

4. Discussion and Summary on BASIS 2002-2006 (Oral-34)

## **The SALSEA Programme – Improving Understanding of the Migration and Distribution of Salmon in the North Atlantic**

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The estimated pre-fishery abundance of salmon in the North Atlantic has declined by about half since in the 1980s. The decline in abundance is linked to increased mortality of salmon at sea despite major reductions in marine salmon fisheries all around the North Atlantic. While the decline in spawners is less marked because of reductions in exploitation, some populations, particularly in the southern parts of the range, are endangered. In response to this situation, NASCO established an International Atlantic Salmon Research Board to investigate the causes of salmon mortality at sea and the opportunities to counteract them. The Board has developed an inventory of marine research in relation to mortality of salmon at sea that details the considerable programmes of research underway around the North Atlantic. A major gap in the programme was identified as studies on the distribution and migration of salmon at sea. A comprehensive, innovative programme of research – the SALSEA Programme, was therefore developed. While research is on-going in inshore waters and acoustic tagging arrays are being extended seaward, scientific research fishing in offshore areas has been limited to date. Under the SALSEA Programme, a public-private partnership has resulted in funding for a major programme of marine surveys in the North-East Atlantic (off the west Coast of Ireland and Scotland, North of the Faroe Islands and in the Norwegian sea) in 2008 and 2009 and in the Northwest Atlantic (off Newfoundland and Labrador) in 2008. The 2008 surveys have been conducted. Genetic stock identification will be used to identify the region or river of origin of all post-smolts sampled and those obtained in earlier surveys. There are also plans to conduct an extended sampling programme during the West Greenland fishery. These new initiatives will be described and an up-date given on progress to date.