

Short Term Task – NAFO & *Illex*

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This task was considered to have two components – does the NAFO assessment have relevance to U.S. quotas and is there opportunity for U.S. vessels to access the NAFO-managed resource in the northern Areas 3 and 4?

Relevance to U.S. quotas

The current NAFO *Illex* quota for Areas 3 and 4 is based on the 1979 landings of 162,092 MT and the Div. 4VWX survey biomass indices from 1979 and 1983-1997. A ratio was calculated by dividing the 1983-1997 average of **2.94** kg/tow by the 1979 survey index of **14.2** kg/tow, equaling 0.207. 162,092 MT times .207 = 33,560 MT, which was apparently rounded up to 34,000 MT. Staff notes that some of the survey values have been edited since the original calculation in 1998 (Rivard et al 1998), and using the current values in the same method results in a calculation of 32,344 MT. 1983-1997 was a low productivity period, and using this ratio approach has been deemed appropriate since 2000. The 2019 NAFO assessment noted that the 2017 and 2019 (there was a vessel breakdown in 2018) Div. 4VWX survey biomass indices were among the highest in the time series (above the 1979 value) and that the “northern stock component may be moving toward a high productivity state.”

The Rivard 1998 paper noted that the mortality ratios in 1976-1981 were the highest on record, and that indices markedly declined afterward, suggesting that the resulting yields for low-productivity periods “might be best considered as maximum values.” More generally, it is not clear that 1979-1997 Canadian data would have any relevance for future U.S. quotas.

Accessing the NAFO quota

Although the quota for the northern stock component is 34,000 mt, NAFO has allocated this quota amongst the 12 Contracting Parties. The U.S. is a NAFO Contracting Party, and as such, any U.S. fishing vessel may apply annually through the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) to fish the U.S. quota *Illex* allocation (453 mt). To date, no United States fishing vessels have done so. The NAFO fishery is subject to a minimum cod-end mesh size of 60 mm and July 1 fishery start date. Captains of NAFO fishing vessels are required to take a NAFO fishery observer on every trip and a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), compliance reporting, and tow-based electronic logbook reporting are also required.

Changing the U.S. NAFO quota allocation or moving to a shared single stock approach would involve considerable difficulty and international negotiations, with an uncertain outcome in terms of what the U.S. might end up with for an overall final quota.