

MACALISTER ELLIOTT AND PARTNERS LTD

SURVEILLANCE VISIT REPORT FOR EURONOR SAI THE FISHERY (*POLLACHIUS VIRENS*)

CERTIFICATE CODE: MEP-F-001 v1.2
SURVEILLANCE YEAR 4

Undertaken by:

Jo Gascoigne (Team Leader)
&
Chrissie Sieben

3RD APRIL 2014



MacAlister Elliott and Partners Ltd
56 High Street, Lymington
Hampshire SO41 9AH
United Kingdom

Tel: 01590 679016

Fax: 01590 671573

E-mail: mep@macalister-elliott.com

Website: www.macalister-elliott.com

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Fishery Name	Euronor saithe			
Unit of Certification	The Euronor demersal otter trawl fishery for saithe (<i>Pollachius virens</i>) from the North Sea and Northeast Arctic stocks (ICES Subareas I, II, IV and VI and Division IIIa).			
Species	saithe (<i>Pollachius virens</i>)			
Area	ICES Subareas I, II, IIIa, IV, VI (NE Arctic, Skagerrak, North Sea and Northwest Scotland)			
Method of capture	Demersal trawl			
Client Address	Le Comptoir des Pêches d'Europe du Nord or Euronor 13 Rue Huret Lagache, BP447 - 62206 Boulogne sur mer, Cedex FRANCE			
Client Contact Name	Bruno Leduc (Director)			
Client Telephone No.:	+33 (0)3 21 10 95 95			
Client Email	euronor@euronor.fr			
Certificate number	MEP-F-001 v1.2			
Certificate Issue Date	10 th March 2010			
Certificate Expiry Date	09 th August 2015			
Audit stage	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Audit experts	Expert 1 (Team Leader): Dr Jo Gascoigne Expert 2: Chrissie Sieben			
Surveillance Audit Date	3 April 2014			
Conclusion	<p>Euronor should retain MSC certified status for North Sea and Northeast Arctic saithe for another year</p> <p>The team made one non-binding recommendation: Euronor should contact Ifremer to see if a spatial analysis of catches of common skate is available based on ObsMer data, which could potentially be used by skippers to avoid hotspots, if any.</p>			

2. INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the process and outcome of the fourth annual surveillance audit for the MSC certified fishery 'Euronor saithe'. The fishery is conducted by the fishing company Euronor, based in Boulogne-sur-mer, France. The main activity of this company is the North Sea saithe fishery, but some saithe is also taken from the Northeast Arctic stock, and this is also covered by the certification.

This audit is the fourth annual surveillance audit for this fishery since certification – which was finalised in March 2010. The audit was carried out by telephone on 3 April 2014 by the surveillance team consisting of Dr. Jo Gascoigne (Team Leader) and Chrissie Sieben. Please note that the surveillance level was reduced to remote surveillance, based on the argument that the fishery is low-risk and that all information required for the surveillance audit could be provided remotely. To view the corresponding variation request and MSC response, please visit this [link](#).

Note that this fishery was certified without any conditions attached. The main purpose of the annual surveillance audit process is to review progress in meeting the conditions as set out in the Client Action Plan (a part of the certification process). This does not apply here. This audit therefore reviewed the fishery to see if there had been any significant changes since certification.

Stakeholders were informed of the scheduled site visit, its time and location and the proposed audit team on the 19th March 2014. No comments or requests for interviews were received.

The fishery remains in conformance with the Scope Criteria relating to unilateral exemption and destructive fishing practices (Certification Requirements v1.3, Section 27.4.4)

3. GENERAL ISSUES

Since the last surveillance audit, there has been a change in the vessels in the UoC as follows:

- The Nordic II and the Halten Bank left the fleet
- The Halten Bank II joined the fleet

The revised list of vessels for this UoC is given in Table 1. Vessels included in the UoC Table 1. A revised certificate has been issued (MEP-F-01 v1.2).

