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MINUTES

From a meeting of BISAC Focus Group 2

March 16, 2021

Topic: FG 2 - Black Sea dogfish fishing.

Current status, fleet, landings, data reporting, values, trends, trade, stock status.

On March 16, 2021, through ZOOM system, a focus group 2 meeting was held by BISAC on the topic - Black Sea dogfish fishing. Current status, fleet, landings, data reporting, values, trends, trade, stock status.

The meeting was attended by videoconference Mr. Dimitar Valkov - NAFA Burgas, Mr. Alexandru Simionov - ANPA Constanta, Mr. Stoyan Kotov - Director of the Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Directorate at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of Bulgaria, Ms. Pinelopi Belekou from the General Directorate of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of the European Commission.

Representatives of: Ecological NGO "MARE NOSTRUM", Association National Association of Bulgarian Black Sea Coast, Association of Producers of Fishery Products BG FISH, Association "European Association of Fishermen in the Black Sea", Association "Small scale fishery association" St. Nikolai Chudotvoretz "and the Secretariat of the BISAC.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the BISAC Mr. Yordan Gospodinov. The participants and the guests of the meeting greet the members of the BISAC.

Following is a presentation by Mr. Dimitar Valkov on: Data on dogfish landings in Bulgaria in 2018, 2019 and 2020. What can be said in general for the last ten years as trends in catches and landings of Black Sea dogfish is that there is no relative constancy in their quantities. Catches over the years resemble a wave, perhaps due to market interest.

- In 2018, a total of 10,082.2 kg of Black Sea dogfish were landed at 12 ports in Bulgaria. The fishing vessels that have declared landings are 36;

- For 2019, the landed kilograms of dogfish are 16,765 kg, at 13 ports by 52 fishing vessels;
- For 2020, the quantities landed are 47,511.6 kg, at 16 ports from 54 fishing vessels.

There has been a trend of increased catches in recent years. There is also an increase in the number of ships catching Black Sea dogfish. With regard to ports where landings have been registered, there is also a tendency to increase their number.

The more detailed information on landings by years, ships and ports is as follows:

- For 2018, the maximum reported quantity from one vessel is 2082 kg, 4 vessels report over 1000 kg, 14 fishing vessels report quantities between 100 and 500 kg, 10 vessels report between 20 and 100 kg, 8 vessels report quantities less than 20 kg. The main port of landing is Varna - 52.6% of all landings, followed by Balchik - 16.3%, Shabla - 7%, Kavarna 6%, Tsarevo - 5.7% and Nessebar - 5.2% of dogfish landings. .
- For 2019: the maximum reported quantity from one vessel is 2921 kg, 4 vessels report quantities over 1000 kg, 6 vessels report quantities between 500 and 1000 kg, 19 report catches between 100 and 500 kg, 17 report between 20 and 100 kg, 6 vessels reported quantities of less than 20 kg. The main port of landing is again Varna - 71.7% of all landings, followed by Balchik - 8.15%, Tsarevo - 6.5%, Kavarna 4.4%, Durankulak 3.2%, Shabla - 2.4%.
- For 2020, the maximum reported quantity from one vessel is 17,010 kg, 9 fishing vessels report quantities over 1000 kg, 4 vessels report between 500 and 1000 kg, 17 vessels report between 100 and 500 kg, 15 vessels report between 20 and 100 kg and 8 fishing vessels reported less than 20 kg. The main port of landing is Varna - 48.9% of landings, followed by Balchik - 35.5%, Kavarna - 10%, Tsarevo - 6.4%, Shabla - 2.4%.

In conclusion, it can be said that in recent years there has been an increased interest in catching Black Sea dogfish, and it is not known whether the levels from 2015 will be reached when the declared catches are 130,000 kg. Or the levels of 2010 and 2011, when the catches were about 80,000 kg. The main dogfish fishing vessels are large vessels over 12 m in length, which are subject to enhanced activity monitoring measures - all equipped with a monitoring device - VMS, and have an electronic fishing logbook, which greatly facilitates the tracking of catches, in real time. Small dogfish fishing vessels are located in the southern part of the Black Sea coast.

Discussions and comments follow:

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov asked the following questions about Black Sea dogfish fishing: In which areas is the dogfish caught? What fishing gear is used to catch it? Is dogfish by-catch taken into account or is it all targeted fishing? In which seasons are you fishing the most?

Mr. Dimitar Valkov: The permitted legal fishing gear in Bulgaria is the longlines. The fishing zones of the Black Sea dogfish are mainly in the northern part of the Bulgarian Black Sea area, even some of them are in the Romanian exclusive economic zone. The peak seasons for dogfish fishing are winter - the end of the year and the beginning of the year. During the warmer months, the Bulgarian fishing fleet usually focuses on catching rapana and mullet. The share of catches declared as by-catch is extremely small, ie the catch of Black Sea dogfish for Bulgaria is targeted.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: It can be said that for a certain segment of the Bulgarian fishing fleet, dogfish fishing is of economic interest. The season in which the dogfish is caught - winter, means that this fishing somehow decides the economic and social moment of the fishermen at this time of year.

