

Establishing a fishery for Greater weever (*Trachinus draco*)

Greater weever (*Trachinus draco*) is a demersal fish species that is found in shallow (1-30 m) coastal waters throughout Europe. It is typically found on sandy, muddy or gravelly bottoms, and can grow to a maximum length of 50 cm (common length=25 cm). In Danish waters, catches of greater weever are primarily taken in the Kattegat, however, the current regulations in the Kattegat inhibit the use of mesh sizes that can efficiently catch greater weever. The documented landings of greater weever in the Kattegat are consequently sporadic and fluctuate enormously. Subsequently, relatively little is known about the stock biomass, the spatial and temporal distribution of the species, its biology, as well as catch compositions of both target and bycatch species in the fishery.

An initial fishery conducted in collaboration with the commercial fishing vessel FN 267 Emilie, Fiskeristyrelsen and DTU Aqua in April 2019 showed that greater weever can be targeted commercially with very low unwanted bycatch in the Kattegat. This project aims to build on those results by establishing an understanding around the spatial and temporal dynamics of the species and fishery.

The fishery will take place from the beginning of March through to approximately the end of April, where there is a possibility for participation in the sampling. Throughout this period, data will be collected by onboard observers (DTU Aqua), CCTV cameras, and self-sampling will be undertaken by the fishermen. These data will help establish the basic knowledge about catch rates and catch compositions in the fishery for greater weever as well as the variation of these during the season in which fishing takes place. This knowledge will help form the basis for a scientific assessment of the possibilities and consequences of establishing a targeted trawl fishery for greater weever in the Kattegat. The expected results from the project are:

- Analysis of catch data from different sources over the fishing season.
- Description of the fishing practice in time and space, including CPUE of greater weever and bycatch.
- Analysis of population structure over fishing season.
- Additional biological data of greater weever relevant for stock assessment may be collected (e.g. size at maturation)

To hear more about the project please contact Jordan Feekings (jpfe@aquu.dtu.dk).