Table 1. Vessels included in the UoC

Vessel		Type	Length (m)	Gross tonnage	Call Sign
1	Cap Nord	freezer	54.55	1492	FNLM
2	Klondyke	freezer	54.55	1491	FHPJ
3	Bressay Bank	fresh	44.00	826	FPTA
4	Halten Bank II	fresh	42.62	790	FIGR
5	André Leduc	fresh	44.15	837	FMAU
6	Cap Saint Georges	Fresh	44.10	885	FQFD

The Halten Bank II will operate in the North Sea saithe fishery only, with a fishing strategy which is the same as the rest of the Euronor fleet in that fishery. She is similar to the other Euronor fresh-fish vessels, except that she is slightly narrower and has a less powerful engine. The objective is to retain the same fishing power but with lower fuel consumption and carbon emissions.

4. PRINCIPLE 1

Euronor catches of saithe in 2013 showed an increase from 2009 – 10 levels but were similar to those for 2011 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Total landings of saithe by Euronor vessels (live weight tonnes), 2009-2013.

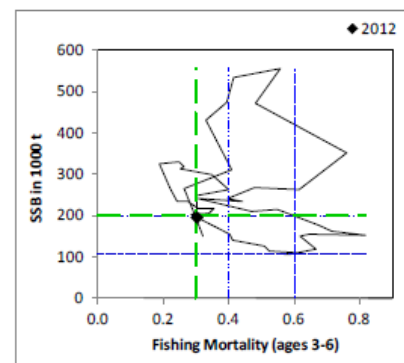
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Catch	13,098	9,660	14,474	14,886	11,454
Total EU TAC for North Sea, West of Scotland and Northeast Arctic saithe fishery				49,034	55,874
Client (UoC) share of TAC				15,230	16,081

4.1. NORTH SEA SAITHE

The audit team reviewed the most recent ICES advice for the target stocks from June 2013. The advice for the North Sea stock (IIIa, IV, and VI) is summarised below (Figure 1). During 2010 and 2011, ICES revised various aspects of the assessment, leading to a retrospective revision of the stock status for 2008-2010 downwards. ICES consider that SSB has been declining and F increasing since 2005, and both are now more or less on the MSY trigger reference points (taken to be the target reference points in the MSC assessment). As shown below, the estimated value of SSB is just above the reference point (i.e. on the right side), while the estimated value of F is just above the reference point (i.e. on the wrong side) – but given the uncertainties in the assessment, particularly relating to recruitment, they can both be considered to be at approximately the reference point values.

Stock status

	F (Fishing Mortality)		
	2010	2011	2012
MSY (F_{MSY})	✓	✓	✓ Appropriate
Precautionary approach (F_{pa}, F_{lim})	✓	✓	✓ Harvested sustainably
Management plan (F_{MP})	✓	✓	✓ At limit
	SSB (Spawning-Stock Biomass)		
	2011	2012	2013
MSY ($B_{trigger}$)	✓	✗	✗ Just below trigger
Precautionary approach (B_{pa}, B_{lim})	✓	○	○ Increased risk
Management plan (SSB_{MP})	✓	✗	✗ Just below trigger



