

7th MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

La Havana, Cuba, 7 to 12 October 2019

SC7-Doc20

European Union Observer program Implementation report 2018-19

European Union

EU observer program implementation 2018-2019

Wójcik I.

(National Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Gdynia, Poland)

1. General

This report covers the activities of the observer program of the European Union (EU) in the SPRFMO Convention area in 2018 and 2019.

2. Organisation of the observer program

Until 2016 the observer program was organized by the Dutch consultant agency Corten Marine Research (CMR). This agency had been responsible for observer missions on board EU (Dutch, German, Lithuanian and Polish) trawlers in the SPRFMO Convention area since 2007. The coordination of the observer program to collect data from the EU fishing fleet in the SPRFMO Convention area from 2017 was taken over by the National Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Poland (NMFRI).

As from 2015, the program is financed through the EU Data Collection Framework (DCF) and is based on the Multi-lateral agreement for biological data collection of pelagic fisheries in SPRFMO Convention area amongst the responsible institutions of the EU Member States concerned.

3. Observer training

The observers employed by NMFRI in the program in 2018 and 2019 had a wide experience in observer missions at sea:

T. Raczynski is an ichthyologist with a University degree who has worked as an observer on board EU pelagic vessels in the Pacific since 2008. He has also worked as an observer on board Polish vessels in the North-East Atlantic. In addition to his expertise on fish sampling, Raczynski is also an experienced bird observer.

Ł. Giedroń and K. Kisielewski are ichthyologists with a University degree who have worked as observers on board Polish vessels (pelagic and demersal trawlers, long-liners, gill-netters) in the Baltic Sea since 2011. They also worked as observers on board pelagic trawlers in the North and South-East Atlantic.

P. Pankowski is an ichthyologist with a University degree who has worked as an observer on board Polish vessels (pelagic and demersal trawlers, long-liners, gill-netters) in the Baltic Sea since 2017. Before that, for six years he served as Fisheries Inspector (Polish Fisheries Administration). He took part in the observer trip in 2018 as a trainee to become acquainted with the specificity of fisheries in the SPRFMO area.

No special training activities were organized for the NMFRI observers in 2018 and 2019 as no training needs were identified.

The NMFRI observers are very experienced - biological and fisheries data collection is their daily routine under the EU DCF and other fisheries monitoring projects executed by the Institute and they are regularly briefed if needed. Before each deployment of the observer on the vessel operating in the SPRFMO Convention area, observers are briefed on the Conservation and Management Measures

applicable to the *Trachurus murphyi* fisheries in the SPRFMO area and as regards observer's obligations with respect to the methods and scope of the data to be collected.

At NMFRI an internal policy is in force regarding qualifications and safety requirements of the scientific observers. According to this policy, a two-stage observer training is applied:

- First - general maritime training confirming the ability to work at sea on board fishing vessels, resulting in obtaining relevant certificates in accordance with national rules and the requirements of the STCW Convention - Seaman's Book, Deck Hand Certificate, Basic Safety Training Certificate (incl. Personal Survival Techniques, Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting, Elementary First Aid, Personal Safety). This training lasts one week. Each observer working at sea must at all time be in possession of all valid basic maritime certificates (which must be renewed each 5 years), including specific Marine Health Certificate.
- Second - practical training on observer's work, both in the lab and in the field and at sea (including species identification, otoliths/scales collection and reading, maturity determination, data recording etc.). Each newly employed observer is working under the supervision of Institute's Data Collection Coordinator and, when working in lab or at sea, is trained under direct supervision of an experienced observer. This training last minimum 3 weeks.

No additional special training is planned, unless new requirements regarding observer program are identified.

4. Program design and coverage

The observer program was designed to meet the requirements of the paragraph 22 of the SPRFMO CMM 01-2018¹, *i.e.* to ensure a minimum of 10% scientific observer coverage of trips for trawlers flying the EU flag and to ensure that such observers collect and report data as described in the SPRFMO CMM 02-2018² (Data Standards) respectively.

Year	Fishing		Observed		Coverage	
	Trips	Days	Trips	Days	Trips	Days
2017	10	273	3	66	30%	24%
2018	6	132	2	53	33%	40%
2019*	3	49	2	47		

*) data for the period March-June. The vessel is still at sea at the time of writing this report

In 2018 three observers were placed on board of f/v 'Margiris' (EU, Lithuania), the only EU fishing vessel active in the SPRFMO area in 2018. Two fishing trips were observed corresponding to 53 observed fishing days, covering 33% of the total fishing trips and 40% of the total fishing days in 2018 respectively.

Also in 2019 only one EU vessel was engaged in fishery for *Trachurus murphyi* in the SPRFMO area – f/v 'Annelies Ilena' (EU, Poland). Scientific observers were placed on board this vessel during her first and second fishing trips (March-June).

¹ Conservation and Management Measure for *Trachurus murphyi*

² Conservation and Management Measure on Standards for the Collection, Reporting, Verification and Exchange of Data

The details of all observer missions 2017 - 2019 are presented in the text table below.

Year	Observed Trip No	Period	Observer	Days With Observations
2017	1	15 March – 3 April	Tomasz Raczynski	8
	2	05 April – 17 May	Tomasz Raczynski Łukasz Dziemian	26
	3	09 August – 20 September	Tomasz Raczynski	32
2018	1	22 March – 02 May	Tomasz Raczynski	26
	2	02 May – 13 June	Kamil Kisielewski Piotr Pankowski	28
2019*	1	25 March – 13 May	Łukasz Giedroń	25
	2	13 May – 24 June	Kamil Kisielewski	22

(*) By June 24, 2019

5. Type of data collected

The observers collected data on species and length composition of the main species observed in the catch (*Trachurus murphyi*, *Scomber japonicus* and *Brama australis*). Biological characteristics such as sex and maturity stage, food composition, stomach fullness and otoliths for age reading were collected for *Trachurus murphyi*. In addition, discards and incidental by-catches of species of concern were monitored.

Otoliths of *Trachurus murphyi* collected in 2018 have been read by a specialist of the National Marine Fisheries Research Institute (Poland) and the information on age/length relationship were used to convert length distributions into age compositions of the catch. This information could be used subsequently by the Scientific Committee in their assessments. Otoliths of *Trachurus murphyi* collected in 2019 will be read in the second half of the year.

Results of the observations of birds around the vessel, and the birds that were caught in the net or that had collisions with the vessel or fishing lines are reported in the national reports of the EU to the Science Committee (Wójcik., Janusz. 2018 and 2019).

6 Problems encountered

In general, the captains and crews of the vessels were very cooperative and the observers could perform their work without obstructions. Safety on-board, equipment and living conditions were up to normal standards.

7 References

SPRFMO 2014. Conservation and Management Measure for minimising bycatch of seabirds in the SPRFMO Convention Area. Report of the 2nd Commission Meeting, Annex N, CMM 2.04.

SPRFMO CMM 01-2018 Conservation and Management Measure for Trachurus murphyi

SPRFMO CMM 02-2018 Conservation and Management Measure on Standards for the Collection, Reporting, Verification and Exchange of Data

Wójcik I., Janusz J. 2018; National report of the European Union to the 2018 SPRFMO Scientific Committee meeting

Wójcik I., Janusz J. 2019; National report of the European Union to the 2019 SPRFMO Scientific Committee meeting