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NAMMCO/WG-IO1/Report

North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission

Report of the Working Group on Inspection and Observation¹

Copenhagen, 21-22 September 1993

¹ This report of the NAMMCO Working Group on Inspection and Observation does not necessarily reflect the views of the Council and should not be quoted without first consulting the Secretary of NAMMCO.

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The Working Group met in the offices of the Greenland Home Rule Government, Copenhagen, September 21-22. The meeting was convened by Einar Lemche (Greenland) and attended by Amalie Jessen (Greenland) Jústines Olsen (Faroe Islands), Kristján Loftsson, (Iceland), Egil Ole Øen (Norway) and Halvard P. Johansen (Norway). Kate Sanderson (Secretary) was rapporteur. The Agenda for the Working Group meeting is contained in Appendix 1.

1. Terms of Reference/Mandate

At the Third Meeting of the Council of NAMMCO in Reykjavik (July 1-2 1993) the Council decided to establish a Working Group:

"to consider inspection and observation schemes, in order to harmonize regulations and thereby *interalia* ensure that data collected will be compatible." (Report of the Third Meeting of the Council of NAMMCO, 1-2 July 1993, p.6)

The terms of reference of the Working Group would apply, where appropriate, to the utilization of all marine mammals relevant to NAMMCO.

2. Inspection and Observation Schemes

Working Group members presented an overview of the systems of inspection and observation in their respective member countries.

a) *Faroës*

Whales:

According to Faroese law, all whales are protected. The Faroese Government may make exceptions for specific species, which at present are: long-finned pilot whale, Atlantic white-sided dolphin, Atlantic white-beaked dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, harbour porpoise.

Harbour porpoises are occasionally shot, and such catches must be reported to the local district authorities. The annual catch of harbour porpoises ranges from 0-5 animals.

Catches of the other four species, the most significant of which are pilot whales, are conducted according to a Government executive order on *grind* (pilot whaling). The currently valid regulations, which came into effect in 1986, will soon be replaced with a revised executive order. The executive order on *grind* stipulates the way in which the drive and kill are to be organized and conducted, outlining the responsibilities of the appointed officials in the authorized location. In the executive order the Government has the authority to temporarily forbid whaling if catches have been sufficient in a certain region. A separate executive order lists the locations (bays) which are authorized for use as whaling bays.

The Faroese government is the highest authority in all matters relating to pilot whaling. The six chief district officers (whose main function today is as district chief of police), are responsible

for overseeing the organization and conduct of the whale drive, as well as for the calculation and division of the catch in the district. Four pilot whaling foremen are chosen in each whaling bay for a period of 5 years at a time. The foremen are responsible, together with the chief district officer, for the organization of the drive and kill, and the foreman's boat must fly the national flag during the drive so that it can be easily identified.

After a whale drive in his district, the chief district officer must send the Faroese Government a report on the conduct of the drive, recorded on a standard report form issued by the Government. Copies must also be sent to the Faroese Museum of Natural History.

This form requires details of the drive, such as the location and time at which the whales were first sighted, the time taken to drive the whales to the chosen bay, the time taken to kill all the whales in the school, the number of participants in boats and on land, as well as information on the extent to which whales were beached effectively. Catch reports outline the division of the catch and calculation of shares by the chief district officer.

Seals:

There are no specific regulations on the killing of seals in the Faroes other than the Animal Welfare act (1985) which prohibits the shooting of seals with shotguns. If seals are to be shot, it must be done with a rifle, for which one must apply for a licence.

There is no organised seal hunting in the Faroes. It is normally fish farmers who request permission to shoot seals which interfere with their nets.

b) Greenland

Catch statistics for all forms of hunting in Greenland were restructured from January 1, 1993 with a new system of reporting all catches. Hunters are divided into two groups - those making a living from hunting and sport hunters. An annual record of catches must be submitted in order for the hunter to be given a hunting license for the following year.

