CIESM Congress Session : Fish biology / early stages

Moderator : Timo Arula, Marine Inst., Tartu Univ., Estonia

Moderator's Synthesis

Since the session speakers focused on various aspects of fish early life, the discussion following the presentations also covered a diversity of subjects from eggs to stock recruitment processes, for instance how different salinity levels affect sprat eggs and embryos in the Mediterranean Sea and in the brackish Baltic Sea.

The general discussion covered in a large extent what has caused the collapse of the sprat stock in the Mediterranean Sea and whether salinity condition actually control recruitment formation via sprat embryonal survival. A second axis of the general debate concerned larval fish habitat quality and the optimal prey conditions in larval fish habitats. To the question of how can better feeding conditions during larval stage result in lower growth rates, the response was ad libitum feeding conditions probably support the survival of genetically weaker individuals that would starve in „normal“ prey conditions. Therefore, generally lower growth rates were observed in cohorts during the years of high prey abundance.

In concluding, it was stated that while extensive effort has been invested into larval fish studies over a century, the results often remain far remote from practical use and therefore have not been applied to fish stock recruitment dynamics analyses.

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