



SALSEA-Merge - Advancing understanding of Atlantic salmon at Sea: Merging genetics and ecology to resolve stock-specific migration and distribution patterns

Project Details

Funding Programme: 7th Framework Programme (FP7)
 Sub-Programme: Cooperation, Theme 6: Environment
 (including Climate Change)
 Funding Scheme: Small to medium scale collaborative
 project
 Project Duration: 36 Months (2008-2011)
 Total Project Value: €5.6m
 EU Grant-Aid: €3.5m
 Funding to Ireland: €767,753
 Website: www.salmonatsea.com



Project Description

North Atlantic salmon have declined significantly in the past twenty years largely resulting from unexplained mortalities at sea. For the increasing efforts in salmon conservation to be successful, it will be necessary to gain a better understanding of how stocks of salmon from different regions and rivers vary in growth, condition and survival. These variations can be linked to different migration patterns and ecology during the marine phase of the life-cycle. Until now, it has not been possible to sample sufficient salmon during their oceanic phase to provide answers to these questions.

SALSEA-Merge is an ambitious international project to investigate the migration and distribution of salmon in the North-East Atlantic. It will involve three marine surveys in both 2008 and 2009 that will be conducted by Irish, Faroese and Norwegian research vessels. The origin of the sampled fish will be determined using the latest genetic stock identification techniques.

SALSEA-Merge will improve our knowledge of oceanic-scale ecological and ecosystem processes which might impact on salmon survival. Through a partnership of fourteen institutes from nine European countries, the programme will deliver innovation in the areas of: genetic stock identification techniques, new genetic marker development, fine scale estimates of growth on a weekly and monthly basis, the use of novel high seas pelagic trawling technology and individual stock linked estimates of food and feeding patterns. The use of the three-dimensional Regional Ocean Modeling System, merging hydrography, oceanographic, genetic and ecological data, will deliver novel stock-specific migration and distribution models. Uniquely the programme is also supported by five non contracting parties who have donated significant financial support (>€400,000) and technical expertise to the initiative. SALSEA-Merge forms part of a wider SALSEA programme involving partners from the US and Canada (www.salmonatsea.com).

Project Partners	
Project Coordinator	Institute of Marine Research, Norway
Ireland	Marine Institute University College Cork
UK	Fisheries Research Services (FRS) University of Exeter Queen's University Belfast University of Wales, Swansea
Finland	University of Turku Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute
Norway	Norwegian Institute for Nature Research
Denmark	Technical University of Denmark, DTU-Aqua
Iceland	Institute of Freshwater Fisheries
Spain	University of Oviedo
France	GENINDEXE

Irish Contacts
Dr Ken Whelan, Marine Institute Aquaculture Catchment and Management Services, Furnace Newport, Co. Mayo Ireland T: +353 98 42302 E: ken.whelan@marine.ie
Professor Tom Cross Department Of Zoology, Ecology and Plant Science Distillery Fields, North Mall University College Cork Ireland T: +353 21 490 4191 E: t.cross@ucc.ie