Fin and minke whales:

Special whale licenses are issued for the hunting of minke and fin whales, with requirements for the regular reporting of catches and the recording of a variety of data from the catch, including tissue samples from each whale with information on species, date and locality of the catch. Licenses are issued per whale, and the holder of the license must have taken a course in the use of the penthrite grenade harpoon, and his equipment must be inspected and in good order.

Control and inspection of fin and minke whale catches is not carried out through direct control at each hunting locality, but each catch must be reported to the municipal authorities no later than one month after the catch, and the hunter must have a stamp from the municipal authorities if he is going to sell his catch. In the peak season, immediate catch reports are required.

It was reported that after the three years in which it has been used, this licensing system is functioning well.

Small whales /seals:

There are no quotas set for catches of small whales. However, a catch-recording license system has also been introduced for beluga and narwhal catches, although without the requirement of a special whale license. In 1993 the reporting regulations for beluga and narwhal catches were extended to include restrictions on the size of vessels and number of whales taken per vessel in the drive hunt.

Catches of other small whales (eg porpoises) as well as walruses and polar bears must be recorded in the annual catch reports.

All seal catches must also be recorded on the annual catch reports issued to each hunter. Apart from this, there are no other regulations for control and inspection systems for sealing.

In general it was explained that there is no on-location inspection as such, due to the practical difficulties of implementing such arrangements. However, there are plans to establish a national hunt inspection system with hunt officers and their representatives in all districts who could maintain direct contact with hunters.

For the most part, control is represented by the reports submitted by the hunters themselves and any additional information from the local districts.

c) Iceland

Whales:

Regulations in Iceland stipulate that the Ministry of Fisheries shall appoint an observer for each land station who shall be officially paid. It is further stipulated that owners of each land station shall be obliged to tolerate the inspection of land station activity by foreign inspectors.

When catches of fin and sei and sperm whales were carried out in Iceland, Iceland was a party to two international agreements on observation schemes. The first from 1972 was between Iceland, Norway and Canada. The second was with Spain from 1981. All observers and inspectors operated ashore at landing stations, since all whales caught in Icelandic whaling operations were brought to land stations.

Logbooks, officially approved by the Ministry of Fisheries, were kept to record data such as the number and species of whales taken, whales struck but not retrieved, position of catch, sex, size and reproductive status (of females) etc.

When minke whaling was operating in Iceland, 8-9 boats operated from the west, northwest, north and east coasts. Fisheries inspectors were responsible for random, on-the-spot control and inspection, which took place at the landing stations (c. 5 different locations).

Licenses issued for minke whaling carried with them certain conditions and obligations. Whaling guns had to be approved by the Ministry of Fisheries.

When a whale was caught a telegram had to be sent reporting the catch and its serial number, which also allowed inspectors sufficient time to reach the landing station. Weekly reports to the Marine Research Institute were also required.

There were no international observers appointed in the latter years of commercial whaling in Iceland.

Seals:

All Icelandic citizens are free to catch seals outside the territorial boundaries of farms and specially protected areas. However, due to strict regulations regarding the use of firearms in Iceland, only experienced hunters who can demonstrate a real need for powerful guns, as are required for sealing, may obtain a license for their use.

d) Norway

Whales:

The inspection and observation regulations applied in Norway in connection with this year's commercial minke whaling were explained. A total of 27 boats took part in the whaling for which a quota of 160 minke whales was allowed for the season, with each boat receiving its own non-transferable quota. 157 whales of the quota of 160 were taken before the season was officially closed by law on 12 September.

This year's whaling was subject to a special inspection arrangement which, it was noted, could become a model for future seasons. Inspectors were present on board every vessel, all of whom were trained veterinarians, and who had been prepared for the season through a special training course. It was reported that this system of on board inspectors on every boat functioned well, given the limited quota. However, space on board was an important consideration, especially since in minke whaling operations, all whales caught are flensed on board at sea, requiring sufficient space and manpower for this to be efficient. The smallest of the vessels is around 48-50 feet with only a three-man crew.

