

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

The Committee on Hunting Methods met on 6 February 2016 at the Ministry of Fisheries, in Oslo, Norway. Present were Guðni Magnus Eiriksson and Kristjan Loftsson (Iceland), Alessandro Tøvik Astroza, Kathrine Ryeng and Hild Ynesdal (Norway), Amalie Jessen and Nette Levermann (Greenland), Signar Petersen (Faroe Islands) and Charlotte Winsnes from the Secretariat.

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Chair of the Committee, Nette Levermann, welcomed the Committee members to the meeting, especially the new member Signar Petersen. The draft agenda was adopted, and meeting documents were reviewed. Charlotte Winsnes acted as rapporteur.

2. UPDATE ON HUNTING METHODS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES

Greenland

Levermann informed the meeting that there is a revision to the Executive Order regulating the hunt on large whales (2014) pertaining to the hunting period for minke whales. The new hunting period is March to November. The change in period is reflecting change in observed behavior of the minke whales.

Also a revision of the two executive orders on hunting licenses (2014) has been made because a change in the price of a hunting license has been approved.

Finally a revision to the Executive Order regulating the hunt on narwhal and beluga (2016) is recently approved. It is based on the newest scientific information of stock status, area and hunting grounds.

One new reference on reporting of catch data of large whales have come in 2015.

Whaling

The national quotas for large whales in 2015-2016 is based on the advice from the IWC Scientific Committee and approved by the IWC Commission in 2014.

Quota 2015-2016: West Greenland: 164 minke whales, 19 fin whales, 10 humpback whales and 2 bowhead whales. East Greenland: 12 minke whales. Carry-over numbers have been added for both years.

Active hunting boats: there were 32 approved whaling boats with harpoon guns and 425 smaller boats were active in whaling activities in Greenland in 2015.

Catch including struck and lost: West Greenland: 11 fin whales, 130 minke whales including 3 struck and lost, 6 humpback whales and 1 bowhead whale. East Greenland: 6 minke whales.

Hunting period: the hunting period for 2015-2016 is for fin whale and humpback whale from 1. January to 31. December and for minke whale and bowhead whale 1. March to 31. December.

Entanglements: 10 humpback whales was reported entangle in fisheries gear in 2015. 9 along the coast of West Greenland and 1 in East Greenland. 5 died of which 4 were permitted euthanized and one drowned.

Strandings: no reported strandings.

Irregularities: Quality control is ongoing. In 2015, there were 2 reported infractions of national legislation on large whales. The infractions were related to the use of rifle as secondary weapon for the humpback whales.

Hunt of small cetaceans, narwhal and beluga

Quota 2015 beluga: West Greenland: 330. Qaanaaq: 20; technical 5 year quota block is given of 100 animals, first year starting in 2014.

Quota 2015 narwhal: West Greenland: 144. Inglefield Bredning: 85; technical 5 year quota block is given of 485 animals, first year starting in 2014. Melvin Bay: quota 81. East Greenland: 88 plus an extra political allocated quota of 10.

Catch including struck and lost 2015 beluga: West Greenland: 120. Qaanaaq: 7.

Catch including struck and lost 2015 narwhal: West Greenland: 72. Inglefield Bredning: 75. Melvin Bay: 71. East Greenland: 94.

The catch numbers for beluga and narwhal includes struck and lost without specifying the actual numbers of S & L.

Hunting period: the hunting periods for 2015 for all small cetaceans are from 1. January to 31. December.

No stranding, entanglements or irregularities have been reported.

There are no quota regulations on other small cetaceans in Greenland. For catch numbers please refer to the national progress reports.

Hunt of pinnipeds, walrus

Quota 2015 walrus: West Greenland: 69. Northwater: 86. East Greenland: 18.

Catch including struck and lost 2015 walrus: West Greenland: 53. Northwater: 74. East Greenland: 4.

The catch numbers for walrus includes struck and lost without specifying the actual numbers of S & L.

Hunting period: The hunting period for walrus in West Greenland is from 1. March to 30. April and in Northwater and East Greenland it is from 1. October to 30. June. The hunting period for harp seal, ringed seal, hooded seal and bearded seal are from 1. January to 31. December.

No stranding, entanglements or irregularities have been reported.

There are no quota regulations on other legally hunted pinnipeds in Greenland. For catch numbers please refer to the national progress reports.

Norway

Ynnesdal informed the meeting of the following:

Whaling

Quota: 1286 minke whales

Active hunting boats: 21

Catch including struck and lost: 660

Hunting period: 1. April – 28. September

Strandings: Norway do not record strandings

Irregularities: quality control is ongoing.

