



Trap & Pot Handling Voluntary Code of Practice ICES 7d and 7e

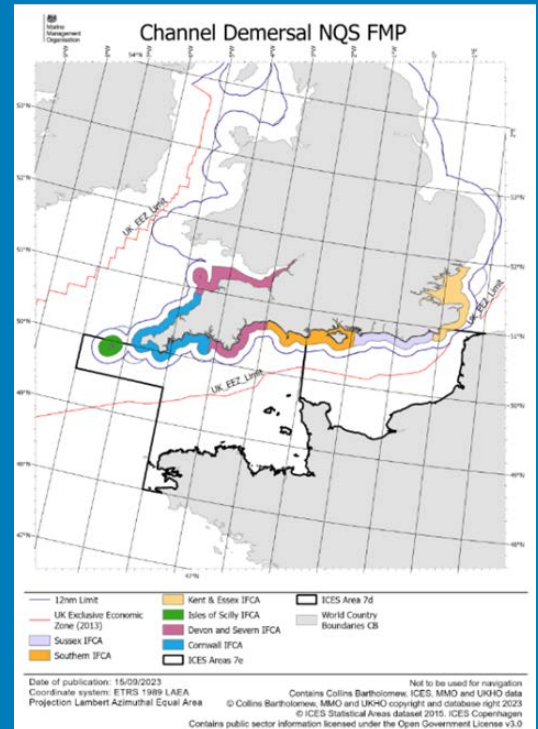
Background

Through consultation of the Channel Demersal NQS FMP, the common cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis*) was identified by stakeholders as a critical targeted fishery at risk of over exploitation. The short life span of cuttlefish needs to be considered and part of the management strategy to promote stock recruitment and maintain population size. A management measure proposed in the FMP for cuttlefish was to consider introducing voluntary codes of practice on trap and pot handling.

Rationale

Cuttlefish breed once and die soon after laying their eggs, they lay their eggs on traps/pots, ropes amongst other natural substrata like sea grass and seaweeds. Due to their short 2-year life cycle, it is important to maximise the number of eggs that reach maturity and subsequently recruitment.

Currently many fishers clean the cuttlefish eggs off throughout the season and clean the traps/pots before being put into storage or stacked on pontoons until further use, resulting in mortality of large numbers of eggs. The aim of this code of practice is to protect and increase the survivability of cuttlefish eggs that have been laid on traps and pots.



Traps and Pots Handling Voluntary Codes of Practice

To improve cuttlefish egg survivability and recruitment the following recommendations should be followed when potting and trapping in English waters from the 6nm limit out to 200nm in ICES divisions 7d and 7e:

- When hauling and shooting pots/traps, if cuttlefish eggs are attached aim to minimise damage to eggs and ensure the pots/traps are returned to the water with the cuttlefish eggs attached.
- Avoid cleaning or washing cuttlefish eggs off pots/traps.
- If cuttlefish eggs are still attached to pots/traps at the end of the cuttlefish season, fishers should leave their pots/traps in the water until the eggs have hatched.
- When leaving pots/traps at sea, fishers should remove entrance panels to avoid ghost fishing or regularly attend their pots/straps to remove captured animals.
- In the event of predicted bad weather at sea, pots/traps should be hauled to avoid gear loss.
- Fishers should seek to avoid conflict with other fishers when leaving pots/traps at sea and avoid damaging marine protected area features.