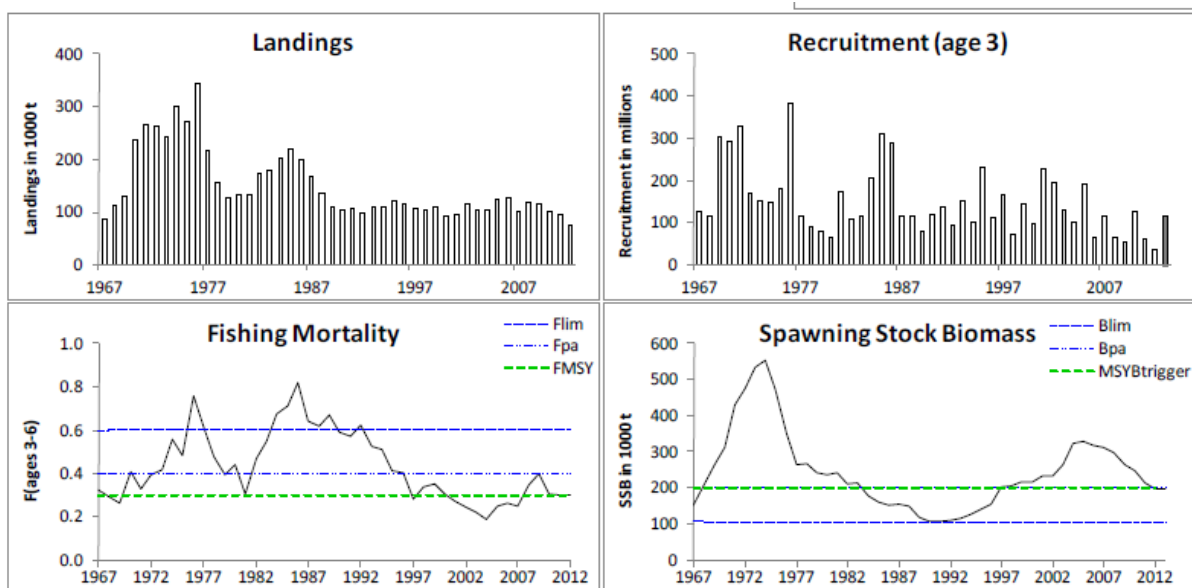


Figure 1. Summary of most recent ICES stock assessment for North Sea saithe – June 2013. Top left: stock status in relation to reference points; top right: trajectory of stock in terms of F (x-axis) and SSB (y-axis) – current situation shown with black dot; middle: ICES estimates of landings (NB: discards not evaluated by ICES) and recruitment (final year assumed not measured); bottom: trajectory of F and SSB, according to ICES estimates (ICES 2013a).

The audit report for 2013 noted that at the time the report was written, no TAC had been agreed, so the audit team could not evaluate whether the management plan would be followed. In fact, the TAC for 2013 Subareas III and IV (91,220 t) was exactly that foreseen by the management plan, given the estimated stock status (TAC 2012 +15%). The TAC for 2014 foreseen by the management plan for III and IV should be TAC 2013 -15%, which would equate to 77,365 t. Likewise for Subarea VI, the management plan foresaw a 2013 TAC of 2012+15% (9,464 t), which was what was agreed, and a 2014 TAC of 2013-15% (8,045 t). TACs for 2014 were not yet published when this report was drafted.

From a practical point of view, it appears that this approach to management has not been particularly successful, in as much as it has led to constant fluctuations of the TAC by 15% up and down in response to rather small apparent changes in the stock status. From the stock sustainability point of view, however, there is no issue at present.

4.1. NORTHEAST ARCTIC SAITHE

ICES are not able to provide a definite assessment of stock status in relation to reference points in their most recent analysis (from June 2013; ICES 2013c). This is because they evaluated two possible scenarios, which give different answers:

Scenario 1: SSB is 28% above B_{pa} , $F_{2011} = 0.3$;

Scenario 2: SSB is 16% below B_{pa} , $F_{2012} = 0.46$ (Figure 2).

Both assessments are considered to be of poor quality. However, a rollover TAC (i.e. the same TAC for 2014 as for 2013 at North Norway) is estimated to give more or less the same SSB, giving ICES a further year to address problems in the assessment. ICES therefore advise on this basis that catches should be no more than 140,000 tonnes (the 2013 TAC for the Norwegian EEZ). TACs for 2014 were not yet published when this report was drafted. At the

next surveillance audit the assessment team will consider the outcome of the latest ICES evaluation and if required rescore this stock.

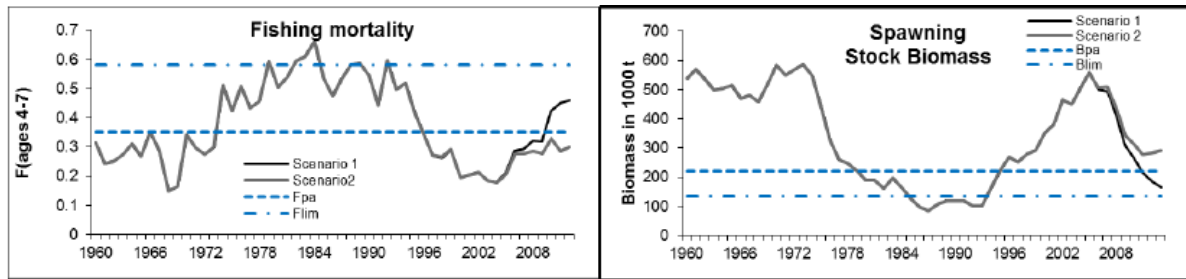


Figure 2. ICES estimates of trends in fishing mortality (left) and spawning stock biomass (right) under the two scenarios: scenario 1 in black, scenario 2 in grey. Blue lines are target (dash) and limit (dot-dash) reference points (ICES 2013b)

