



*European Undulate ray
ban*

Presentation for: NWWRAC

By Don Thompson on behalf of NFFO UK

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History of the EU wide ban

2008- ICES expressed concern about the lack of Undulates, *raja undulata*, in western channel sampling and other surveys.

ICES advised against “targeted fishing” for the species.

STEFC-interpreted the advice resulting in EU directive (EC) No43/2009 and an EU wide total ban on landing of Undulates

2010- ICES clarified the advice stating that while the precautionary approach should prevail and that there should be no targeted fishing in Celtic Sea areas/SW Ireland or bay of Biscay. (See ICES EU request for data on undulates)

It is likely that in Dec council of ministers negotiations 2009/2010, the undulate ban and ray TACS have not received specific focus, resulting in the status-quo remaining

VlId Quotas

- VlId fishermen have had ray quotas imposed for 2 years. The allocation bears no resemblance to historic catch levels and creates severe difficulty.
- Ray catches make up apx 15-20% of catches but significantly higher in some ports.
- UK quota or overall TAC desperately needs a review
- Undulate ban in VlId has huge impact in some areas and very little in others

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2010

Anglo-Norman Gulf, East Channel Scenario

From Poole-Beachy Head, Western Channel, Channel isles and adjacent coasts of France, undulates generally form the higher percentage of ray catches. Rays are not covered by TACs in this area.

ICES/CEFAS surveys concur with the prevalence of the species in this area

Interestingly, while rays are not covered by quota here, of the four main commercial species (inc. undulate) for this area, fishermen's catch and discards figures indicate healthy or improved abundance of rays.

The ban has impacted heavily on coastal communities, plus has had negative conservation benefits!!

Distribution

Undulate rays are distributed widely throughout European waters, but are known to be very selective in habitat choice and from jersey research display site fidelity which may signify that populations do not mix.

Undulate Ray *Raja undulata*

General view (L) *Raja undulata* (R)

Characteristics

- Undulate Ray, Flat skate 14cm, Pale sea ray, Blue Striped Eel, Navy Blotch or Flat, Pizza Crustle or M. Golling Flat.

Conservation

2004 IUCN: L (Low Risk), 1992 IUCN: Near Threatened (Least Concern), 1992 IUCN: Near Threatened (Least Concern), 1992 IUCN: Near Threatened (Least Concern), 1992 IUCN: Near Threatened (Least Concern).

Habitat

The flat skate lives in shallow waters, in the western Atlantic, from Norway to the south coast of France. It is a common species in the central and southern parts of the North Sea, and is also found in the western Mediterranean and the Canary Islands. It is a common species in the western Atlantic, from Norway to the south coast of France. It is a common species in the central and southern parts of the North Sea, and is also found in the western Mediterranean and the Canary Islands.

Characteristics

- Maxima, in total length 14cm.
- Consists of 28-32 bands along each side, from the dorsals.
- Upper half back to 11cm yellow to dark.
- Patches of dark "wool" bands; head with four rows of white spots.
- Eyes larger than a spot's width to pattern.
- Lines darker when with dark markings.

Habitat

Undulate ray of the flat skate, distributed from the coast to the depths, giving the species a wide range of habitats. It is a common species in the western Atlantic, from Norway to the south coast of France. It is a common species in the central and southern parts of the North Sea, and is also found in the western Mediterranean and the Canary Islands.

Characteristics

- Some common club-milled length of the flat skate live off to 100m but the largest club-milled species approach to 25m. Club-milled of 100cm Round the western coast length for males was 18cm's last 10 days for females (Graham et al., 2005). This suggests that it may be to some degree migratory.

Map base conforms with ICES grid squares.

DISTRIBUTION

Senegal to the southern and western coasts of the British Isles including the western Mediterranean. East to the Canary Isles^x.

Map base conforms with ICES grid squares.

