# NATURAL RESOURCES - FISHERIES

### **Falkland Islands Government**



## Scientific Programme 2021 - 2023

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#### **Mission Statements**

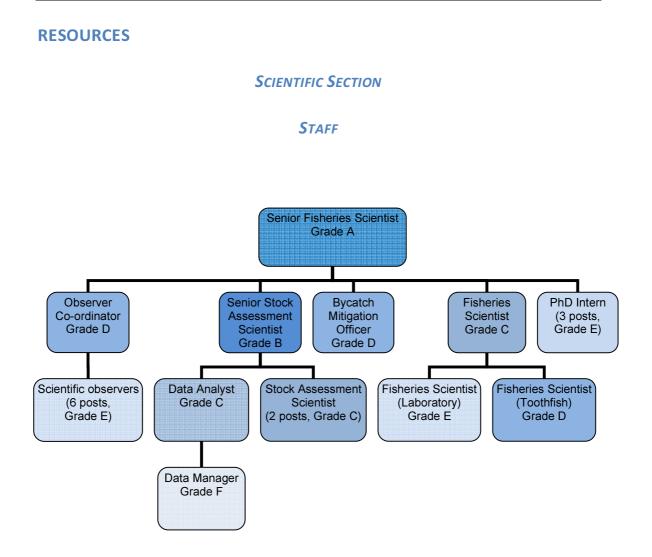
#### **FISHERIES DEPARTMENT**

The Fisheries Department's primary mission is to achieve maximum sustainable yield from fish and squid stocks in Falkland and adjacent waters in order to create long-term wealth for the community. This process is to be underpinned by effective Fisheries Science, Fisheries Protection, and Administration.

#### **FISHERIES SCIENCE**

Provision of scientific advice to Fisheries Management to exploit the marine resources around the Falkland Islands in a sustainable manner, achieved by:

- Collection and analysis of all available commercial and biological data
- Stock assessment and biomass estimates of main commercial species of fish and squid using up-to-date methods and modelling
- Studies of the biology, ecology and life cycles of the main commercial marine species inhabiting waters around the Falkland Islands
- Ecosystem approach to study key biological and physical parameters, and dynamics in waters around the Falkland Islands on the Patagonian Shelf, contributing to Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM)
- Minimisation of environmental impacts of fishing practices, and promote good environmental stewardship in the Falkland Islands



There is a scientific team of 20 people grouped into three subsections (scientific observers, stock assessment and fisheries studies) working on various subjects within the Scientific Fisheries Section, plus Bycatch Mitigation Officer and PhD intern positions.

#### **SCIENTIFIC SECTION**

#### BUDGET

The following funds are budgeted to accomplish the scientific tasks for the financial year 2020-2021. Similar funding is anticipated in future years of the programme.

Main budget votes of the Scientific Budget 0326:

Item	Budget (FKP)
1. Salaries and wages	789,364
2. Research	53,520
3. Charter fees for research vessel	375,440
4. Charter fuel	194,150
5. Fishing equipment	27,310

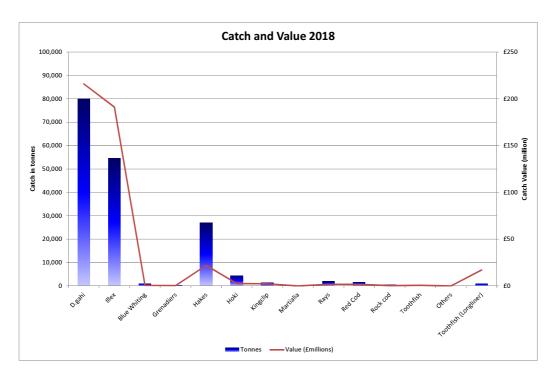
The detailed breakdown of the research budget is being prepared every year and is subject to tasks allocated for a given year.

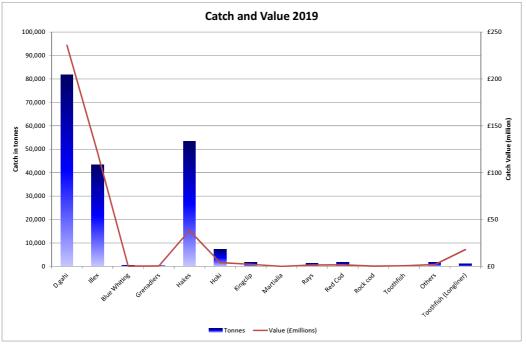
#### MAIN COMMERCIAL SPECIES WITHIN FICZ/FOCZ

Total catch (metric tonnes) of main commercial species in Falkland waters in every decade between 1987 and 2016 and their average catches in the four years (2017-2020).

