



Bord Iascaigh Mhara
Irish Sea Fisheries Board

Seed Mussel Growth Report for the South Irish Sea – 20/08/2013 to 22/08/2013

Vessel: MV T'Burke (BIM), Skipper John Murphy, Survey Officer Nicolas Chopin

Equipment: 1 m dredge

Area surveyed: Previously found seed settlements at Cahore Point, Blackwater head and between the Lucifer bank and the Long Bank.

Survey summary:

➔ **Cahore Point:** Two tows were made on this small settlement and only a small amount of seed was brought back from each one. The seed has grown well though from 11.11 mm in average in July, it is nearly 22 mm in average now (largest around 30 mm and smallest at 8 mm), 58% of the seed (from the sample) is comprised between 20 and 26 mm. There is a large amount of waste composed of stones, shells and hydroids which represented 65% of the weight of the sample. The ratio per kilogram has evolved from 7180 Pieces/Kg to 1900 Pieces/Kg. Despite the amount of waste, the seed seems in good condition (tough shell) and few starfish were found in the dredges.

➔ **Blackwater Head:** An extra 11 tows were made on the various patches found earlier in July. 9 tows brought back good quantities of seed (from 20 kg to 60 kg per dredge). The average growth has increase across the patches, from 13 mm back in July to 20.5 mm in August. 58% of the seed (from the samples) is comprised between 20 and 26 mm, with the largest at 30 mm and the smallest at 7 mm. The amount of waste in the samples is around 30% (37% in average in July), mainly composed of byssus, small gravel, hydroids and sandy mud. Few starfish were found, especially on the larger patch on the east side. The average ratio per kilogram evolved from 5117 Pieces/Kg to 2000 Pieces/Kg.

The area blocked in July by whelk pots has been cleared and more seed was found in the location (30 hectares more for the large patch, see map), but the seed seemed a bit more scattered in that particular area. In average, the seed seems of good quality (tough shell, no or little mortality); starfish are appearing on the larger patch. The seed is still in patches on the seabed (see map).

➔**Lucifer Bank:** 7 tows were made on the bed location. 6 tows were made in the centre of the settlement and all of them came back filled up with large starfish and clumps of empty or broken seed mussel shells. A very little quantity of small seed is surviving for now; but taken the amount of predation in the location, there is a high possibility that it will be destroyed.

Recommendations:

The amount of seed in the South Irish Sea for 2013 looks to be limited to the settlement around Blackwater Head and the small bed in Cahore. Despite being of good quality, the estimated amount remain unchanged from the reports previously issued (4000 to 5000 tons for the Blackwater Head and few hundred tons for Cahore). There is a threat of starfish predation on both seed locations.

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Notes for the map:

TB stands for Tow Blackwater
GB stands for Grab Blackwater
dgd stands for dredge in the map legend
gb stands for grab in the map legend