5. PRINCIPLE 2

5.1. RETAINED SPECIES

The retained species for the period 2009 to 2013 for this fishery are given in Table 3. Percentages of the total catch for species representing more than 5% in either the North Sea, Northeast Arctic or both are shown in Table 4. For 2013, the ‘main’ retained species were cod and redfish in the Northeast Arctic and hake in the North Sea. The Euronor fishery for Northeast Arctic cod is certified MSC; the most recent audit report (April 2014) provides further information on this stock. Hake and redfish are considered further below.

Table 3. Table of retained species catches 2009 - 2013 (tonnes live weight)

Species	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Cod	1399	1067	2797	2272	3244
Hake	257	364	741	519	677
Redfish	220	424	311	223	375
Haddock	191	198	242	290	332
Greenland halibut	107	188	86.1	100	205
Ling	96	82.6	157	130	99.5
Whiting	12.6	23.2	62.3	48	29.0
Pollock	15.4	18.6	12.7	3	27.5
Tusk	60.6	62.5	28.7	45	16.7
Wolffish	3.96	0.83	2.05	7	15.1
Monkfish	27.2	27.4	14.4	22	11.5
Blue ling					11.3
Megrim	5.27	3.61	9.65	8	11.1
Canadian plaice*					6.9
Greater argentine					2.2
Chimaera					0.75
Various	0.59	0.67	1.10	4	0.60
Conger	0.20	1.16	1.79	0.7	0.38
<i>Phycis phycis</i>					0.22
Grey gurnard	1.58	0.71	2.41	1	0.11
Atlantic halibut	25.1	6.47	0.67	0.5	0.10
Rays	5.87	4.53	1.05	0	0
Dab	0.44	1.60	0.09	0	0

**Hippoglossoides platessoides*

Table 4. Percentage of the total landings made up by species representing >5% in either of the two bio-regions.

Species	% of total landings	% landings North Sea	% landings NE Arctic
cod <i>Gadus morhua</i>	19.76	0.80	55.61
hake <i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	4.13	6.23	0.14
redfish <i>Sebastes</i> spp.	2.29	0.27	6.10

North Sea Hake:

As observed previously, the quantity of hake available in the North Sea has increased dramatically in recent years, and there is increasing concern that a lack of quota for this species could pose a problem for mixed demersal trawl fisheries, particularly in the context of the discard ban¹. Euronor was able during 2013 to make quota exchanges with Denmark (via the PO FROM Nord and the respective fisheries administrations) to obtain additional hake quota in return for saithe quota. The ICES advice for hake is summarised in Figure 3 below. ICES consider that F , although declining, is still above F_{MSY} , and that stock biomass has increased significantly in recent years. This may be due to improved management (enforcement of minimum landing size), climate change, or perhaps both.