Distribution continued

Undulates

- SW Ireland mainly found in localised inshore populations, also as by-catch in offshore trawl/netting sector
- Celtic seas Vllf&Vllg very patchy distribution
- Vlle western channel. From Poole/IOW to Beachy head, across to Cherbourg peninsular and particularly the Normano-Breton Gulf/Channel Isles undulates make up the highest percentage of the 4 main species
- Eastern Channel, very occasional (predominantly Thornbacks)

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Capture methods & percentages

- ***Trawl fisheries***- Undulates are generally taken as a non-targeted (by catch) undulates representing typically 35% of the ray component in Normano-breton Gulf.
- ***Netting***- Dependant on ground types *Undulates* will constitute apx 70% of overall ray component but can exceed 90%
- ***Long ling***- This metier, arguably the most sustainable & selective of all fishing methods has been severely impacted by EU bans on rays and sharks

Survival rates

Trawl fisheries

- Survival rates, from CEFAS study aboard commercial trawlers working Bristol channel fishery.

Dependant on length of tows and quantities in the cod-end but survival rates little **better than +/- 56%** observed

Net fisheries

- Survival rates from net fisheries varies according to soak time. Not well documented but anecdotal evidence for Normano-Breton Gulf, is for mortality rates of typically 80+%

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Research programs

Jersey tagging and recapture program, 2006-2008. Of 814 specimens tagged, and 138 recaptured, not one single fish was captured outside of the A.N.Gulf



Other programs & data:

- Includes W- Channel and E-Channel beam trawl sampling, UK market figures. French market data and observer work over 6 yr period.
- Various work on maturity (not all aligned) maturity varying with LOA from 72cm -80cm

State of the stocks

Celtic Sea, Wales VII f & g

- Celtic Sea, Bristol Channel and Thames general ray stocks reportedly healthy .

Few Undulates, mainly Blonde ray, Small Eyed, Cuckoo ray, Spotted Ray and Thornbacks feature in these areas.

Lower North sea and Eastern Channel, predominantly thornbacks. English quota shortages

France/ Anglo-Normand Gulf

- *South coast England upper western channel and Normano-Breton Gulf. Fishermen reporting higher than previous abundance and high level of discarding.*
- *Normano-Breton Gulf netters typically dumping 500kg/trip & one vessel alone reported discarding circa 70,000kg in 2010*

Implications/ comment

- **Socio-economic effects**, current ban is having a hugely detrimental effect on fishermen's livelihoods in certain regions, but is having very little positive conservation effect for the stock
- For Jersey's fleet alone, pre ban annual landings (2008) were 79,000kg post ban = 22,700kg-37,300kg
- **Wide sweeping bans/closures.** Response to Jersey/French motion of 2010 by UK fisheries minister. More regionally tailored measures required to sustainably manage EU fish stocks.
- Practical and sustainable management of ray fisheries simply cannot be achieved without factoring in regional differences.
- **Discards & conservation deficits.** Documented poor survival rates in trawl fisheries. Tangle netters denied the ray component of their catch have increased the length of net fished to compensate. *The ban and to some extent quotas do not sit well with the current EU move to prevent discards!*
- **ICES advice** also advocates more regional measures
- **No basis** for undulate ray to remain on the banned list

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Solutions.

- **Jersey/France motion!** Re-open the fishery on a non-targeted basis, with focused data collection , observer program (to strengthen data) and max percentages of landings limits
- **Minimum landing sizes.** Requires more research but existing stats would support a proposal for MLS of ~75cm loa.
- **Catch percentages.** Max percentages of undulates within total (ray) landings could help constitute the basis for a re-opening
- **Irish proposal.** Not all elements acceptable for other regions
- **TACs/Quotas.** Strong arguments that quotas do not offer the solution. Tailored regional measures, Seasonal area closures, establish MLS, research into spawning, breeding areas and improved data collection supported by species specific log entries are all practical alternatives.



Thank for your attention

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