stage of recruitment overfishing. In this paper, I review the state of knowledge concerning the genetic composition as well as trends in landings, fishing mortality, stocks size, stock composition and recruitment among all major cod stocks in the North Atlantic