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NORWEGIAN AND INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS IN THE NORWEGIAN
WHALING FOR MINKE WHALES, BALAENOPTERA ACUTOROSTRATA,
AND SMALL WHALES

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INTRODUCTION

Modern whaling for small whales started in Norway about 1930. The whaling operations in prewar seasons were undertaken in Norwegian coastal and adjacent waters, the Lofoten area being the main whaling grounds in the late 1930's. During postwar seasons an expansion took place in the northern North Atlantic. Coastal whaling, however, has been maintained throughout this period by smaller vessels, but they are today reduced in numbers as compared to those operating before and just after the war.

The minke whales, meat of which is used for human consumption, has by far been the main species caught. Other species, which have been taken mainly when prices for animal food were good, are bottlenose whales, killer whales and pilot whales.

The first regulation of this whaling was put into force in 1938, when the participation in the whaling was licenced by the Norwegian Government. Detailed requirements were also made on the whaling equipment, and several other aspects concerning the whaling operations and the preparing of the products. The whaling was controlled by a sailing inspector representing the Norwegian Government.

Since 1938 different kinds of regulations have been put into force, mainly with the aim in mind to give protection to minke whales in the waters where whaling operations for this species seemed to be too intensive. The Norwegian and International (I.W.C.) regulations for Norwegian whaling of small whales are shown separately in Table 1.

TABELE 1 Norwegian and International regulations in the Norwegian whaling for minke whales and small whales.

Norwegian regulations

1930 - 1937	No regulations
1938	Regulation by licences issued by the Norwegian Government. <u>This regulation has been maintained for all later seasons.</u>
1950	All whaling forbidden in a period of three weeks lasting from July 1 to July 21. <u>This regulation has been maintained for all later seasons, except for 1972.</u>
1952	Whaling only permitted in a period of six months lasting from March 15 to September 14.
1955	Whaling north of 70° N and east of 0° east only permitted in the period March 15 to June 30. In other waters as for 1952.
1961	No whaling permitted south of 70° N and east of 25° E (South-eastern Barents Sea). In other waters as for 1955.
1972	In the waters north of 65° N and east of 15° W whaling only permitted from March 15 to July 15. In other waters as for 1952.
1973	In the waters north of 70° N (South-eastern Barents Sea included), whaling limited to the period April 1 to June 30. In other waters whaling limited to the period April 1 to August 31. A maximum quota per season for minke whale meat set at 70 tons per vessel.
1974	In the waters north of 70° N and east of 20° W whaling limited to the period May 1 to June 30. For other waters east of 44° W (Cape Farewell) whaling permitted from April 15 to August 31, and for waters west of Cape Farewell from May 15 to August 31. The maximum quota set in 1973 maintained.

International regulations

- 1952 The season should include no more than six consecutive months (I.W.C.)
- 1975 A catch quota set at 2000 and 550 minke whales east and west of Cape Farewell respectively. (I.W.C.)

DISCUSSION

Norwegian regulations

As seen from table 1, the regulations put into force by the Norwegian Government include three kinds of effort limitation:

1. Regulation by licences

During the 1930's the whaling for minke whales expanded along the coast of Norway and the number of vessels participating in whaling operations increased considerably from one season to another. At that time little was known concerning the biology of the minke whale, and no regulations based upon such knowledge could be introduced. However, in 1937 the Norwegian Government was aware of the fact that in spite of lack of basic scientific data for introducing effort limitation, a conservative attitude pointed to the fact that something had to be done. As a consequence, the whaling was made dependent upon licences from 1938 onwards. At the same time collection of catch and effort data was organized, resulting in the Norwegian small whale statistics. These statistics are completely based upon information from the licencees.

In the beginning of the 1950's up to 378 licences were issued each season. At this time the whaling had expanded also to waters outside the coast of Norway, mainly to the Spitsbergen and Barents Sea areas. Scientific data available at that time and increasing number of whales being taken, pointed to the fact that, the number of licences had to be reduced. Since then the Norwegian Government has gradually reduced the number of licences and as a result of this reduction, only 91 licences were issued in 1975.

