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In Confidence: Not to be quoted without reference
to the Laboratory

CRUISE REPORT

F.R.V. "MARA"

8-19 February 1971

Objective: To sample sandeel concentrations in the Moray Firth.

Narrative: Owing to refit delays the cruise did not begin until 9 February and it was decided to omit the stations SE of Orkney and concentrate on the Moray Firth around Smith's Bank. A total of 14 hauls were made of which 3 were on Smith's Bank, 4 south of the Bank and the remainder in the northern part of the Moray Firth where larval concentrations were recorded in February 1969.

Results:

Sandeels. The largest catches (1-1½ baskets) of sandeels were made in 3 hauls on Smith's Bank and in one haul to the south of the Bank. In all cases, these catches were composed of immature (A. marinus, at a modal length of 8-9 cm. A. marinus was also taken in smaller numbers in six other hauls, but in all cases these were also immature fish at a modal length of 8-10 cms. A few specimens of A. lanceolatus were also caught. No adult sandeels in spawning condition were caught.

Other Industrial Species: Sprats were taken in small quantities in six hauls, two to the north and four to the south of Smith's Bank, at a depth of 40-60 cm. Most specimens contained ripening gonads. Trisopterus esmarkii ranging from 7-11 cm were taken in three hauls, and Gadus minutus, with a length range 7-13 cm, were taken in six hauls. A few specimens of Argentina sphyraena were taken in one haul.

Other Species: The species making up the bulk of the catches were cod, haddock, whiting and common dabs. Their respective modal lengths were:

Cod - 12-13 cm
Haddock - 18-20 cm
Whiting - 17-21 cm
Common Dab - 13-16 cm

N.P.E. Langham

25 February 1971