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Bottom fishing & VME Processes in SEAFO

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**SEAFO Mandate**

- **Convention came into force in April 2003**
- **First Convention to enter into force following the adoption of the 1995 UNFSA** – the first of the “modern” fisheries conventions.
- **C-Parties: Angola, EU, Japan, Korea, SA, Namibia and Norway**
- **Objectives is to ensure long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources in the Convention Area through the implementation of the Convention.**
Geographical application

CA covers a sizeable part of the high seas of the Southeast Atlantic Ocean. It covers all waters beyond areas of national jurisdiction in the region (about 16 million square km).
Decision process

- **Commission**: highest decision making body.
- **Subsidiary bodies**: Compliance & Scientific Committees and Standing Committee on Administration and Finance.
Function of Scientific Committee

- The function of the Scientific Committee shall be to provide the Commission with scientific advice and recommendations for the formulation of conservation and management measures for fishery resources covered by the Convention .....
Overview: Bottom fisheries

- Southeast Atlantic Ocean has been subject to commercial fisheries since at least 1950
- Since 2005 the fishing pressure has been low.
Overview: Bottom fisheries...

- Bottom fishing in the CA occurs around or on seamounts in three distinct areas
Overview: Bottom fisheries...

- Assessed species subject to TACs are: Patagonian toothfish, deep sea red crab, alfonsino, pelagic amourhead & orange roughy (species are assessed biennially)
Overview: Bottom fisheries

- Scientific Observers on board of fishing vessel are responsible for the collection of data and reporting on catches – 100% coverage
- Each vessel shall keep a bound fishing logbook to record information on the fisheries
- For each haul: vessels shall report retained and discarded catch in live weight (kg) by species
- SEAFO adopted the System of Observation, Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement - shall apply to all fishing vessels and fishing research vessels operating or intending to operate in the CA
Regulations and Measures: Closed area’s (VME’s)

- In 2006, the SC provided advice as regards to areas that might contained vulnerable habitats and ecosystems.
- Commission decided that it is important to ensure that seamounts which had not been exploited or had been slightly exploited, should be protected from any new fisheries until more information has been collected.
- Commission closed 13 area’s.
In 2010 the SC took account of new available information on the distribution of VME indicator species, review of available biological data, bathymetric maps and GIS information of the South Atlantic Ocean.

Potential new closures were identified on the basis of modified criteria and by overlaying the fishing footprint data.

The main consideration was to ensure reasonable geographical distribution of closed areas throughout the CA.

A total of 11 area’s that possibly contained vulnerable marine ecosystems were identified and closed by the Commission.
Dr. Fridjof Nansen conducted a survey in Jan-Feb 2015 on several seamounts in the CA. An area containing undisturbed coral and sponges was identified and closed for all gears except longlines and pots by the Commission on recommendation by the SC in 2015.

To date a total of 12 areas are closed and some are subject to gear specification (CM30/15).
Regulations and Measures: Existing Bottom fishing area

- Contracting Parties with vessels involved in bottom fishing activities during the period of 1987- Jul 2011 submitted fishing information and comprehensive maps of fishing areas
- SC developed the “fishing footprint”
- Commission adopted the existing bottom fishing area in 2011
Regulations and Measures: Exploratory fishing

- Bottom Fishing outside of the existing bottom fishing area is subject to exploratory fishing including an impact assessment.

- Impact assessment requires *inter alia* a harvest plan, mitigation plan, catch monitoring plan and data collection plan to be submitted to SC prior to commencement of exploratory fishing.

- Use of new bottom gear in the existing bottom fishing area also requires an impact assessment.
Regulations and Measures: Exploratory fishing

- IA is subject to assessment by SC and approval by Commission.
- In 2012 an application was made to undertake an exploratory longline fishery for toothfish; this resulted in the addition of three new existing bottom fishing areas for commercial longlines only.
- **Closed area’s:** 3,18%
- **Fishing footprint:** 3,26%
- **Area subject to exploratory fishing:** 93,56%
Regulations and Measures: VME’s

- SEAFO adopted definitions for “VME indicators” and “vulnerable marine ecosystems”
- The Commission adopted encounter protocols, set thresholds levels for VME indicator species, “move-on” rules and temporary closures
- Scientific Observers on board of vessels have to record catch of VME indicator species – 100% coverage
- SEAFO adopted rules and procedures for the opening of new fishing areas
Regulations and Measures: VME’s

- Identifications guides and sea-going manuals are available to assist Scientific Observers with on board sampling.
Regulations and Measures: VME’s

- Only a limited number of scientific surveys have been conducted in CA to date
- In 2014 the Commission adopted guidelines for Scientific Research
- Research and marine science activities in closed area’s is subject to prior notification to CP’s and review by the SC.
Regulations and Measures: VMEs

- SEAFO began adopting specific bottom fishing measures aimed at protecting VMEs in 2006.
- These measures have been reviewed seven times within eight years.
- The review process will continue as new data becomes available.
Thank you