

Project title: FlexiFish – Developing flexible instruments for mixed fisheries

Duration: January 2023 – December 2026

Client: The Research Council of Norway

Project leader: Trond Bjørndal

Project description

Many commercial fisheries worldwide suffer from overexploitation. In many mixed fisheries, where several species are fished in continually changing ratios, bycatch and high-grading are problems of particular relevance. However, species are often managed individually, with quotas that do not align with catch proportions. This may lead to inefficient fishing practices, technological adjustments, discarding and misreporting. In addition to fishing, environmental conditions are main drivers of variability in marine ecosystems. In this context, improved management systems are called for. This research project compares various forms of regulations for managing mixed fisheries. The working hypothesis is that successful implementation of mixed fisheries management may require a more flexible control than what is achieved with traditional instruments such as single species quota setting. Flexibility is achieved by using a scheme that allows for quota transfers within and between periods together with quota trading. This might be combined with suitable penalties/rewards, either financially and/or through adjustment of quotas. The quota flexibility facilitates the fishers' ability to balance catches and quotas in mixed fisheries and supports the implementation of what is known as Pretty Good Yield (PGY) measures. Empirical studies will be undertaken for mixed fisheries in the North Sea, however, implications for international fisheries will also be considered. Moreover, the studies will be undertaken with consideration to relevant international fisheries agreement. The project includes different methodologies including biological and bioeconomic modelling in static and dynamic settings. Compliance behaviour will be included, with a sociological approach on how more flexibility can improve regulation legitimacy.