	1987-1996	1997-2006	2007-2016	2017-2020
D. gahi (calamari)	74,786	43,047	46,348	71,829
Illex	140,749	105,401	125,493	57,039
Martialia	617	261	1	0
Hakes	11,558	3,108	13,991	34,926
Red Cod	4,708	4,621	4,147	1,555
Blue Whiting	42,352	24,787	7,233	972
Grenadiers	0	270	872	1194
Kingclip	1,361	1,884	3,168	1,603
Rock cod	0	2,973	47,014	1,611
Rays	4,326	4,015	5,870	2,020
Toothfish	859	1,910	1,409	1,305
Hoki	11,979	20,669	15,670	5,885
Scallops	0	252	6	6
Others	3,341	2,610	1,043	5,036
	296,636	215,808	272,265	184,981

#### TOTAL CATCH AND COMMERCIAL VALUE IN 2018 AND 2019





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#### **S**TATUS OF STUDIES AND STOCK ASSESSMENT OF MAIN COMMERCIAL SPECIES OCCURRING IN **F**ALKLAND ISLANDS WATERS

The data on the status of studies of each commercial species and their stock assessment are summarized in the Table below. Traffic light indicators are applied to describe the status.

Green – well studied, needs seasonal or annual monitoring of stock status. Yellow – some important points are unknown, needs further studies. Red – major points are unknown, needs to be studied.

Species	Abundance	Commercial value: Total catch (per kilo)	Life cycle studies	Stock structure	Stock assessment models applied	Conservation measures applied
Illex	Variable, between very high (catch >100,000 t) and very low (<10,000 t)	High (Medium)	Well studied. Spawning grounds known, feeding grounds known, migrations, trophic relations	Well known, several seasonally spawning cohorts	Depletion model but problematic to use because of straddling nature of South Patagonian Stock of Illex,	40,000 t spawning biomass threshold.
Loligo	High (catch 20,000-60,000 t)	High (High)	Well studied. Spawning grounds known, feeding grounds known, migrations, trophic relations	Well known, two seasonally spawning cohorts	Biomass survey before fishing season, depletion model in-season, biomass projection model post-season	10,000 t spawning biomass threshold, fishing ban on spawning and nursery grounds

Rock cod	Low (catch ~less than 10,000 t)	Low (Low)	Well studied. Spawning grounds known, feeding grounds known, the migration extent is known, trophic relations known	Stock consists of one interbreeding population around the Falkland Islands. Relationship with stocks from the Argentine EEZ is unclear.	Regular annual swept-area surveys of the stock in FICZ	11,000 t TAC for the 2021 fishing season
Southern blue whiting	Static at low level (catch ~2,000 t)	Low (Low)	Well studied. Spawning grounds known, feeding grounds known, migrations known, trophic relations known	Well known, interchangeable stocks with Argentina and Chile.	Straddling stock, some problems in application of stock assessment models without the knowledge of the Argentinean part	TAC of 2,000 t for 2013; fishing ban in spawning grounds since 2010
Hoki, whiptail hake	Medium (catch ~20,000 t, with possibility to increase)	Medium (Low)	Not well studied. Spawning grounds unknown, feeding grounds known, migrations known, trophic relations unknown	Not well-known, needs further studies, same stock as Argentina and possibly Chile.	Straddling stock, problems in application of stock assessment models without the knowledge of the Argentinean part	Finfish effort limitations
Hakes	Medium (catch >10,000 t, with possibility to increase)	Medium (Medium)	Well studied. Spawning grounds known, feeding grounds known, migrations known, trophic relations known	Not well-known, needs further studies, , same stock as Argentina and possibly Chile.	Straddling stock, some problems in application of stock assessment models without the knowledge of the Argentinean part	Catch by limited effort in A-licensed fishery and targeted fishery not allowed for other licences (W and G)