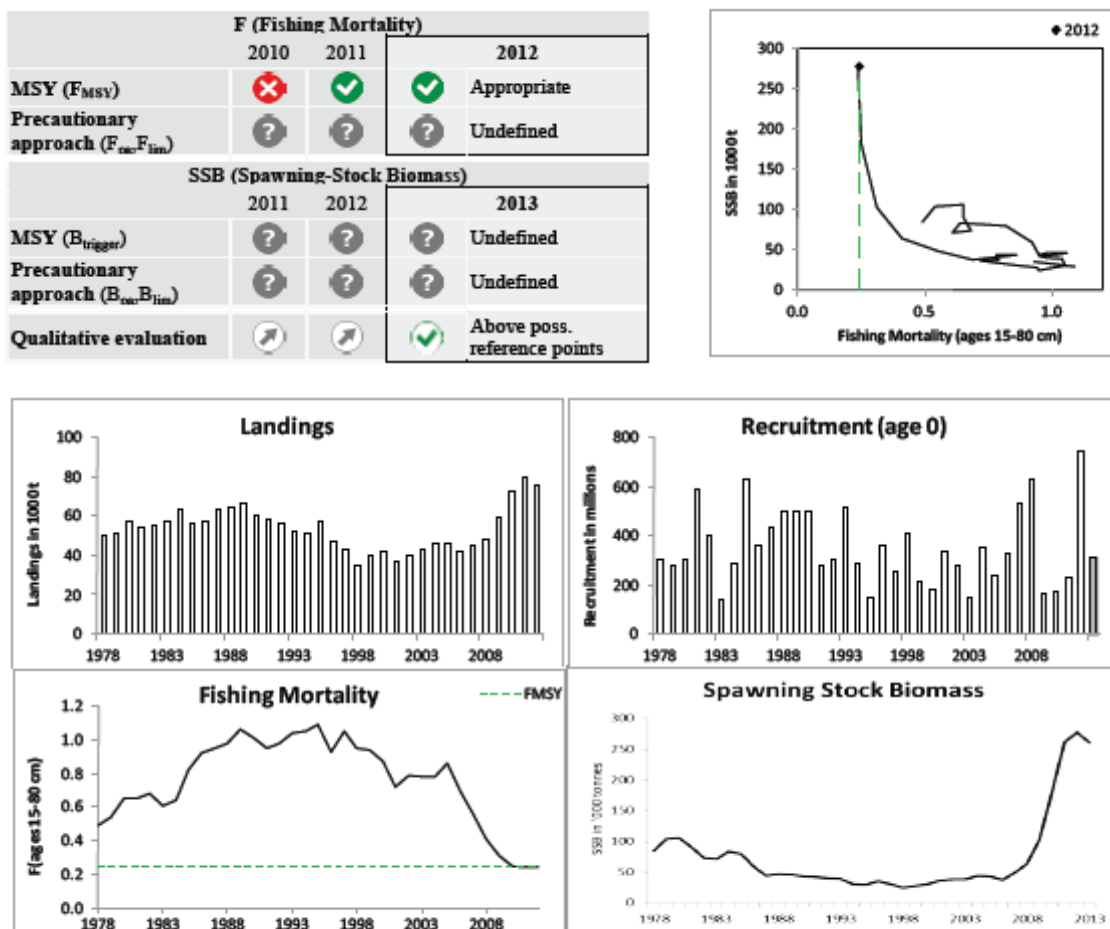


Figure 9.4.10.1 Hake in Division IIIa, Subareas IV, VI, and VII, and Divisions VIIIa,b,d. Summary of stock assessment (weights in thousand tonnes). Assumed values are shaded. Top right: SSB/ F for the time-series used in the assessment.

Figure 3. ICES advice for hake (northern stock) for June 2013. Top left: stock status in relation to reference points; top right: trajectory of stock in terms of F (x-axis) and SSB (y-axis) – current situation shown with black dot; middle: ICES estimates of landings (NB: discards not evaluated by ICES) and recruitment; bottom: trajectory of F and SSB, according to ICES estimates (ICES 2013c).

NE Arctic redfish:

Although redfish are not identified to species in catch data or quotas, the observer reports suggest that the species concerned in this fishery is *S. mentella* (beaked redfish). The ICES

¹ See for example <http://www.fishupdate.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/20910>

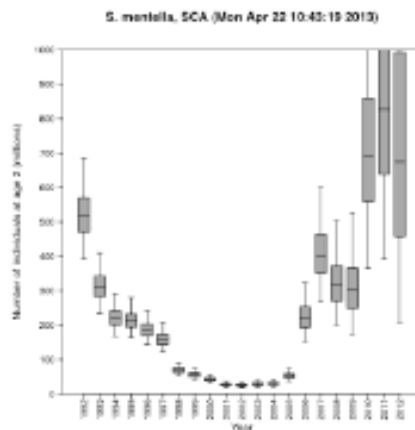
advice is uncertain (Figure 4), because of issues around the data (difficulties in distinguishing the two species in catches) and the biology of the species (e.g. age and growth). The ICES assessment (a statistical analysis of catch-at-age), suggests that the prolonged recruitment failure of the mid-1990s to 2000s is now at an end, but since the species is long-lived, this is now feeding into spawner biomass, leading to a decline which may last for a significant period. On this basis, an MSY reference-point type approach might not be precautionary – an ICES study is proposed to consider this issue, which will take place during 2014 (ICES 2013d).

