

The Cod Quality Project began with a pilot in 2014, and has continued successfully into 2015 and 2016, with proposed expansion for 2017. The key focus of the project has addressed four areas of the Newfoundland and Labrador cod fishery:

- Increasing our capacity for landing a high quality cod product in NL;
- Increasing the quantity of cod landed during the year while maintaining a high quality;
- Expanding the season for landing high quality fish;
- Improving prices for harvesters, which would bring additional economic benefits to rural communities; and
- Enabling processors to access a consistent supply of Northern Cod to support the quality-focused marketplace.

The Cod Quality Project is an important part of the process of refocusing and reimagining the NL cod fishery. To explain and show our ability to adapt to the demands of the new cod market, the Science Stewardship and Sustainability Board (FSSSB) in conjunction with Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAW-Unifor) and the Canadian Centre for Fisheries Innovation (CCFI) continues to demonstrate a local capacity for the inshore, owner-operator fleet to produce a high volume of excellent quality fish in all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador throughout the year.

To achieve this goal, strict handling protocols were developed for participating harvesters to follow so that results could be compared across landings sites using the same harvesting techniques. Documentation was also required from the handling and processing stages.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Fisheries and Land Resources (DFLR) together with Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) provided financial support to execute this project.

The project also benefited from support from industry organizations and processing companies. FFAW-Unifor has been an active partner throughout this project and approximately 22 different buyers and processors purchased fish from participating harvesters. Technicians were also trained and employed to ensure protocols were followed throughout the chain of custody and to assist in making improvements where necessary.

Participating harvesters were selected by random draw to represent the regions of the province. 33 enterprises harvesters have actively participated in the project, with the goal of doubling active sites for 2017. This is in response to feedback from buyers who have said in communities with active project sites quality exceeds that of quality of fish from communities where project sites do not exist. A project allocation of 6,000 lbs. of cod per month, over and above the harvester's Stewardship allocation, was allocated to Cod Quality Project participants.

Proposed activities for 2017 also include a train-the-trainer program, utilizing a set of materials developed by the Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters (CCPFH) to disseminate the already-developed protocols further. Those trained will then go into communities and continued to work with harvesters to share the protocols and best practices. For this extension we propose 500t be allocated for these purposes.

For 2017 we also propose expanding work on quality into autumn, in areas further than those areas fished within 12 miles during the Stewardship fishery in past years. The realities of the future groundfish fishery will mean vessels harvest further from land, and it is imperative that we begin similar work on ensuring a quality product is landed from vessels fishing outside of these limitations. Given that the Council proposes removing the 12 mile limit in 2017, timing is perfect for FSSSB and partners to begin similar quality work outside of the previous 12 mile limit. This project will be a crucial first step to this work, allowing harvesters and processors to develop and test similar protocols to ensure quality fish is available to market from all vessels, fishing in all areas. For this we anticipate 200t to be utilized.