Inspectors had two major tasks to perform:

- 1) to control that whaling vessels and their crews abided by the regulations; and
- 2) to gather specific scientific data.

Apart from the special arrangement with inspectors this year, whaling regulations for minke whaling in 1993 were similar to those which applied when minke whaling was last in operation in 1987.

Aside from the on-board inspectors, publically appointed controllers are responsible for checking the quality of the whaling equipment.

All whalers were required to pass a shooting test with both rifles and harpoons. This test will probably become an annual requirement.

In addition to this a special course for those operating the harpoons was held in connection with this year's whaling operations. The course was largely subsidised by public funds, but participants also had to pay some of the costs themselves. The course included training in the use and maintenance of equipment, safety requirements in the use of the penthrite grenade, the relevant whaling regulations, as well hygiene requirements in the storage of meat.

It was explained that in relation to hunting in general in Norway, there are well-established training and inspection requirements and regulations. All hunters (whether of large game or small) must pass a public hunting test. Those wishing to hunt large game with rifles must pass a shooting test each year with the ammunition they use in the field. Shooting licenses must be shown to inspectors at any time.

There is also a public on-the-spot control system to inspect weapons and hunting licence, in order to make sure that all the right ammunition is used. In moose hunting, for example, the hunter can also be asked to collect biological samples from the animal in order to control the age and sex of the animals taken.

There had also been some discussion of the possibility of using electronic data systems to help with control of catches and the regulation of quotas within particular zones.

The Secretary reported that a proposal from NORFICO (Nordic Fisheries Management Company, Tromsø) had been forwarded to the Secretariat. This concerned a project called Hval-link, which outlines a system of gathering and reporting catch data via the Immarsat C satellite.

Seals:

In Norwegian sealing from the western and eastern ice, four vessels take part and an inspector is present on board each one. All sealers must have passed a shooting test. The species hunted are harp and hooded seals. Quotas are set every year. Only adult seals are taken and the quotas are reassessed every year. Each boat must submit an annual report on its sealing activities.

The regulations for coastal sealing are being revised and will include clearer regulations for the culling of seals (grey and harbour seals) along the coast.

3. Common basic principles

The Working Group discussed some basic principles and features of marine mammal utilization common to all NAMMCO member countries. In this connection it was considered important to distinguish clearly between the hunting of larger whales and the hunting of smaller marine mammals (small whales and seals).

It was noted that seal catches were not significant in the Faroes or Iceland, but were of major importance in Greenland and also of some significance in Norway. However, some extent of coastal seal catches (whether organised culls or incidental catches) was common to all NAMMCO member countries.

It was noted that at the present time, and apart from Norway's catch of seals in the Russian zone, NAMMCO members only hunt marine mammals within their own fisheries zones.

NAMMCO member countries all have a basic legal framework in which the hunting of whales is forbidden, with exceptions made for specific species. Only national authorities can take action in connection with breaches of the regulations.

Also common to NAMMCO members was the fact that in the hunting of larger whales (eg minke) only boats with licences are permitted to catch whales. There is a regular reporting system for all such catches of larger whales, and some system of control and inspection is in effect in relation to such whaling.

It was noted that no international observers were or had been involved with minke whaling (small-type coastal whaling) in any NAMMCO member country.

Control and inspection schemes have developed largely in relation to the nature of the hunt itself. Where an inspector is present, the opportunity also exists to gather a wide range of data (eg biological) in addition to the other tasks of the inspector.

4. Possible harmonization of national regulations

The Working Group agreed that respective members should acquaint themselves with each others' regulations and methods of reporting in order to determine the common ground shared with respect to inspection and observation schemes.

Some kind of control system was considered necessary to ensure that the reporting system is effective. Such control systems could be expanded in all land-based hunting.