Estimated catches (by ICES) appear to be consistent with ICES advice over recent years (catch to correspond with advice: 47,000 t 2013, 24,000 t 2014; estimated landings 16,000 t for 2012 – more recent estimates not yet available). The advice of 24,000 t for 2014 is based on maintaining the status quo, which ICES appear to consider is precautionary for the moment.

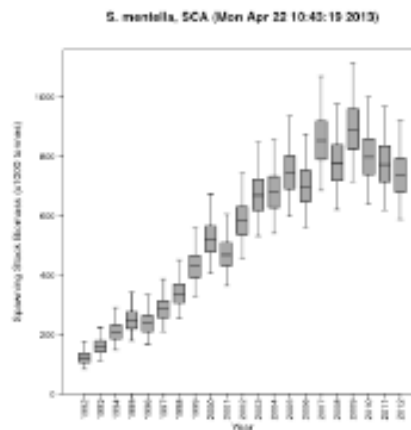
Stock status

F (Fishing Mortality)		
		2010–2012
MSY (F_{MSY})	?	Unknown
Precautionary approach (F_{PA} , F_{lim})	?	Unknown
SSB (Spawning-Stock Biomass)		
		2011–2013
MSY ($B_{trigger}$)	?	Unknown
Precautionary approach (B_{PA} , B_{lim})	?	Unknown
Qualitative evaluation	→	

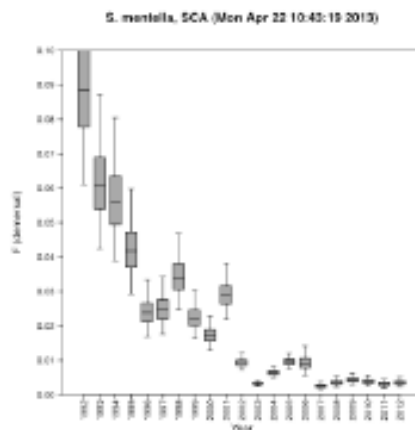
Recruitment-at-age 2



Spawning-Stock Biomass



Fishing mortality demersal



Fishing mortality pelagic

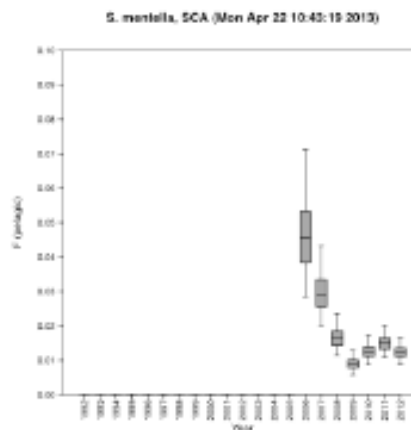


Figure 4. Summary of most recent ICES assessment: Top: assessment (or lack of assessment) of stock status in relation to reference points, Middle: estimates of recruitment at age 2 (left) and spawner biomass (right), Bottom: estimates of fishing mortality – demersal (left) and pelagic (right) (ICES 2013d).

Following the year 1 audit, the following recommendation was made in relation to retained species:

The assessment team recommends that Euronor participate in attempts to collect more data on redfish, Greenland halibut, tusk and megrim, in an attempt to improve scientific assessment of this stock.

Euronor continues to participate in the Ifremer observer programme (ObsMer) and the recommended species continue to be sampled by observers on Euronor vessels. Observer 2137R10A | MacAlister Elliott and Partners Ltd.

reports are communicated to the fishing company within two months, and the information collected are housed on the French fisheries data system (SIH <http://www.ifremer.fr/sih>) at Ifremer, and shared with ICES Working Groups.

