

14th MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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SC14 - DW 06

History of Toothfish fisheries in SPRFMO

Chairperson of the DWWG

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Deepwater Working Group Chair

Introduction

Patagonian toothfish has been targeted since the 1980's and Antarctic toothfish fisheries in CCAMLR waters directly to the south of SPRFMO commenced in the mid 1990s. Patagonian toothfish fisheries within the Australian and Chilean EEZs directly adjacent to SPRFMO also started or expanded at around this time. There are reports of toothfish being caught within what are now SPRFMO waters prior to SPRFMO entering into force, but this data has not been made available to SPRFMO.

The first formal exploratory fishing for toothfish within the SPRFMO convention area commenced in 2016, undertaken by New Zealand. Since that time the EU, Chile Australia and Republic of Korea have all participated in exploratory fisheries for toothfish within SPRFMO.

This paper will outline the history of approved exploratory fisheries within SPRFMO including where and when catches have occurred and how many tagged fish have been released and recaptured.

Exploratory fishing framework

SPRFMO introduced the new and exploratory fishing framework in 2016. The requirements were implemented in CM 13-2016 which has been updated four times, with the current requirements outlined in CMM 13- 2024 [CMM 13-2024 Exploratory Fisheries \(CONSEQ2026\)](#).

The objective of the exploratory fishing framework set out in CMM 13 is to evaluate the long term potential of new and exploratory fisheries, to assist the formulation of management advice, to evaluate the possible impacts on target stocks and non-target and associated and dependent species, to ensure new and exploratory fishery resources are developed on a precautionary and gradual basis and to promote the sustainable management of new and exploratory fisheries.

CMM 13 also sets out that once an exploratory fishery has been fished for 10 years, any further fishing in that fishery shall be undertaken only in accordance with a CMM adopted by the Commission. The CMM also allows for the management of a fishery as an established fishery before 10 years of exploratory fishing.

For Toothfish, exploratory fisheries have typically been separated by flag and area, with each member conducting an exploratory fishery in a specified area where no other

exploratory fishery is authorised for that period of time. Each exploratory fishery may be split into smaller areas each with their own catch limits.

Exploratory fishing is required to be conducted under a Fishery Operational Plan (FOP) and the requirements are set out under a specific CMM for that member. To date exploratory fisheries FOPs have been approved for a period of three years.

Exploratory fishing requirements

Current exploratory fishing requirements for the four active exploratory fisheries are set out in CMMs 14e, 14f, 14h and 14i. Typically these CMMs outline the duration of exploratory fishing, the catch and effort limits as well as the authorised vessel.

The CMMs all include data collection requirements which typically outline that data will be collected as required under CMMs 02 and 03, with some outlining the use of CCAMLR data collection tools.

All of the CMMs require the carriage of least one scientific observer and either an additional data collection officer or a second observer. All CMMs require at least 3 fish per tonne tagged (EU tag 5 fish per tonne) with a minimum tagging overlap for the trip of 60%.

Seabird mitigation is required in all exploratory fisheries and typically includes line weighting and tori lines meeting CCAMLR standards, although these requirements differ in implementation.

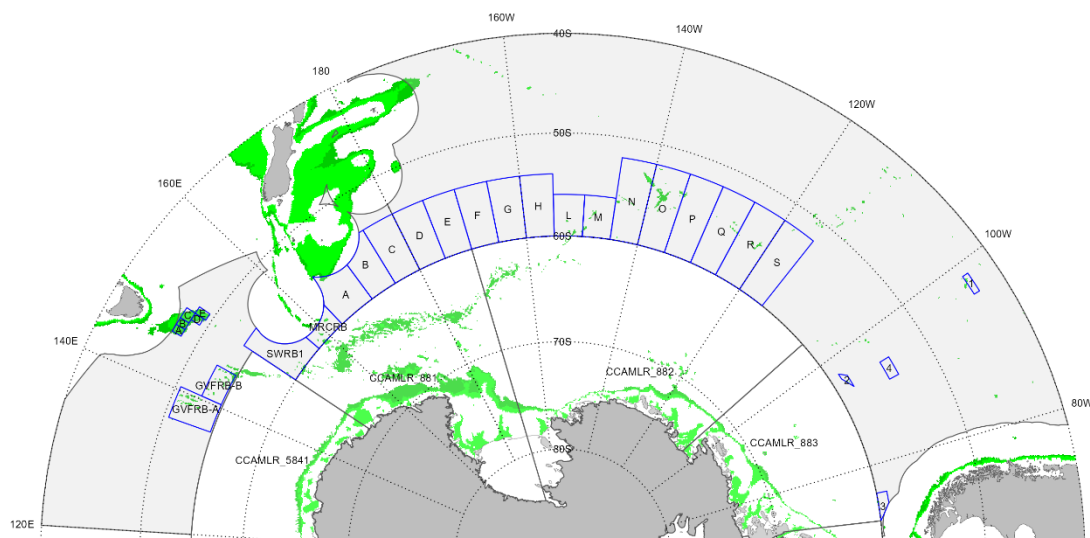
Exploratory fishing results

A total of 29 SPRFMO exploratory toothfish fishing areas have been approved (Figure 1). Toothfish catch, effort and tag data within approved areas were collated from SPRFMO Scientific Committee reports for the period 2016 to 2024.