Norway suggested that there may be the basis for a common inspection scheme for minke whaling in the North Atlantic. In this respect it was necessary to determine the minimum standards required. The system used in fisheries inspection could serve as a model. In the case of long-distance vessels conducting whaling far offshore, for example, it would be most suitable to have inspectors on board every vessel.

The Working Group noted that it was ultimately up to the national jurisdiction of individual members countries to enforce catch regulations.

It was agreed that it would be impractical to require a standard system of controlling times to death for every animal as this would require the presence of an inspector on board every boat.

4.1 Recommendation:

The Working Group agreed to recommend that a standard NAMMCO checklist be formulated for inspectors. This could, for example be along the lines of the Norwegian fisheries inspection report form: "Report on inspection of fishery in Norwegian areas of jurisdiction".

It was also noted that quality control of equipment was a very important consideration in any such checklist.

Suggested basic elements of an inspection system (for minke whaling):

The Working Group agreed on some basic elements for a common inspection scheme for coastal minke whaling. Such a system would also be based on the principle that any one authorized to inspect can do so at any time.

These basic elements include:

1. Check of hunting equipment (quality control)
2. Report beginning of hunt (departure, discovery of whale)
3. Report the catch from sea
4. Report intended landing destination of the catch
5. Check that exploding grenades have been used
6. Register number of shots in the logbook - whether successful or not (explain reason for failed shot)
7. Licences for catcher boats

The Working Group also agreed that it could further consider the elements of inspection and observation systems, based on the above-mentioned points, which could be applied in common to coastal catches of large whales in respective member countries.

International Observers:

On the question of the role and function of international observers, the following points were left open for further discussion in the Working Group:

- within the 200 mile EEZ of each country it is up to respective governments to decide whether international observer schemes were appropriate. The Working Group therefore made no recommendations for establishing a common NAMMCO policy on allowing external international observation.

- the Working Group discussed the fact that international observation was not concerned with the enforcement of regulations. Rather it concerned the observation of the catch and the writing of reports to the home base. The costs of international observation would be covered by the observer's own country/institution.

- it should be possible to allow international observers on board some vessels (at their own cost), although there would also be a need for certain requirements in relation to the qualifications of those acting as observers. Such international observation would be according to agreements between NAMMCO member countries and non-member governments/inter-governmental institutions.

4.2 *Recommendation:*

The Working Group agreed to recommend that a common system be used for recording data on the number and species of seals taken in respective NAMMCO member countries. This should be confined to simple data, such as is required in the annual catch reports for various hunted species in Greenland.

5. **Compatibility of data collected**

The Working Group noted that the biological data necessary to collect depends on the management procedures concerned, and this can differ from species to species.

Usual biological data collected in the course of hunting activities by inspectors include the number of animals, sex, catch location, presence of foetus and so on. In many cases tissue samples were also relatively easy to gather and store.

It was agreed that it was up to the Scientific Committee to recommend what data should be collected.

It was also noted that there was some need for standardization between NAMMCO countries with regard to the parameters applied to hunting efficiency.

The Working Group was of the impression that the compatibility of scientific data between NAMMCO countries was not problematic.

The Working Group identified data on times to death and length measurements as possible areas of incompatibility.

6. **Possible questions to Scientific Committee**

The Working Group agreed to ask the Scientific Committee whether any particular data on marine mammal species relevant to NAMMCO may be required for scientific purposes, which could be collected by hunters/inspectors in the course of their activities.

The Working Group agreed to ask the Scientific Committee for advice on the standard methodology for collecting data to ensure consistency of data. In this regard it was also stressed that hunters could not be expected to be responsible for collecting detailed data, and the sample would have to be a simple, standard one.

7. **Report**

The Working Group agreed to send the final report to the Scientific Committee prior to its meeting in Reykjavik in November, with particular reference to items 5 and 6.

Agenda

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 - b) Greenland
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 - d) Norway
3. Common basic principles
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