5.2. DISCARDED BY-CATCH

During this year's audit, Euronor provided 10 observer reports. These were all from the fresh-fish vessels Bressay Bank, André Leduc, Cap Saint Georges and Halten Bank II – it remains impossible to obtain observers for the longer (45-60 day) trips undertaken by the freezer vessels. The team analysed the observer reports for discard rates and main discarded species for the 12 observed saithe trips, as shown in Table 5. Note that the species given in Table 5 do not constitute 'main' discard species, because the total percentage of discards is <5% in most cases.

Table 5. Discard rates (%total catch weight) per trip as reported in observer reports. Note that hauls where no saithe was caught (targeting Greenland halibut or redfish) have been excluded.

Trip	Details	Total %weight discarded	Species making up >5% of discards in weight (with % of quantity discarded)
1	André Leduc 9/6/13	4%	hake (39%), gurnard (18%), horse mackerel (9.1%), saithe (8.3%), mackerel (6.7%)
2	André Leduc 13/9/13	1%	hake (31%), gurnard (17%), horse mackerel (16%), saithe (8.9%), chimaera (7.3%)
3	André Leduc 14/3/13	4%	saithe (43%), gurnard (23%), mackerel (22%), squid (8.1%)
4	Bressay Bank, 14/6/13	3%	hake (39%), chimaera (22%), gurnard (7.8%), saithe (5.8%)
5	Cap St. Georges 7/1/13	2%	hake (37%), saithe (15%), chimaera (11%), argentine (7.2%), squid (7.1), blue whiting (5.9%)
6	André Leduc 8/3/13	3%	chimaera (45%), saithe (30%), squid (5.6%), gurnard (5.2%), hake (5.1%)
7	Bressay Bank 3/6/13	6%	hake (58%), argentine (20%), blue whiting (11%)
8	Bressay Bank 13/2/13	1%	hake (28%), gurnard (22%), haddock (19%), whiting (8.5%),
9	Bressay Bank 22/4/13	6%	argentine (87%), gurnard (5.9%)
10	Halten Bank 29/7/13	5%	hake (51%), whiting (14%), saithe (12%), megrim (6.6%), horse mackerel (5.0%)

Previous species identified in the Public Certification Report for this fishery as possible 'main' bycatch species were Norway pout, horse mackerel, herring, mackerel, argentine, blue whiting, common and bigeye chimaera, and grey gurnard. Based on the figures above, there are no 'main' bycatch species, since no discarded species comes close to representing 5% of the total catch in any of the observer reports.

A full list of all the species mentioned in the observer reports as discarded, excluding those mentioned above either as retained or as discarded, is given in Table 6. Note that this represents a small number of individuals of each species. Common skate are considered further under ETP species below.

Table 6. Full list of species mentioned in the observer reports (not mentioned above).

Bony fish	Elasmobranchs	Other
<i>Helicoleus dactylopterus</i> (rockfish) <i>Zeus faber</i> (John Dory) <i>Chelidonichthys cuculus</i> (red gurnard) <i>Glyptocephalus cynoglossus</i> (witch) <i>Lycodes esmarkii</i> (eelpout) <i>Phycis blennoides</i> (forkbeard) <i>Macrourus berglax</i> (roughhead grenadier) <i>Pleuronectes platessa</i> (plaice) <i>Trachipterus arcticus</i> (dealfish) <i>Cottunculus thomsonii</i> (sculpin) <i>Sebastes viviparus</i> (Norway redfish)	<i>Scyliorhinus canicula</i> (small-spotted catshark) <i>Galeus melastomus</i> (black-mouthed catshark) <i>Dipturus batis</i> complex (common skate) <i>Squalus blainville</i> (long-nose spurdog) <i>Dipturus linteus</i> (or <i>lintea</i>) (sailray) <i>Leucoraja naevus</i> (cuckoo ray) <i>Amblyraja radiata</i> (thorny skate) <i>Leucoraja circularis</i> (sandy ray) <i>Galeus murinus</i> (mouse catshark) <i>Raja fyllae</i> (round ray) <i>Bathyraja spinicauda</i> (spinetail ray) <i>Leucoraja fullonica</i> (shagreen ray) <i>Squalus acanthias</i> (spiny dogfish) <i>Mustelus asterias</i> (smoothhound) <i>Amblyraja hyperborea</i> (Arctic skate) <i>Etmopterus spinax</i> (velvet-bellied lanternshark)	<i>Loligo</i> spp.