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Red cod	Low (catch <10,000 t, with possibility to increase)	Medium (High)	Well studied. Spawning grounds known, feeding grounds known, migrations known, trophic relations known	Not well-known, needs further studies, possibly same stock as Argentina and Chile.	Low migratory stock, swept-area method	Fishing ban in spawning grounds since 2010
Kingclip	Low (catch <10,000 t, with possibility to increase)	Low (High)	Not well studied. Spawning grounds unknown, feeding grounds known, migrations unknown, trophic relations known	Not well-known, needs further studies, possibly same stock as Argentina and Chile.	Straddling stock, some problems in application of stock assessment models without the knowledge of the Argentinean part	Finfish effort limitations
Toothfish	Low (catch <10,000 t)	Medium (High)	Well studied. Spawning grounds known, feeding grounds known, migrations known, trophic relations known	Not well-known, needs further studies, possibly minor interchange with stocks from Argentina and Chile	Age-based production model with use of CASAL statistical package	1,040 t TAC, fishing ban in spawning grounds
Skates	Low (catch <10,000 t)	Medium (Medium)	Not well studied. Spawning grounds unknown, feeding grounds known, migrations unknown, trophic relations known	Not well-known, needs further studies, possible overlap on stocks of some species with Argentina and Chile.	Skate stocks are assessed annually using a biomass production model. In some years, by swept-area surveys during research cruises	No specialized fishery to the south of 51ºS.

#### **OUTCOMES FROM THE LAST PROGRAMME 2018-2020**

Main outcomes of the scientific programme 2018-2020 are listed below. Traffic light indicators are applied to describe the status.

Green – Fully completed. Yellow – partially completed, reasons given. Red – nit completed, explanations given

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Outcomes
Objective #1 On-going	Carry out stock assessment and biomass estimates of main commercial species of fish and squid.	Stock Assessment Scientists, Senior Fisheries Scientist	Review relevant stock assessment models and techniques. Develop new stock assessment models that will include environmental parameters.	Regular stock assessments are conducted of main commercial species <i>D. gahi</i> and toothfish. Initial stock assessments using data- poor methods have been conducted in the past three years for all commercial finfish species, and will be updated and revised according to guidelines from the MEP external review. The first stock assessment of <i>I. argentinus</i> in over a decade was conducted in 2019 using data made available that year through the data exchange of the Scientific Sub-Committee of the South Atlantic Fisheries Commission
2018-2019	Introduction of TAC in finfish fisheries with allocation of individual TAC to companies	Data Analyst, Stock Assessment Scientists, Senior Fisheries Scientist	TAC of all commercial finfish species for individual companies	An exercise has been made to set TAC based calculation of VUs in finfish fishery and compare that with the current TAE calculation of VU. External reviewer (MEP) was chosen to provide the advice for finfish fisheries studies and management in 2020. Their advice will be considered in the next programme.

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Outcomes
Objective #2 ongoing	To collect and analyse all available commercial data and produce licensing advice and TAC (where available) for every type of Falkland fisheries.	Data Analyst, Stock Assessment Scientists	Address the data quality issue; improve the data base structure and queries.	All data were checked and entered into commercial and biological databases. The data were analysed to produce reports and licensing advice. A standardized program of parallel trawl surveys in February between the <i>D. gahi</i> fishing zone ( <i>Loligo</i> Box; to the east) and finfish zone (to the west) has now been implemented in 8 of the past 11 years. For the past two years, survey biomass estimates have been summarized in a comprehensive report to provide time series indices for the major Falkland Islands commercial fishery species.
2018	Catch reporting by e-logbooks in all Falkland fisheries	Data Analyst, Stock assessment scientists In conjunction with Synergy	Same day acquisition of catch data from finfish fleet Facilitation of data entry and data management in all fisheries	E-logbooks are operational in all fleets apart from jiggers. It has been challenging to introduce them in jiggers as some of these vessels do not have regular email (yet) and have their communication with Fisheries Department via their agents.

