

Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization



The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) is responsible for regulating fisheries in the NAFO Regulatory Area (NRA), just outside of Canada's 200-mile limit. It currently provides for the conservation and management of 13 fish stocks in the Northwest Atlantic. Since NAFO's founding in 1978, Canada has worked extensively to promote and strengthen international cooperation in science, conservation and the management of these stocks.

Over the years, Canada has experienced many challenges and successes within NAFO including the adoption of many conservation measures to protect fish stocks in the Northwest Atlantic. The past decade, particularly since 1995, has seen significant gains in the NAFO enforcement regime, including:

- **100% observer coverage** which requires all vessels fishing in the NRA to carry an observer who can independently observe and report catch as well as collect data and information for the NAFO Scientific Council.
- **100% dockside inspection** which require NAFO Contracting Parties to ensure port inspections are completed on all fishing vessels that fish for NAFO-managed stocks and to verify species and quantity caught.
- **100% satellite tracking** which requires all vessels fishing in the NRA to carry satellite-tracking devices that automatically supply location of the vessel to enforcement officials.
- Requirement for **nets to be standardized at the 130-mm mesh size** and the establishment of a **minimum fish size** for Greenland halibut to prevent the capture or retention of juvenile fish.

These new measures led to improvements in compliance with NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures, particularly as it related to fishing gear selectivity and catch reporting. NAFO Contracting Parties now have significantly better information to monitor fishing activity in the NAFO Regulatory Area.

However, while the NAFO Regulatory Area continues as one of the most highly monitored fisheries in the world, recent analysis completed by Canada indicates that non-compliance has increased in recent years, particularly during 1999, 2000, and the latter part of 2001.

The most significant incidents of non-compliance relate to directed fisheries for moratoria species such as American plaice and cod as well as misreporting of Greenland halibut and shrimp. Canadian NAFO inspectors are continuing with regular patrol of the NAFO area to monitor fishing activity in the Northwest Atlantic. While the incidents of non-compliance have increased in recent years, they are not approaching the levels observed by Canada in the pre-1995 period. Prior to 1995, significant quantities of prohibited catch were observed, the use of small mesh gear was widespread, and many fisheries were prosecuted without adherence to a scientifically-based quota regime.