2. Regulation by time and area

As early as in 1950 a three week halt in whaling operations was imposed from July 1 to July 21. Since then this regulation has been left in force, except for 1972, when whaling was permitted until July 15 in the waters north of 65° N and east of 15° W. When introducing the three week catch stop in July, it was anticipated that the total number of minke whales in the catches would be reduced, because in relation to other months, the catches were very high in July. Since a considerable number of calves are inhabiting Norwegian coastal waters (especially the Lofoten area) in July, it was also anticipated that a part of those calves would be spared. From a commercial point of view this regulation no doubt was also useful since the reduced quantities of minke whale meat being brought ashore at the peak of the holiday season, when most people were away from home, had a stabilizing effect on the prices for whale meat being sent to the market.

Both time and area limitations were put into effect in the season 1955, when whaling was permitted only from March 15 to June 30 in the waters north of 70° N and east of 0°. This regulation was based upon the biological knowledge that, because of segregation, a relatively large number of mature female whales inhabited this area. In North Atlantic minke whales, almost all mature females are pregnant during the whaling season. A reduced catch of such females would therefore positively effect the recruitment of the minke whale stocks.

Because of the relatively large number of minke whales being caught in 1972, further time and area restrictions were put into effect in 1973, and in 1974. In 1973 the whaling in the Barents Sea was limited to the period April 1. to June 30, and in 1974 only from May 1 to June 30. For the same reason, further time restrictions have been made for all other North Atlantic areas of Norwegian whaling for small whales. Up to and including 1972

whaling was permitted in these waters from March 15 to September 14. In 1973 whaling was limited to the period April 1 to August 31, and in 1974 the whaling season was further restricted to the period April 15 to August 31 in the waters east of Greenland (Cape Farewell), and to the period May 15 to August 31 west of Greenland. The regulations put into effect in 1974, were not changed in 1975.

3. Regulation by a maximum quota

In order to try and reduce the rather large number of minke whales taken by the 4 or 5 largest vessels, equipped with refridgerators for freezing the meat at sea, a maximum quota per season for minke whale meat was set at 70 tons in 1973. This regulation has not been changed since then. In special circumstances the Norwegian Government may dispense from this restriction.

International regulations

In 1952 the International whaling Commission made the first step to regulate the whaling for minke whales in the North Atlantic, deciding that the season should include no more than six consecutive months. Since a six month season almost exactly included the period of time in which minke whales inhabit northern North Atlantic waters, the practical meaning of this decision have not at all restricted the whaling operations. On the other hand, the decision prevented trials to be made to catch minke whales during the breeding seasons.

Far more important is the regulation by quota carried through in 1975, which is in accordance with all other regulations of whaling being made by I.W.C. A quota regulation by number for minke whales has been discussed at several occations in Norway, but it has been generally agreed, that such a way of regulating would be too hazardous, and therefore could not be recommended. The main reasons are the following: Introducing a quota by number,

an effective control system also had to be put into force. The only way of making effective control would be to send an inspector onboard every vessel. Since so very many vessels are participating in the whaling operations, both practical and economical problems would make such a regulation unreasonable and in fact impossible. If no effective control is put into force, there can be no doubt that at least a part of the whalers would use a quota by number regulation to catch more whales than permitted. Almost all the whalers have long experience in filling out forms for each whale caught, and they may very easily convert two or three smaller whales into one large one; and even experienced scientists will not be doubting the data presented. As a consequence, not only the small whale statistics would be "killed", but in all probability also an over-exploitation of the stocks of minke whales would take place. Such problems are avoided or almost avoided by using the different kinds of effort limitation now in force.

According to the decisions of the International Whaling Commission, the Norwegian whaling for minke whales can now be lawfully carried out within six consecutive months and within an overall quota for 1976 set at 2000 and 550 east and west of Cape Farewell, respectively. The Norwegian Government must consider the desirability of keeping to this regulation only or, in addition, to have further regulations. For the 1976 season at least, it has already been decided, that the Norwegian effort limitations being in force in the season 1975, shall also be kept in 1976, in spite of the additional quota by number limitation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The decision of the I.W.C. to introduce a quota by number limitation for the catch of North Atlantic minke whales is disagreed by the Norwegian specialists in this field, for reasons explained in this paper. The regulation by effort limitations has apparently worked well during 4 decades, and a quota limitation may only be preferred if an effective control is introduced at the same time. To avoid collapse in future whaling for North Atlantic minke whales

this problem has to be solved immediatley, and, in fact, should have been solved before a quota was set.

The problem obviously needs to be carefully discussed at the "North Atlantic whales" meeting in Oslo.