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Outcomes
Objective #3 On going	Studies of biology, ecology and life cycles of main commercial marine species inhabiting waters around the Falkland Islands	Senior Fisheries Scientist	Reveal population structure by genetic and fine chemical methods. Identify migration routes and stock dynamics by research surveys.	Reports on biology and life cycles of main commercial species from Falkland Islands waters. The Fisheries Department worked directly, subcontracting external genetic and chemical laboratories when necessary. Genetic studies showed two independent toothfish populations above and below Antractic Polar Front. Trace element analyisi of toothfish juveniles revealed two source populations in the Falkland Islands, Diego Ramirez and Burdwood Bank.
2018	Environmental factors influencing abundance and migrations of <i>Illex</i> squid	Senior Fisheries Scientist, Stock assessment scientist	Possible incorporation of environmental parameters into stock assessment models	Sampling has been collected during 2019-2020 for this project, and analysed fully by PhD Intern I. Chemshirova in 2020. A paper has been submitted. Results could be used in prediction of squid size and maturity relative to SSTs in January-February before the start of the fishing season.
2018-2020 ongoing	Investigation of stock structure and population dynamics of main finfish species (hake, rock cod) and bycatch species (kingclip, red cod)	Fisheries Scientist, Stock assessment scientists	Understanding of spatial and temporal variability in abundance, reproductive, and trophic patterns	In 2018-2020, studies were mainly concentrated on hake which is now the main commercial species in finfish fishery. Sampling has been completed including otoliths, genetic samples and feedin g spectrum of hakes in different parts of their species range. It is strated to be analysed in 2020.
2018-2019	Studies of distribution and migration of juvenile toothfish on the Falkland Shelf	Senior Fisheries Scientists, Fisheries scientist	Data for stock assessment of toothfish	The study has been completed by Toothfish Scientist B. Lee and is being submitted for publication. Reports and presentations have been made. Positive correlation of the ACC eddies passing from easter part of Burdwood Bank onto the Falkland Shelf and recruitment abundance has been identified.

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Outcomes
<b>Objective #4</b> 2018-2019	Decrease of finfish by-catch in skate fisheries	Senior Fisheries Scientist, Stock assessment scientists, Fisheries Scientist	Summary of mesh size experiments to avoid the by-catch of finfish and squid species in skate fisheries	Sea trials using commercial vessels involved into skate fishery has been done in 2018. Recommendations of applicable mesh size to skate trawl fisheries (400 mm mesh in the codend) has been introduced into licence conditions since January 2021.
<b>Objective #5</b> On-going	Study key parameters and dynamics of marine ecosystems in the Falkland Conservation Zones and adjacent waters	Senior Fisheries Scientist, Data Analyst/Stock Assessment	Investigate dynamics in oceanography during research surveys and standard oceanographic transects.	Variability of environment and possible impact of recent climate change is being analysed using monthly oceanographic transects and hydrological surveys during research cruises. In 2020, plankton surveys have been carried out and plankton dynamics is being analysed.

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Outcomes
Objective #6 On going	To produce fisheries reports for Government and fishing industry and publish scientific papers	Senior Fisheries Scientist, Fisheries Scientist, Data Analyst/Stock Assessment Scientists	Summarize all commercial and biological data after each fishery season, encourage personnel to publish results of their research without delays.	Fisheries Statistics report has been produced annually with summaries of every commercial fishery around the Falkland Islands annually. Reports to Fisheries Committee are produced quarterly, and to FFLG – monthly. All other reports have been produced when required, with 22 scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals in 2018-2019.
Objective #7 On going	Reduction of incidental mortalities of seabirds, sea mammals and sharks to negligible levels	Senior Fisheries Scientist, Seabird Observer, Observer Co- ordinator	Mitigation measures to reduce contacts of sea birds and marine mammals with fishing gear	
2018-2020	To reduce seabird mortality in longline and trawl fisheries	Seabird Observer, Observer Co- ordinator	Improved Bird Scaring Devices, or discard management systems installed on the ships	Annual mortality estimates are produced in the annual reports and summarized in Fisheries Statistics Bulletin
2018-2019	To reduce and avoid seal mortalities in trawl fisheries	Senior Fisheries Scientist, Scientific Observers, Observer Co- ordinator	Optimum seal exclusion devices put within the trawl nets to prevent seals from entering codends and drowning	Licensing regulations to mitigate interactions between seals and trawl gear were introduced in 2018. Approved Seal Exclusion Device has to be fit into the net if seal mortalities exceed the maximum limit. A paper has been produced and published in Fisheries Research.