In 2016 and 2019 to 2024, toothfish fishing was reported in 14 areas (Table 1). Over this period, there was 583 t of toothfish catch from 319 hauls and 1,292,029 hooks of effort. Most of the toothfish catch was in areas EU_GVFZRB-A (311 t) and NZ_N (203 t). In some areas, there was fishing effort with no toothfish catch (e.g. areas EU_A-E).

In 2016 and 2019 to 2024, 2,603 toothfish were tagged and released (Table 1). Of these, 15 tagged toothfish were recaptured from a previous year and from the same area.

Figure 1. SPRFMO exploratory toothfish fishing areas.



Notes: SPRFMO convention area between 40-60S is shaded light grey. Approved SPRFMO exploratory toothfish fishing areas are blue boxes. Fishable areas between 600-1800 m depth are shaded light green and fishable areas between 1800-2500 m depth are shaded dark green, using GEBCO Compilation Group 2026 grid (doi:10.5285/37c52e96-24ea-67ce-e063-7086abc05f29) at 10 km resolution. Areas A to E (or EU_A to EU_E in Table 1) at South Tasman Rise below Tasmania are defined in CMM-14c-2019 and areas A to E (or NZ_A to NZ_E in Table 1) below New Zealand are defined in CMM14i-2025. Neighbouring CCAMLR subareas are shown.

Table 1. Catch, hooks, hauls, years fished, and tag information by area, 2016–2025.

Approved exploratory toothfish fishing area	Years fished	Toothfish catch (t)	Effort (hooks)	Effort (hauls)	Tags released	Tags recaptured
AU_MRCRB	2 ('24)	7.1	116549	24	38	0
CH_1	-	-	-	-	-	-
CH_2	-	-	-	-	-	-
CH_3	-	-	-	-	-	-
CH_4	-	-	-	-	-	-
EU_A	1 ('19)	0	19908	4	-	-
EU_B	1 ('19)	0	4977	1	-	-
EU_C	1 ('19)	0	4977	1	-	-
EU_D	1 ('19)	0	4977	1	-	-
EU_E	1 ('19)	0	4977	1	-	-
EU_GVFRB-A	5 ('21-'25)	430.3	861851	177	2226	11
EU_GVFRB-B	2 ('24-25)	63.7	141568	32	331	0
NZ_A ¹	1 (25)	-	-	-	-	-
NZ_B	-	-	-	-	-	-
NZ_C	-	-	-	-	-	-
NZ_D	-	-	-	-	-	-
NZ_E	-	-	-	-	-	-
NZ_F	-	-	-	-	-	-
NZ_G	-	-	-	-	-	-
NZ_H	-	-	-	-	-	-
NZ_L	6 ('19-'24)	4.0	152546	47	734	8
NZ_M	2 ('21,'22)	0	11241	4		
NZ_N	6 ('19-'24)	203.1	179494	57		
NZ_O	4 ('19-'21,'24)	0.1	95181	29		
NZ_P	-	-	-	-		
NZ_Q	1 ('22)	0	34280	13	734	8
NZ_R	-	-	-	-	-	-
NZ_S	-	-	-	-	-	-
NZ_SWRB1	1 (25)	1	33423	9	5	-
NZ_H,L,M,N	1 ('16)	29.0	35994	7	104	0
Total	8 ('16,'19-'25)	738.3	1701943	407	3400	19

Notes: Catch and effort information was not available by area in 2016, so was reported under multiple areas (NZ_L-N). Tag information was not available by area for NZ, so was reported under multiple areas (NZ_L-N and NZ_L-Q). Tag recaptures refer to recaptures from a previous season (not including recaptures within the season the tag was released) and from the same area.

Key links

Current exploratory fishery CMMs

CMM14e-2024 Exploratory fishing for toothfish by EU [CMM 14e-2024 Exploratory Toothfish EU\(CONSEQ2026\)](#)

CMM 14f-2024 Exploratory fishing for toothfish by Australia [CMM 14f-2024 Exploratory Toothfish AUS \(CONSEQ2026\)](#)

CMM 14h-2025 Exploratory fishing for toothfish by Korea [CMM 14h-2025 Exploratory Toothfish Fishery-KOR](#)

¹ Results are reported combined with NZ_SWRB1

CMM 14i-2025 Exploratory fishing for toothfish by New Zealand [CMM141-2025 Exploratory Toothfish Fishery](#)

Reports on exploratory toothfish fishing

2016 New Zealand report [SC-04-DW-02-New-Zealands-exploratory-fishery-for-toothfish-within-the-SPRFMO-Convention-Area.pdf](#)

2017 New Zealand report [SC5-DW02-Toothfish-update-2017.pdf](#)

2019 New Zealand report [SC7-DW04](#)

2020 EU report [SC8-DW08](#)

2020 New Zealand report [SC8-DW09](#)

2021 New Zealand report [SC9-DW04](#)

2021 Chile report (nil fishing) [SC9-DW16](#)

2022 New Zealand report [SC10-DW07](#)

2022 EU report [SC10-DW08](#)

2022 Chile report (nil fishing) [SC10-DW09](#)

2023 New Zealand report [SC11 – DW11_rev1](#)

2023 EU report [SC11 – DW14](#)

2024 EU report [SC 12 – DW 03](#)

2024 Australia report (short summary) [SC 12 – DW 04](#)

2025 Australia report [SC13 - DW 02](#)

2025 Korea report [SC13 - DW 05](#)

2025 EU report [SC13 - DW 06](#)

2025 New Zealand report [SC13 - DW 07](#)