According to information from the Romanian colleagues, the BISAC has data that the target catch of dogfish is not of interest to Romania. Only by-catch is reported, as for 2019 it is 215 kg. In Romania, shark fishing is prohibited from 15 March to 15 April inclusive and from 15 October to 30 November inclusive, except during these periods, the detention and placing on the market is only permitted for accidentally caught dogfish. It is also forbidden to keep pregnant female dogfish on board all year round.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: asks a question to Mr. Dimitar Valkov: Does Bulgaria declare export of dogfish meat, or the quantities caught are for the Bulgarian market?

Mr. Dimitar Valkov: The quantities of dogfish caught are for the Bulgarian market, the quantities exported are negligibly small.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: then it can be said that market demand determines catches. In the years when there are fewer catches, this does not mean that the dogfish has decreased, but rather there is a decline in demand.

Mr. Alexandru Simionov: Romania had bans on dogfish fishing and only by-catches are reported. And in Romania from this year it will be possible to catch sharks only with longlines, nets are prohibited. More information will be available after it is published by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Ms. Mihaela Candea-Mirea: With regard to the dogfish, she believes that more research is needed before any opinion can be made in order to get a clear idea of the situation with this species. She does not know if there are any current studies. She regrets that Mr Victor Nita and Mr Violin Raykov did not participate because they could share information.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: highlights some points from the report of the Bulgarian official authorities: Measures to manage the stock of Black Sea dogfish. The scientific opinion is that the stock is depleting and therefore a very cautious approach is required. The biomass of the species is at a constantly low level. However, the opinion of the fishing industry is that demand determines catches, ie. it is not hunted on its own. The shark is a species that cannot be processed, but is sought fresh. Its shelf life in deep-frozen state is not long. Species information is scarce. It can be seen from the presentation of Mr. Valkov that the control and data collection has been strengthened in recent years, which is good. In the event that a

resource management plan is drawn up, historical data will be one of the indicators for determining the quota, if any. It may also be necessary to set a target percentage of dogfish fisheries, including certain conservation measures. The measures that are applied to the turbot and give results can also be used for the dogfish. Through this document, Bulgaria has expressed a position, perhaps the Romanian state will prepare a similar report. It is clear that without the final research of the scientific community, the BISAC cannot give any opinion on this topic. Perhaps the recommendation should be addressed to research institutes to launch serious research in 2021 so that they can help the administration as well. Indicative is the fact that for Bulgaria the number of vessels interested in dogfish fishing is increasing, which means that there is market demand. This report, prepared by the administration, is coordinated with the business companies in Bulgaria and their opinion is taken into account.

Mr. Marian Paiu: The dogfish is a vulnerable species and the BISAC can support the authorities' efforts to make a recommendation in this regard.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: He clarified that there is a difference in the interests of the two Member States in terms of dogfish catches, and some of the fishing grounds are in the exclusive economic zone of Romania. BISAC proposes NAFA Bulgaria and ANPA Romania to organize a meeting with each other and invite the BISAC to comment on this issue – dogfish fishing, catch areas, bans during the year, permits, permitted gear, etc.

Mr. Dimitar Valkov: Regarding the future measures that can be taken for the conservation of this species, they must be based on sufficient scientific data, so NAFA would support any research in this area. The right management approach must be based on adequate scientific advice. Any activity that would improve data collection would be beneficial. Specifically on the proposal to meet with colleagues from Romania, NAFA Bulgaria is always open to organizing such bilateral meetings, although almost everything about the dogfish is regulated in EU regulations. With the latest upgrades made in the surveillance systems in NAFA, it is compatible with the one used by Romanian colleagues. The Bulgarian Monitoring Center is in constant contact with the Romanian Monitoring Center and constantly exchanges information. So a joint meeting would achieve very common and positive results.

Ms. Pinelopi Beleku: This meeting is important and very focused, the data provided on catches in Bulgaria are quite interesting. It is true that there is a reduction in the stock of Black Sea dogfish and it is clear that the Scientific Council will approach this type of fishing very carefully. Both Member States need to improve data collection and catch reporting. Question to Mr. Valkov, if there is data on the increase in fishing effort in 2020, is it due to the improvement of fishing gear? It is evident from the data that a fishing vessel significantly increases its shark catch from about 2000 kg in 2018 and in 2019 to 17,000 kg in 2020. In conclusion, Ms Belekou recalled that the Commission always sought to assist the Member States in their work on the conservation of the species.

Mr. Dimitar Valkov: If there is such a case, only one of the ships declares a catch of 17,000 kg. for the whole of 2020. The remaining fishing vessels have significantly lower catches. Regarding the selectivity of the device - shark fishing is done only with longlines.

The meeting closes.

Prepared the protocol: Mrs. Elena Peneva

Chairman of BISAC: Dr. Yordan Gospodinov