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Outcomes
Objective #8 On going	To meet the MSC standards in the toothfish longline fishery	Stock assessment scientist, Toothfish scientist, Fisheries scientist	Habitat model, with assessment of the longline impact and development of a move-on rule for VME species. Research on adult movement, and juvenile mortality Continued testing of the stock assessment model for robustness in face of uncertainty	MSC recertification was granted in November 2018, for a five year period. Habitat model was used for mapping of VMEs, a scientific paper has been produced by SAERI with FIFD scientists participation. Tagging report summarized the results of tagging and recaptures of toothfish in the last 3 years.

#### MAIN GOALS OF THE PROGRAMME 2021-2023

The following main goals will be continued to follow from the previous programme to ensure provisions of stock assessment and recommendations for management of the commercial fishery resources of the Falkland Islands.

- 1. Abundance and stock dynamics of main commercial species should be estimated both in-season and after-season and used for licensing advice, TAC/TAE allocation and management.
- Ecology, stock structure and migrations of main commercial species inhabiting waters around the Falkland Islands should be studied in sufficient detail that would create a basis to apply stock assessment models to better effect. Ecosystem structure will be analysed to prepare the background for Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management (EBFM).
- 3. Hydrographic/oceanographic factors affecting the variability in stock abundance should be studied to reveal possible environmental predictors to forecast the trends in stock biomass.
- 4. Work towards MSC Certification of *D. gahi* fishery when required and continue to provide advice for re-certification of toothfish longline fishery.
- 5. The impacts of various fisheries on the environment and ecosystems should be minimised.

#### SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME 2021 – 2023: KEY TASKS (DETAILED PLANS WILL BE PRODUCED EACH YEAR)

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Targeted Outcome	Resources	Timescales and Milestones
Main goal #1 On-going	Abundance and stock dynamics of main commercial species should be estimated both in- season and after- season.	Stock Assessment Scientists, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist	Review relevant stock assessment models and techniques including data poor models.	Stock assessments of main commercial species included into licensing advice produced every year	The Fisheries Department will work on stock assessments directly subcontracting statistical modellers for specific advice if necessary.	
2021	Analysis and evaluation of stock assessment methods including ICES species categories	Data Analyst, Stock Assessment Scientists, Senior Stock Assessment Scientist	TAC of all commercial finfish species for individual companies if recommended and accepted	TAC based calculation of VUs in finfish fishery with alternative TAE calculations based on individual species abundance	Demersal surveys of standing biomass of finfish species in FICZ	Introduction of new form of Licensing advice for finfish fisheries in 2022
2021-22	Stock assessment of Illex using depletion model and timing of squid occurrence in Falkland Zones	Stock Assessment Scientists, Senior Stock assessment scientist	Update of depletion model to estimate stock abundance and fisheries mortality rates	Recommendations for fisheries management of Illex including management measures for jigging fleet	Juvenile surveys, catches in observed commercial trawls, data on out of zone catches and whale depredation	Updated stock assessment in 2021- 2022

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Targeted Outcome	Resources	Timescales and Milestones
Main goal #2 ongoing	Ecology, stock structure and migrations of main commercial species inhabiting waters around the Falkland Islands	Fisheries scientist, Toothfish scientist, Senior Fisheries Scientist	Reveal population structure by genetic and fine chemical methods. Identify migration routes and stock dynamics by research surveys		The Fisheries Department will work directly, subcontracting external genetic and chemical laboratories	
2021-22	Demography of migrating stocks of Illex in Falkland waters	PhD Intern, Senior Fisheries Scientist	Population structure of Illex by using chemical and genetic methods with identification of seasonal cohorts by back calculation of their age	Basis for development of management scheme for Illex jigging fishery	The Fisheries Department will work directly, subcontracting external genetic and chemical laboratories	2021 – ageing of squid by statoliths 2022 – genetic and chemical studies
2021-22	Stock structure and population dynamics and migrations of main finfish species with hake as a target species	Fisheries Scientist, Sock assessment scientist, Senior Fisheries Scientist	Population structure of hake by using chemical and genetic methods	Seasonal and spatial regulation of hake fishery	Same as above	2021 – length- frequency analysis 2022 - chemical studies of otoliths 2023 - genetics

