

ICES Symposium on Herring Stocks 1977.

Only a few decades ago it was generally maintained that pelagic fish resources such as the herrings were much less vulnerable to the effects of fishing than the demersal types of fish, and management problems and related research was focused on the demersal stocks. With the increasing fishing pressure on many pelagic resources over the recent period resulting from increased effort mostly through advances in fishing technology, it has become evident that far from being inexhaustible, pelagic fish seem even less able to stand up to exploitation than demersal species. In particular herring stocks have demonstrated declines and failures in a number of cases in the northeast- and northwest Atlantic as well as the northeast Pacific. Most of these cases were unpredicted, and instances of associated management failures must at least in part be ascribed to incomplete or untimely scientific advice. In retrospect it seems appropriate to conclude that fishery research was not fully geared to the problems created by the increased fishing pressure on pelagic stocks, neither in terms of priority nor as regards methods and principles. Still it is thought that a great amount of data, material and information is at hand in the various institutions responsible for research on these herring stocks, only part of which has been analysed fully and broadly. A special herring symposium could bring forth these data and promote a comprehensive evaluation and discussion. The symposium should not cover pelagic fish or herrings in a general sense. The 1961 herring symposium gave us a comprehensive review of herring research and herring problems. The new symposium should focus more directly on the effects of fishing on the herring stocks and in particular analyse such effects with regard to behavioural and physiological characteristics of pelagic fish, the dynamics of the reproductive systems of herring, and ecological relationships both as regards environment and other competing fish stocks. The problems should also be considered in the light of possible need for revisions of current management principles and objectives for herring stocks.

It is thus recommended that a special herring symposium is convened to examine these problems as well as the adequacy of the related

research. In order to be able to include NW Atlantic herring stocks ICNAF should be requested to cosponsor the symposium. Also FAO should be asked to provide support so that the coverage could include relevant stocks and phenomena outside the North Atlantic. It is suggested to convene the symposium in 1977 in Århus. If the proposal is accepted a small planning group should as a first step be formed to prepare the plans for the symposium.

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