



# Evaluation of Compliance with the Landing Obligation North Sea Demersal Species 2016 – 2017

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Photo credit: ILVO

## Executive Summary

The MS Control Expert Group (CEG) for the NS, the Scheveningen Group, formally requested the assistance of EFCA in carrying out a compliance evaluation with the provisions of the LO in the NS region. The framework EFCA methodology agreed for this evaluation is the same as that applied to similar evaluation exercises in other areas. This report presents the findings of an evaluation of compliance with the LO in the NS region over the period 2016 and 2017 for selected species where applicable: cod (COD, 2017 only), common sole (SOL), and plaice (PLE). This compliance evaluation is essentially addressing illegal discards as a proxy to compliance. Compliance with recording obligations of LO exemptions are not fully considered.

The overall evaluation is mostly based on direct observations in the form of LH inspections to record detailed information on catch compositions, notably the quantity of BMS fish present in the catches and on a 2016 trial with vessels equipped with CCTV on potential high grading of LSC cod (Method 1). Still, as it was the initial phase of the LH inspection scheme, the number of LH inspections conducted in 2016 and 2017 does not correspond to an adequate numbers to derive a discard estimate when split by the different fleet segments. Therefore, some results of the analyses presented should be taken with caution and confirmed with similar LH data in following years. Nevertheless, Method 1 is supplemented to a certain extent with the findings of Method 2 – with both STECF and ICES discard data estimates.

Results indicate that for certain towed gears used in certain areas (NS01, NS02, NS03 and NS07), non-compliance with the LO appears to have been widespread during the evaluation period. In addition to the discarding of BMS fish, there was evidence from some areas (3a and 4a) of significant high-grading of cod, according to the CCTV trials data from 2016.

The infringement analysis (Method 3) yields few results for the evaluation period, not surprising given that in the absence of continuous monitoring, any discarding behaviour may take place unobserved at sea. The results of interviews with industry methods 4a, 4b and 5, are disappointing in terms of response rate measured against the effort and cost involved in the exercise, and few conclusions can be extracted.

This compliance evaluation was complicated by two elements: the lack of data and the complexities of the provisions under the discard plans exemptions. The collection of reliable reference data is essential for an effective compliance evaluation exercise. As traditional control tools have proven to be inefficient in control and monitoring the LO, the introduction of REM systems could be instrumental both for collection of reference data and for efficient control and enforcement of the LO. Furthermore, increasing number of LH inspections, including with grade sizes collection for species where high-grading is believed to take place (e.g. cod), should be envisaged.

Overview of compliance evaluation of North Sea COD, PLE and SOL in 2016 and 2017, based on Methods 1 and 2.

Segment code	Area	COD	PLE		SOL	
		2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
NS01 Otter trawls/Seines ≥ 100 mm	2a	-	-	-		
	4a			-		
	4b					
	4c		-	-		
NS02 Otter trawls/Seines, ≥ 70 and < 100 mm	4a					
	4b					
	4c					
NS03 Otter trawls/Seines, ≥ 32 and < 70 mm	3a					
NS04 Otter trawls/Seines, ≥ 90 mm	3a					
NS05 Otter trawls/Seines, ≥ 70 and < 90 mm	3a					
NS06 Beam trawls, ≥ 120 mm	3a					
	4a					
	4b					
NS07 Beam trawls ≥ 80 and < 120 mm	4b					
	4c					
NS08 Gillnets ≥ 120 mm	3a					
NS9 Gillnets ≥ 90 and < 120 mm	4a					
	4b					
NS10 Gillnets < 90 mm	4c					
NS11 Trammel nets	3a					
	4a					
	4b					
	4c					
NS12 Longlines	3a					
	4a					
	4b					
	4c					

Compliance benchmarking criteria

Compliance Level	Estimates of illegal discards	Benchmark Icon
High	< 5%	
Medium	≥ 5% and < 15%	
Low	≥ 15%	