Sealing:

Quota: 21.270 harp seals

Catches of harp seals: 1165 harp seals including 8 taken for research

Catches of hooded seals: no commercial hunt allowed, 11 hooded seals taken for research

Hunting period: 1. April – 30. June

Active hunting boats: 1 vessel

No irregularities reported.

Norway stopped to subsidize the seal hunt in 2014 resulting in only one vessel going out. Previously it used to be 3 – 4 vessels each season. For the season 2016 no decision has been taken on either sealing or whaling pending upcoming meetings between the authorities and the industry.

Faroe Islands

Petersen informed the meeting of the following:

There are no regular quota system in the pilot whale hunt, but the Sysselmann has the authority to decide if the hunting should be stopped. The hunt can take place around the year and therefore no particular season.

In 2015 there were 6 drives and 501 pilot whales were taken. In addition two bottlenose whales were also caught. No irregularities were reported.

A new whaling regulation was introduced in 2015 " Løgtingslóg um grind og annan smáhval, sum seinast broytt við løgtingslóg nr. 93 frá 22. juni 2015", on pilot whales and other small

cetaceans. The law enables the authorities to prosecute persons exhibiting disruptive behaviour and interference in the hunt and also making training courses on the use of the spinal lance.

There will be made a slight improvement to the design of the spinal lance based on experiences with this new equipment. There was a minor problem with the curving of the blade that did not prolong TTD but damaged the equipment. However the overall evaluation is that the lance is working as intended and has improved the killing technique. All hunters are obliged to undertake a training course built on the NAMMCO manual, and so far around 2 700 hunters have completed this course.

Iceland

Eiriksson informed the meeting of the following:

Minke whales

Quota: 275 minke whales – incl. carry over from 2014

Catch: 29 taken by 1 vessel. No struck and lost

Hunting period: 9 May – 30 August

No irregularities have been reported.

Fin whales:

Quota 171 fin whales – incl. carry over from 2014

Catch 155 including 1 struck and lost 2 active hunting vessels.

Hunting period: 29 June – 28 September

No irregularities have been reported.

Two new references on TTD on minke and fin whale hunt have come in 2015.

Eiriksson informed the meeting that the Directorate has advised the Ministry that more TTD data should be collect in order to complete the TTD assessment of minke whales. The collection of TTD in 2014 and 2015 represents too few animals to draw firm conclusions.

The Committee took note of the presented information, and agreed that for future meetings it would be beneficial to present the information on quota, catch and scientific advice in a table format. The Secretariat was also tasked to look into ways of improving the List of references.

The Committee furthermore discussed at length problems related to bycatch, strandings and entanglement of whales. It recognised that its terms of reference was focused on direct takes but at the same time the mentioned issues have great animal welfare consequences something that is of concern for the Committee. It therefore agreed to ask the advice of Council on how best to address these questions.

3. TTD EXPERT GROUP MEETING 6 – 8 NOVEMBER 2015

The report from the expert group meeting on assessment of whale killing methods for large whales held in November 2015 was presented under this agenda item.

Council, at NAMMCO 23, had tasked the Committee to organise an expert group meeting for the presentation of TTD data on large whales with the terms of reference:

The expert group meeting shall undertake a review and evaluate the whale killing data submitted to NAMMCO by member countries and associated hunting nations, as well as data and information on recent and ongoing research on improvements and technical innovations in hunting methods and gears used for the hunting of large whales.

The meeting had assessed information on hunting methods and TTD data from NAMMCO member countries (Iceland, Norway and Greenland) in addition to Japan, Canada and USA.

All members of the EWG were invited in a personal capacity as experts in fields related to the issue of killing mammals.

The meeting was successful with indebt and informed discussions, and resulted in specific conclusions and recommendations.

In its evaluation of the expert group meeting the Committee on Hunting Methods agreed to that next time more time should be set aside for discussion of recommendations in plenum and also for the committee drafting the recommendations.

The Committee endorsed the report with its conclusions and recommendations and agreed to in particular to draw the attention of the Council to the following issues:

- The Expert groups concern that the rifle hunt in Greenland seems to be increasing as a result of demand for meat that is not being met by the harpoon cannon hunt.
- In general, to recognise the importance of increasing hunters awareness through training, of the angle of the shot relative to the animals body position in order to reduce TTD.
- To monitor TTD at 10 years intervals.
- To organise a Workshop on alternatives for collecting standardised TTD data that is more economical and also makes it possible to compare TTD between countries.
- To review underlying reasons for struck and lost with the aim of decreasing it.

4. NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed to get back to the date for the next meeting after Council had met. The Committee also agreed to hold skype meetings. However, the Committee will evaluate a need of face to face meeting in relation to topics to be discussed and solved.

5. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

The report was adopted by correspondence on 8 February 2016.