



Riksrevisjonen
Office of the Auditor General of Norway

The Office of the Auditor General's follow-up of the parallel audit with the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation of the management of the fish resources in the Barents Sea and the Norwegian Sea

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Summary

Background and goal of the investigation

For some time, it has been a primary goal of Norway's resource management to facilitate long-term value creation in the fisheries industry through the sustainable utilisation of resources. Norway and Russia cooperate on the management of the cod and haddock stocks in the Barents Sea and the Norwegian Sea in accordance with two bilateral agreements from 1975 and 1976 and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In 2006, the Office of the Auditor General and the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation carried out a parallel audit of the management and control of the fish resources in the Barents Sea.

The period investigated was 2003-2005. The Office of the Auditor General reported its findings to the Storting in 2007 in Document 3:2 (2007-2008) The Office of the Auditor General's investigation into the management and control of fish resources in the Barents Sea and Norwegian Sea – a parallel audit by the Norwegian Office of the Auditor General and the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation.

The 2007 audit showed that there was considerable unregistered Russian overfishing of cod in 2005. The investigation also showed that the Norwegian fisheries administration had good and adequate regulations and a good system for control, follow-up and sanctions against those guilty of violations. However, Norway's resource control and system of sanctions for violations of the fisheries regulations had certain weaknesses. There were also some deficiencies in the regulations. The investigation showed that the decisions made by the Joint Norwegian-Russian Fisheries Commission had largely been implemented by the Norwegian fisheries administration. However, the Norwegian and Russian authorities did not exchange information in accordance with the commission's decisions and Norwegian

researchers had encountered problems carrying out research cruises in Russian waters.

On the basis of the findings from the 2007 audit, the Office of the Auditor General and the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation decided to follow up the audit during the period 2008-2010. The goal of this follow-up investigation was to evaluate whether the management of the shared fish resources has improved since the period investigated in the 2007 audit and the extent to which the problems of illegal and unregistered fishing of cod and haddock have been solved.

Method

The investigation is based on interviews with the Norwegian and Russian authorities, analyses of statistical material and relevant documentation from the Storting and the government administration. Some of the interviews were carried out in cooperation with the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation.

The Office of the Auditor General of Norway and the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation have prepared separate and independent audit reports. They agreed on the goal and lines of inquiry. On the basis of the two reports, the Office of the Auditor General and the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation prepared a joint memorandum containing the results of the investigations and their joint assessments.

Results

The investigation shows that the scope of illegal and unregistered overfishing of cod in the Barents Sea has decreased considerably, from an estimated 100,000 tonnes in 2005 to no cases being uncovered in 2009. Resource control has been strengthened since the period investigated in the 2007 audit, among other things as a result of more resources being allocated to the Directorate of Fisheries and new technical aids. International control of fishing in the Barents Sea and the Norwegian Sea has also been strengthened through the introduction of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission's (NEAFC) port state control in 2007. The investigation also shows that the Norwegian system for control and enforcement largely ensures that sanctions are imposed on those who violate the fisheries regulations. Previous deficiencies in the legislation have been remedied. The police's case processing time in connection with violations has decreased since the period 2003-2005.

However, the investigation shows that there are still some weaknesses in the Norwegian authorities' management of the shared fish resources. In the area of resource control, they include the fact that the fish sales organisations' control practice other than quota control varies and that the Directorate of Fisheries' control methods for salted and dried fish facilities still have shortcomings that result in a low frequency of inspections of enterprises of this type. Moreover, the Coast Guard's presence at sea and the number of fisheries inspections at sea have decreased since the period investigated in the 2007 audit. The cooperation between the Directorate of Fisheries, the Norwegian Tax Administration and Norwegian Customs and Excise in the fisheries area has improved, but the number of joint controls is relatively

modest and the agencies do little to help each other in their control work.

There are also certain weaknesses relating to the imposition of sanctions by the authorities in cases of violation of the regulations. The police and prosecuting authority's case processing times in connection with reported cases involving cod and haddock have decreased since the previous investigation period, but they remain relatively long. The differences between the regional branches of the Directorate of Fisheries in terms of the use of sanctions have decreased since the 2007 audit, but there is still considerable variation. The investigation shows that the police cooperate with the control agencies to a varying extent in the work of uncovering and punishing fisheries crime, and that the authorities do not succeed in uncovering and punishing those responsible for organised fisheries crime to any great extent.

The investigation shows that important decisions of the Joint Norwegian-Russian Fisheries Commission have still not been implemented. The decisions in question concern the exchange of information between the Norwegian and Russian authorities about satellite tracking of vessels, trans-shipment at sea and landings in third countries. The Norwegian authorities have been willing to exchange some of this information. The failure to implement these decisions weakens Norwegian authorities' ability to control the fishing of shared fish stocks by Russian vessels. Nor have planned Norwegian-Russian research cruises been carried out in full.

Ministry/ministries

- Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs
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