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Targeted Outcome	Resources	Timescales and Milestones
2021-2022	Life cycle and habitat use by toothfish on the Falkland Shelf	Toothfish Scientist, Fisheries Scientist Senior Fisheries Scientist	Scheme of toothfish life cycle with conservation measures to exploit the stock sustainably	Depending on the outcome, spatial and temporal fishing restrictions to prevent exploitation of 'sink' stocks.	The Fisheries Department will work directly, subcontracting external genetic and chemical laboratories	2021 – juvenile toothfish habitats 2022 – chemical analysis of otoliths and tagging to analyse migrations of adults
2021-2023	Studies of trophic chains on the Patagonian Shelf with identification of <i>D. gahi</i> place in it	PhD Intern, Fisheries Scientist, Senior Fisheries Scientist	Trophic relations on the Patagonian Shelf to make a background for EBFM using Ecosym and Ecopath modeling	Possible inclusion of diet component into the model of variability of <i>D. gahi</i> stocks	The Fisheries Department will work directly, subcontracting external genetic and chemical laboratories	2021 - food spectrum analysis 2022 – stable isotope analysis
2021-2023	Studies of seasonal and annual dynamics in species composition and abundance of zooplankton	Data Manager, Fisheries Scientist, Senior Fisheries Scientist	Role of various plankton groups in ecosystem of the Patagonian Shelf	Basis of EBFM modelling of the Patagonian Shelf	The Fisheries Department will work directly	2021-2022 Seasonal dynamics of crustacean and gelatinous plankton

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Targeted Outcome	Resources	Timescales and Milestones
Main goal #3 On-going from previous programme	Study key parameters and dynamics of marine ecosystems in the Falkland Conservation Zones and adjacent waters	Senior Fisheries Scientist, Data Analyst/Stock Assessment	Investigate dynamics in oceanography during research surveys and standard oceanographic transects	Possible inclusion of environmental parameters into stock assessment models	The Fisheries Department will work directly subcontracting external oceanographic institutions when necessary.	Monthly oceanographic transects, hydrological surveys
Main goal #4 On-going	MSC Certification. Preparation of data and materials for possible certification of <i>D. gahi</i> fishery when required and continue to provide advice for re- certification of toothfish longline fishery	Stock Assessment Scientist (MSC), Senior Stock Assessment Scientist, Senior Fisheries Scientist	Updated toothfish stock assessment and management; Strategy for managing bycatch and bait species in longline fishery; Strategy for managing vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) in longline fishery.	Data for the surveillance /reassessment produced and submitted to the certification body (CAB) on schedule; Successful MSC recertification of the toothfish fishery.	FIFD will lead the work, in collaboration with SAERI (primarily for benthic habitats work) and CFL (for research cruise organization and fishery related issues).	3 <sup>rd</sup> annual surveillance audit: September 2021 4 <sup>th</sup> annual surveillance audit and fishery reassessment: September 2022

Objective	Task or Action	Lead Person	Targeted Output	Targeted Outcome	Resources	Timescales and Milestones
Main goal #5 On going	Minimise the impacts of various fisheries on the environment and ecosystems	Bycatch Mitigation Officer Senior Fisheries Scientist, Observer Co- ordinator	Development of new mitigation measures to reduce interactions of megafauna with fishing vessels		The Fisheries Department will work directly	
2021-2023	To mitigate seabird interactions in longline and trawl fisheries	Same as above	Improvement of mitigation methods, with research on net entanglement and discard tank mitigation	Decrease of seabird net mortalities to negligible levels	The Fisheries Department will work directly	2021 - Net-binding trials on commercial vessels 2022-2023 – discard tank effects on seabird interactions with fishing vessels
2021-2023	To mitigate seal interactions in trawl fisheries	Same as above	Seal Exclusion Device (SED): monitoring of usage and improvements, finfish SED trials	Decrease of seal net mortalities to negligible levels	The Fisheries Department will work directly	2022-2023 – trials of SEDs in finfish fisheries
2021-2023	To mitigate shark mortalities in bottom longlining	Bycatch Mitigation Officer Senior Fisheries Scientist, Stock assessment Scientist (MSC)	Measures to minimise shark bycatch by preventing hooking	List of measures to prevent shark bycatch in the longline toothfish fishery	The Fisheries Department will work directly	2022 - Trials on commercial longliner