5.3. ETP SPECIES

The most critical ETP species identified at assessment as having potential interactions with this fishery is the common skate *Dipturus batis* (now identified as a species complex). A small number of individuals of *D. batis* was identified from the observer reports (it is difficult to evaluate exactly how many because it is not clear whether numbers given represent samples or the total catch). The animals were discarded as required by EU regulations. Company policy is that rays and sharks are not landed (see Audit report for Year 3), but the audit team did not check every logsheet to verify this. It is unknown what proportion of rays and sharks were discarded live vs dead – this is not recorded in the observer reports.

The observer reports covered some trips which were partly targeting saithe and partly targeting Greenland halibut and redfish, and the audit team noted that tows targeting species other than saithe had a higher mix of species in the discards, and a higher probability of catching sharks and rays. Although the observer reports and the audit team made some effort to separate out the non-saithe tows, the list of species given above may include some species which are not taken with saithe.

It would be possible, from the observer reports, to analyse the locations in which elasmobranchs in general and common skate in particular are more likely to be caught. This may indicate some ‘hotspots’ which could be avoided in the future. Since the Euronor observer reports include only small numbers of these catches, the outcome of such an analysis

on these data would probably not be very meaningful, but Ifremer (who have access to the full ObsMer data set), may have done a fuller evaluation. **The audit team recommends that Euronor contacts Ifremer to request this information, if it is available.**

5.4. HABITATS AND ECOSYSTEMS

The activities of Euronor in relation to fishing areas have not changed since certification.

6. PRINCIPLE 3

No significant changes were identified in Principle 3. Marine Scotland Compliance in Peterhead (where Euronor vessels land their catch relatively frequently) reported no compliance issues and a cooperative attitude from the company (Craig Paterson, Marine Scotland Compliance, pers. comm., 3 April 2014).

7. TRACKING AND TRACING OF FISH PRODUCTS

Euronor's fresh saithe is all landed to the auction in Boulogne (including landings elsewhere which are brought to Boulogne by lorry). For the fresh product, it was concluded that the start of the chain of custody should be the point of sale. This has not changed.

Frozen product is landed in Boulogne and stored in a cold store by Euronor Distribution. Euronor Distribution has separate Chain of Custody certification.

During the year 1 audit there was some concern that insufficient precautions had been taken to avoid mixing of certified product with non-certified saithe caught in Faroese waters. This question is for the moment academic since the ongoing dispute about mackerel quotas means that no EU vessels may fish in Faroese waters for the moment.

8. CONCLUSION AND CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

The audit team concluded although no conditions had been set for this fishery, progress had been made to implement the non-binding recommendation given. This fishery's progress is therefore considered to be **on target**. On the basis of the above, Euronor **should** retain its MSC certification for North Sea and Northeast Arctic saithe for another year.

9. SURVEILLANCE SCORE

In accordance with the Certification Requirements v1.3, the frequency of future surveillance visits was calculated for this fishery. The overall surveillance score is calculated by adding the scores from Table 7 and matching those with the Surveillance Level in Table 8.

This fishery's score was calculated at 2, which implies a normal surveillance level with annual on-site surveillance audits.

Table 7. Criteria to determine Surveillance Score

Criteria	Surveillance Score	Euronor Score
1. Default Assessment Tree used?		
Yes	0	0
No	2	
2. Number of conditions		
Zero conditions	0	0
Between 1 – 5 conditions	1	
More than 5	2	
3. Principle level Scores		
≥85	0	2
≤85	2	
4. Conditions on outcome PIs?		
Yes	2	0
No	0	
Total Score		2

Table 8. Surveillance level

			Years after certification or recertification			
Surveillance score (from Table C3)	Surveillance level		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
2 or more	Normal Surveillance		On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit & recertification site visit
1	Remote Surveillance	Option 1	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit & recertification site visit
		Option 2	On-site surveillance audit	Off-site surveillance audit	On-site surveillance audit	
0	Reduced Surveillance		Review of new information	On-site surveillance audit	Review of new information	On-site surveillance audit & recertification site visit

