



Bord Iascaigh Mhara
Irish Sea Fisheries Board

Seed Mussel Growth Monitoring Report for the South Irish Sea beds – 27/08/2012

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

Equipment: 1 meter dredge

Survey Areas: seed mussel beds in the South Irish Sea, namely: Rosslare, Blackwater Bank, Rusk Channel buoys No. 1 and No.2.

Survey Summaries:

➔ **Rusk Channel buoys No. 1 (Green) and No.2 (Red):** Two samples were taken from the Green buoy bed. The seed has grown from 14 mm in average to nearly 22 mm in approximately one month and a half, which represents around 1000 Pieces/kg. A large class size (from 15 to 30 mm) represents 70% of the mussels from the samples. The north part of the bed has mortality due to starfish (60% of waste in the sample, mainly empty shells). The rest of the bed looks healthy with only 26 % of waste in the sample (mainly coarse sand and small stones stuck in byssus patches).

The seed bed observed close to the No.2 Red Buoy has been decimated by starfish, a number of tows were made in the bed location but no live seed was found.

More seed was found in the middle of the Rusk Channel close to the buoy No. 4. Only one tow was made.

Buoy No. 4 successful tow coordinates: (WGS 84Degrees, decimal minutes):

Latitude	Longitude
52° 30.962' N	006° 10.537' W
52° 30.816' N	006° 10.511' W

The seed at the buoy No.4 is smaller than the mussels on the other beds; the average size is 17 mm for approximately 2100 Pieces/kg. The waste is mainly byssus and coarse sand. The seed looks healthy and in good condition, there was few starfish found in the dredge. Due to time constrains, the survey of the area could not be extended.

➔ **Blackwater Bank:** Three tows were made on this seed mussel bed. The first one was inconclusive (few oyster shells with only a small bit of seed). The following ones were of better quality. The seed is still set on old oyster shells but the bed seems to be narrower than when first inspected. The seed is in good condition and the average size is approximately 25 mm, most of the seed in the sample were between 25 and 30 mm (other 40% of the overall seed). There is approximately 30% of waste on the bed (oyster shells, byssus and small stones). The seed on the Blackwater Bank showed the best growth signs for the South Irish Sea seed mussel beds.

➔ **Rosslare:** Three tows were made on the Rosslare bed. The three tows were successful and the dredges well packed. The seed looks in better conditions than during the first survey in the area back in June 2012. The current average size is over 23 mm (from 800 to 1200 pieces/kg) which is double the size of the seed found in June. The majority of the seed from the samples are in the 20 to 30 mm class (60 % of the overall samples). Some starfish were found in the dredges but no heavy mortality was observed.

Recommendations:

So far the best seed seems to be from the Blackwater Bank and Rosslare. The bed found close to the Red Buoy No. 2 has been wiped out but the bed close to the Green Buoy No. 1 is still looking in good condition and more seed was found close to the Buoy No. 4. No single large settlement was identified by the survey effort this year on the South Irish Sea, only scattered small beds well spread along the coast. Extra growth is expected before the current agreed seed mussel fishery opening date (September 6th) which should bring the average size of the seed to 20/30 mm in average.

Following this survey, samples were brought back to Wexford Harbour and showed to some of the producers. The general feeling is that the size of some of the seed is suitable for fishing.

The most recent reports also showed that starfish are widely spread on the beds around Cahore Point/ Rusk Channel.

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