



2014 Spiny Dogfish Fishery Performance Report

The Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel (AP) will meet on Sept 29, 2014 to develop advice for the Monitoring Committee and Council. Information in this Fishery Performance Report (FPR) was gathered through direct communications with industry representatives on the AP.

MAFMC Dogfish Advisers industry advisors that contributed to the report include: Claire Fitz-Gerald, (Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Alliance), James Fletcher (United National Fisherman's Association), Kevin Wark (NJ Gillnetter). Additionally, Marder Trawling (New Bedford, MA Processing/Seafood Export Company) was contacted for information on the current state of the export market.

Recreational Fishery Issues

No discussion

Market / Economic Issues

Constraints on Current Landings

Market demand rather than the abundance/availability of spiny dogfish is the constraining factor for commercial landings. Virtually the entire consumption market for spiny dogfish products is outside of the U.S. with backs (fresh or frozen) and belly flaps going to the E.U. and fins to Asia. Processors also supply a small domestic gurry (fish offal) market involved in the production of organic fertilizer. The E.U. demand for dogfish backs at the beginning of the 2014 fishing year (May 1, 2014) was very low with less than 25,000 lbs/wk being landed. Starting in mid-July, demand for the frozen product picked up and landings per week since then have exceeded 700,000 lbs.

As in the previous report, low prices for landed dogfish (as low as \$0.09/lb in 2013) limited the extent of directed fishing in 2013. Currently, under improved market conditions, prices have risen to \$0.18 to \$0.21/lb at the dock and \$0.28/lb at the processor. Retention of spiny dogfish tends to be associated with trips directed at more profitable species (lobster, monkfish, and groundfish). Some of the hook gear boats have been making directed trips nearshore.

A PCB detection issue affecting imports of dogfish into the E.U. was first reported in the previous year's FPR and has been a major constraining factor in market demand over the past year. The E.U. standard (75 ng/g) is much lower than in the US (~500 ng/g). Discussions are expected soon that will modify the E.U. standards. Detection of PCBs appears to be limited to the fresh market for backs where processors describe an expectation among E.U. buyers for the presence of blood in the product. Frozen backs are apparently bled out or soaked in a solution and PCBs are at or near zero in assays of this form of the product. If the market for the fresh product improves, then processors will likely be accepting spiny

dogfish at their maximum processing rate which is sufficient to support coastwide landings of approximately 30 M lb (the 2015 quota is 50 M lb). Processors are currently accepting dogfish six days/week.

Predictable and Consistent Management Measures

It was pointed out that stability in the market is important secondarily only to price. There was skepticism expressed at the prospect of 2015 trip limits remaining as specified since the previously specified trip limits (specified for 2013-2015) were changed.

Market Name of Dogfish

As in the previous year's FPR, this issue reflects the opinion of an AP member who considers the name "dogfish" to be a major constraining factor in the development of a domestic fishery. It was suggested that changing the market name to "chipfish" (from the use of the product in "fish and chips") would improve prospects for domestic sale. An attempt to formally submit a market name change to the Secretary of Agriculture was initiated by this Advisor, but was not followed through.

Environmental Issues

At the time of this writing, spiny dogfish had not begun to move toward the south and landings have been concentrated in Massachusetts waters.

Management Issues

Trip Limit

There was extensive discussion of the issue of trip limits prior to the final implementation of the 2014, 2015 federal spiny dogfish measures. The Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils developed very different recommendations for vessel-level retention of spiny dogfish (Mid-Atlantic: status quo 4,000 lbs; New England: unlimited). A formal discussion of trip limits was conducted in April 2014 (see report) with most fishermen and processors arguing that removing trip limits (i.e., the New England proposal) would cause the prices to drop even further. The NMFS is authorized to identify measures when the Councils disagree and eventually implemented a small increase to 5,000 lbs. Some commenters noted that they were getting the same revenue for a 4,000 lb trip that they used to get for a 2,000 lb trip with less cost to gear.

Male Dogfish Fishery

Male spiny dogfish, not typically retained in the directed spiny dogfish fishery, are overabundant, and according to one advisor, it behooves the Council to explore opportunities for developing a market for this vast untapped resource.

Other

The speedy recovery of spiny dogfish starting in 2006 was brought up by one advisor as being evidence that the stock assessment is fundamentally flawed and an explanation is needed by the NEFSC. The shutdown of the directed fishery in 2000 was stated as having eliminated dogfish processing and hundreds of associated jobs in the southern range of the fishery.