**Celtic Seas and northern Bay of Biscay megrim (*Lepidorhombus whiffiagonis*) Otolith exchange (ICES 7.b-k – 8.a,b,d) (SmartDots event: 355)**

An otolith exchange from the Celtic Seas and northern Bay of Biscay stock (Div. 7.b–k and 8.a,b,d) of megrim was performed after more than a decade. A total of 120 whole otoliths and images were analysed, representative of the whole range of specimens commercially captured. The “multistage modal age approach” was used, and the percentage of multiple mode cases was reduced from 13% (traditional approach) to 0% (multistage approach).

For **all readers**, the overall agreement (PA) was 46%, CV was 23%, APE was 17% and relative bias (RB) was 0.32.

For **advanced readers**, the overall agreement (PA) was 49%, CV was 22%, APE was 16% and relative bias (RB) was 0.21.

 For the **readers involved in the assessment** of this stock, similar results were obtained: overall PA of 48.8 %, CV of 18.6%, and RB of 0.29.

 In no case the agreement exceeds 50%, or CV was lower than 10%.

Strata **semester** was analysed showing better results for **all readers** in the first semester compared to the second one: PA (50% vs 47%), CV (21% vs 22%), APE (15% vs 16%), RB (0.30 vs 0.12). The overall PA have values over 50% only for ages 3 to 6, CV doesn’t show any particular pattern, in fact it is over 20% for all modal ages except age 3. The modal ages estimated with highest accuracy are 3 and 4, the rest of modal ages are in general overestimated systematically until the age 9 when systematic underestimation appears and progressively get worse. Different criteria in the identification of the true annuli appeared. Worst results in present exchange than in previous megrim age estimation exchanges and workshops (almost all based on stock 7.b-k, 8.abd) are observed. General concerns related to the age estimation in that stock were found, **a new workshop is** **recommended to unify reading criteria.** Additionally, a reference collection training, with examples of structure’ interpretations clearly explained is recommended due to the difficulty of interpretation for otolith with high degree of opacity. A reference collection, trainings and continue calibration EXs for all readers are recommended.

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