

**REPORT OF THE NAMMCO SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
ON THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF MARINE MAMMAL - FISHERIES
INTERACTIONS**

Marine Research Institute, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1-2 March 1998

At its Seventh Meeting in Tórshavn in May 1997, the Council requested that special attention should be paid to studies related to competition and the economic aspects of marine mammal - fisheries interactions.

To address this request, the Scientific Committee agreed to establish a special Working Group, under the chairmanship of Gunnar Stefánsson (Marine Research Institute, Iceland). The Working Group met from 1-2 March in Reykjavik at the Marine Research Institute. Participants are listed in Appendix 1.

1-3. OPENING PROCEDURES

The Chairman of the Working Group, Gunnar Stefánsson, welcomed participants to the meeting. The agenda, as contained in Appendix 2, was adopted. Secretariat staff functioned as rapporteurs and it was agreed that relevant members of the group would also assist with the drafting of relevant sections of the report.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Working Group noted that the hunting of marine mammals has long been a part of the traditional economic use of marine resources across the North Atlantic. Lower levels of marine mammal utilisation in many areas in recent years compared with previous decades, combined with increasing pressure on fish stocks from fisheries, has introduced new factors into discussions related to the management of marine mammals, with an emphasis on the need to better understand the interactions of marine mammals and fish in the marine ecosystem. Such factors include, in particular, concerns in the fisheries sector about the potential effects of growing marine mammal populations on fish stocks. The Working Group further noted that in some sectors there were also concerns related to the possible effects of marine mammal utilisation on other economic activities, such as whale watching operations, although these were not directly related to either fisheries or whaling and sealing activities.

The Working Group agreed that an analysis of the economic aspects of marine mammal-fisheries interactions should encompass all aspects of the situation, including both potential losses in fish resources due to increases in marine mammal populations, as well as the estimated revenues from whaling and sealing weighed against the potential losses in other sectors.